

Wicksteed Park Conservation Plan



prepared for the Wicksteed Trust
by Sarah Couch Historic Landscapes

Revised June 2022

Wicksteed Park



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Sarah Couch Historic Landscapes
August 2011, revised and redrafted January 2019 and March-June 2022
74 Acre End Street
Eynsham
Oxfordshire
OX29 4P

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Pavilion, Rose Garden and station (photo from Wicksteed archive, prior to recent changes)



Plan 1: Site location and boundaries

SUMMARY

This Conservation Plan is based on the Conservation Management Plan of 2012. The CMP was prepared as part of the Lakes Project and focused on the essential parts of the CMP: assessing the significance of the site and how this can inform long term management. This Conservation Plan updates the earlier CMP and expands detail on the Pavilion and other historic structures and gardens which in the core of the park. It is part of the development of the *Wicksteed Park - @ Play - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* project. The 2022 revision records changes undertaken by the @Play and Historic Heart Projects and reassesses the condition and policies to conserve the park.

Wicksteed Park is an unusual combination of a public country park and paying attraction which has survived substantially intact since its opening in 1921. An analysis of its history and context has revealed many layers of significance, including its role as setting for an eighteenth century designed landscape; its place as a park made by an industrialist; its place in public park and recreation ground design; its place in theme park design; its place in the history of healthy outdoor recreation and swimming; its place as a celebration of engineering and invention; its natural or scientific interest: but without doubt, its greatest significance relates to its unique role in the development of children's play, to Charles Wicksteed's ethos of adventurous recreation, his international influence on the provision for play and the importance of the park to the local and regional community. Many of these themes are clearly demonstrated in the lakes activity area, now conserved and enhanced by the Lakes project which was completed in 2015. The most significant areas and features are in the core of the park, stretching from the original entrance and the playground to the lake and it is this heart of the park and area around the Pavilion that are the focus of the current @Play project.

The park remains in the management of a charitable Trust which upholds the founder's values. During the later twentieth century the park developed in response to social changes, public expectations and the need to generate income. As a result, the balance of its character changed from predominantly a countryside experience with an emphasis on play, recreation and well-being to that of a theme park attraction within a country park. This tended to reduce the impact of the unique historic origins and ethos of the park and eroded or concealed elements of the site's distinctive character, but this trend has now been reversed. There has been major progress since 2012: not only physical work to the lake and other areas, but also a shift in emphasis towards the unique legacy of Charles Wicksteed:

'The appreciation of our heritage as a real asset has become a reality. Our staff, management and visitors have gained a better understanding of the importance of the history of Wicksteed Park and the contribution it has made to the community for 100 years'.¹

The park was severely impacted by the pandemic of 2020-2022. For much of this period the park's revenue earning activities were closed. With assistance from the NLHF the park continued to function as a highly valued country park. A new trading arm has been established and many changes effected despite enormous challenges.

This plan follows HLF Conservation Plan Guidance and sets out updated recommendations for the conservation of each character area as part of a long term strategic vision for the park, endorsed by the Trustees. It concludes with overall management aims, which will be taken forward in the updated Park Management and Maintenance Plan (PMMP), to ensure that short and long term management decisions will be based on an understanding of the park's significance, will engage a wide range of visitors and volunteers and will preserve and celebrate the unique qualities of the park.

¹ Wicksteed Charitable Trust, Lakes Restoration Project Evaluation Report 2017



The lake, shelter and paddling area after conservation, seen from the east side of the lake, 2018



Recreated plank slides in the playground, 2018

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This plan has been written by Sarah Couch Historic Landscapes in consultation with the project team and the Wicksteed Trust and is part of the development phase of the Wicksteed Trust's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Heritage Grants Programme for the @Play project, which will include the repair of the Captain's Lounge in the Pavilion, the Fountain Lawn and Rose Garden, archive digitalisation and creation of a heritage play area.

Sarah Couch is qualified in architecture and in the conservation of historic landscapes and has a wide experience of professional practice, teaching and work for major conservation bodies. The current plan draws on a great deal of earlier reports, as well as new research and surveys carried out as part of the current project. The original CMP involved Sally Stradling, who assisted with research; Linden Groves and Sarah Rutherford contributed specialist knowledge on Wicksteed Park's significance as a play landscape and David Withycombe of Land Management Services led on management aspects of the plan and the Management and Maintenance Plan which is being updated as part of the current project.

1.1 Scope of the project

The Conservation Plan (CP) 2018 revision was written as part of the development phase of an HLF project to conserve parts of the Pavilion, gardens and play at Wicksteed Park. It follows HLF Guidance for Conservation Plans (2012). This updated plan is based on the scaled down CMP which was written as part of the Lakes project and updates and expands information in the CMP to cover the Pavilion and other historic structures in more detail. New research has been added and all sections updated and refreshed. Overall management aims for each character area are set out, and these will be developed in the updated Park Management and Maintenance Plan (PMMP).

The major changes in the 2018 and the 2022 revisions include:

- Update on progress since 2012 and 2018 and description of current projects
- Additional information on the construction and significance of historic structures including new research, images and surveys carried out in relation to the Pavilion, concrete cottages, boathouse and Rose Garden retaining wall
- Further contextual research
- Further work on Humphry Repton's work at Barton Seagrave; new research has come to light as part of Repton's bicentenary celebrations in 2018
- Additions to history and chronology
- New information on archaeology and its potential
- Updated information on designations and planning policy
- Revisions and additions to historic map overlays and other plans
- Revisions to views analysis
- Addition of images
- Revisions and additional material on management and activities
- Review of significance with additional material
- Review of issues and new section relating issues to themes of significance
- Review of policies, priorities and management aims
- Addition of draft updated masterplan
- Additions to image gazetteer and update of gazetteer schedule
- A simplified heritage impact checklist to aid decision making (2022) in Section 10, page 167.

As with the original CMP, this plan concentrates on the registered site, but also considers wider areas of the park, as shown on the location and character areas plans (Plan 1, page vi ; Plan 16, page 60), and its setting.

1.2 Methodology

The earlier CMP and this updated CP were developed through:

- Research within the Wicksteed Park archive including recent findings; also using existing and new digital copies of guide books, catalogues and photographs.
- Research at the Kettering Library, Northamptonshire Record Office and British Library; obtaining copies of historic maps, drawings, watercolours, guide books, photographs, press cuttings and sources of further information.
- Contextual research to establish Wicksteed Park's place in history, including contribution from Linden Groves and making use of her report for English Heritage on play in public parks.
- Consultation with local historians and Northamptonshire Gardens Trust.
- Study of published sources.
- Enquiry and visit to the National Monument Record: buildings and park records, illustrations, aerial photographs and archaeology.
- Preparation and review of digital historic map regression overlays.
- Preparation and update of comparative views.
- Site visits and general walkover site surveys to establish survival of historic features, condition of the landscape and significant trees, drawing on the existing tree survey, changes since 2012 and 2018 and assessment of management issues.
- Consultation, meetings and site visits with members of the project team, staff and Trustees at Wicksteed Park.

Reports consulted include:

- HLF application documents, both projects
- Barton Seagrave Hall, Castle Field and Wicksteed Park: Conservation Statement, TfT Cultural Heritage, 2003
- Wicksteed Park Restoration Plan, Landscape Design Associates, 2004
- Management Plan for Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Jenny Pentelow, Wicksteed Trust, November 2007
- Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Landscape Design and Ecology Plan: Stage 1 Draft, OHES, June 2011
- The History of Children's Play Provision in Public Parks, draft report by Linden Groves for English Heritage
- Landscape, Recreation and Ecology Report, Steve Plumb, 2007
- Arboriculture report by Lockhart Garratt Ltd, 2007
- Tree risk assessments to November 2021, RGS – Arboricultural Consultants
- Oliver Wicksteed 'A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park' 2015
- Lakes Restoration Project Evaluation Report 2017
- David Smith Associates, report on Rose Garden retaining wall, May 2018
- Fira, Statement of Significance (Rose Garden and Fountain Lawn), July 2018
- Full report on results of 2017 Visitor Survey
- Design drawings by Lathams architects and Fira landscape architects
- John Pegg, Wicksteed Park Landscape Master Plan 6th January 2017
- LMS/Trevor McHugh, Wicksteed Park, Park Management and Maintenance Plan December 2013, Updated August 2017
- Lathams, Historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts October 2017
- Lathams, Captain's lounge historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts May 2018
- Design drawings
- Tracey Clarke (Community Link Manager, Wicksteed Park, later Community and Heritage Manager) Timeline of Hilda Wicksteed – Summary of research and other reports
- Wicksteed Charitable Trust Memorials policy
- Educational Activities 2018 and new draft

- Bowles Green, Interim Report on Public Consultation, September 2018
- Simon Leach Design, Interpretation Plan and Design Workshop Summary / Interpretation Vision August 2018
- Simon Leach Design, Wicksteed Park @Play Project, Interpretation Plan Final, February 2019
- Masterplan for retirement village by New Chapter Villages, April 2020
- Greenwillows Associates 'Preliminary Ecological Assessment of Wicksteed Park, Kettering' February 2021;
- Greenwillows Associates 'Survey Results for Bat Surveys at The Southern End of Wicksteed Park, Kettering' 7th July 2021.
- TVAS 'Land at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire An Archaeological Evaluation' March 2021
- Ise Watermeadow plans and Paradise Spinney planting plan
- Public responses to Wicksteed Park in the pandemic
- Wicksteed 2021 Visitor Survey Report
- The aim of the management section is to ensure that the way the Trust manages the site is informed by the significance of the site.

The findings of the CMP and CP will set the agenda for the future management of the park including:

- The agreed vision for the site as a whole.
- For each 'character area', a description of the historic and current landscape character (including recent work), the significance, ecology and other issues such as access requirements and broad management aims to enhance, protect and sustain the significance of the area.

This provides the framework for the development of the Park Management and Maintenance Plan, currently being updated (2022).

The following was undertaken as part of the CMP and is being reviewed through the PMMP and this CP:

- Interviews with site staff as a group and individually.
- Review of information from existing plans and results from site surveys and consultation as well as work by other members of the project team.
- Identification of management issues.
- Development of broad management aims to protect the significance of the park as a whole and character areas/features.
- The Action Plan relating to the management aims and character areas from the former CMP is now part of the Park Management and Maintenance Plan.

1.3 Location, Ownership and Boundaries

Wicksteed Park lies at the south-east edge of Kettering, on the west edge of Barton Seagrave village. The c45ha registered site covers approximately half the area of the current park. It is bounded to the north by the A6003 Barton Road, to the west by twentieth century housing, including the 1920s Paradise Lane and Spinney Lane, and to the south by the former railway and development at Kettering Venture Park beyond. The northern part of the east boundary is marked by a track, beyond which lies Castle Field, containing the earthwork remains of moats, fishponds, and the shrunken medieval village (Scheduled Ancient Monument). To the southeast of the registered park lies former agricultural land, much of which has recently been developed for housing. The land is elevated in the western section of the site, with a gentle slope running south-east from the Pavilion and Rose Garden down towards the lake in the Ise valley below. The Wicksteed Trust's landholding now amounts to c140ha, including the park, recently acquired meadow south of the lakes, Ise valley water meadow nature reserve and Barton Hall parkland to the north, Castle Fields, the Cricket pitch and Walls Spinney to the north and east.

The setting has become more urban since the writing of the 2012 CMP, but it retains an open



Plan 2: Aerial photograph showing boundaries and designations

outlook over the Ise valley to the remains of Barton Seagrave Hall's landscape park and gardens adjacent to the north-east. The land which Wicksteed Park occupies was until 1913 part of the Barton Seagrave Hall estate. Significant urban expansion is planned for the next two decades to the east of Kettering which is a Designated Growth Area and East Kettering will form a Sustainable Urban Extension. In 2017 planning permission was granted for 5,500 homes with development underway, with much within 2 miles of Wicksteed.²

The park and wider estate is owned and managed by the Wicksteed Charitable Trust (registered charity No. 1142103), which has taken over from the Wicksteed Village Trust established by Charles Wicksteed in 1916. The day-to-day management was carried out by Wicksteed Park Limited until the crisis of the Pandemic forced the company to enter administration; the trading company has been replaced by Wicksteed Trading Limited. It is responsible for the maintenance of the majority of the Trust's estate, including the Registered Park, Wicksteed Park nature reserve (with the Wildlife Trust) and Castle Field to the north and east, and will take on management of the Ise Watermeadow to the south.

1.4 Designations

The park is included in the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* Grade II. The *Register* currently contains some 1600 sites.

The water chute was listed Grade II in November 2016.

Part of Castle Field and Barton Seagrave Hall are included in the Barton Seagrave Conservation Area and Castle Field is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The fishing lake (Area J) and lake banks have been designated as a Local (previously County) Wildlife Site and this habitat is part of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Northamptonshire. The park forms a part of the setting of Barton Seagrave Hall (The Orangery is Grade I, the hall is Grade II* and the outbuildings are Grade II).

Wildlife sites in and around the Wicksteed Park area:

- Wicksteed Park South Lake Local Wildlife Site (fishing lake, area J)
- Castle Field Local Wildlife Site (Trust estate to the north east)
- Wicksteed Watermeadow and Ise Marsh Local Wildlife Sites (Trust estate to the north)
- Southfield Farm Marsh Local Wildlife Site and SSSI (outside Trust estate to the south)³ and the park is within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for local SSSIs.
- Wicksteed Park is located within the Nature Improvement Area for Northamptonshire and it forms part of both sub-regional and local Green Infrastructure corridors.⁴

1.5 Planning Policy context *National planning policy*

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued in 2012 and revised in July 2018. The new NPPF contains the following relevant policies:

15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment

16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

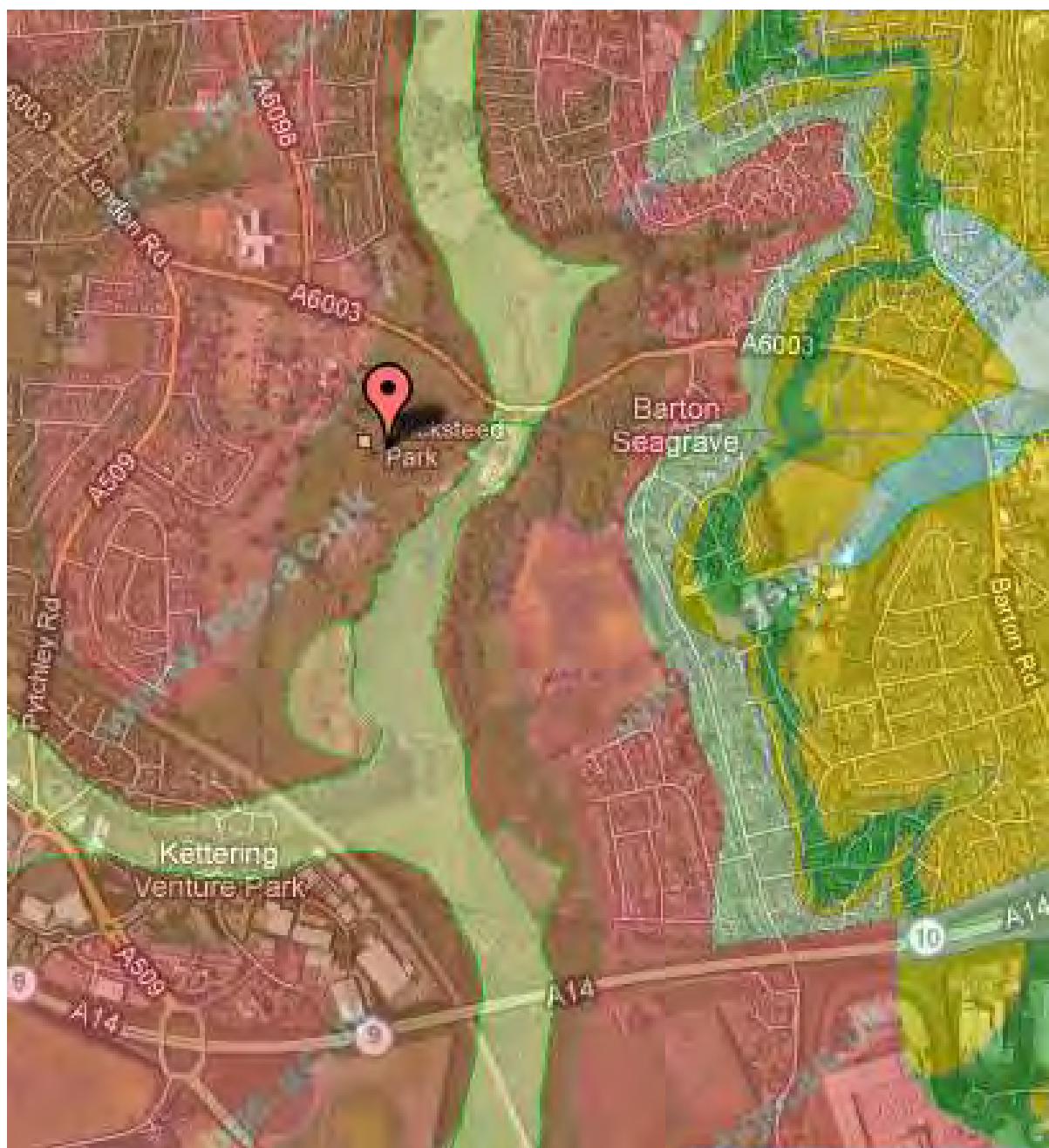
184. Heritage assets ... are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

189. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

² Wicksteed Park MMP updated 2017

³ Northamptonshire County Council interactive mapping accessed 14 August 2018

⁴ Greenwillows Associates 'Preliminary Ecological Assessment of Wicksteed Park, Kettering' February 2021; Greenwillows Associates 'Survey Results for Bat Surveys at The Southern End of Wicksteed Park, Kettering' 7th July 2021.



green: river valley alluvium upper Lias clay and silt on Whitby mudstone
 brown : Whitby mudstone
 pale brown: Grendon member- sand and gravel on Whitby mudstone
 red : on Northampton sand formation- ooidal ironstone
 from British Geological Survey Geology of Britain viewer, reproduced with the permission of the British Geological Survey ©NERC. All rights Reserved

Plan 3: Site geology

Local context

Kettering Local Plan (1995) and North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

The Local Plan for Kettering Borough was adopted in 1995 and is being replaced in stages by the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Part 1 Local Plan (adopted 14 July 2016). The Kettering Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan (SSP2) was formally adopted at North Northamptonshire's Full Council meeting on 1 December 2021 and forms part of the Development Plan for Kettering Borough. The SSP2 covers the whole of Kettering Borough with the exception of issues addressed in the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) and the Kettering Town Centre Area Action Plan.

The JCS deals with strategic issues and covers the whole of North Northamptonshire and sets out the overall spatial strategy, the level of growth required and the distribution of growth. It also allocates strategic sites and sets out strategic policies, place shaping requirements, and development management policies, including:

POLICY 2 – HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The distinctive North Northamptonshire historic environment will be protected, preserved and, where appropriate, enhanced. Where a development would impact upon a heritage asset and/or its setting:

- Proposals should conserve and, where possible, enhance the heritage significance and setting of an asset or group of heritage assets in a manner commensurate to its significance;*
- Proposals should complement their surrounding historic environment through the form, scale, design and materials;*
- Proposals should protect and, where possible, enhance key views and vistas of heritage assets, including of the church spires along the Nene Valley and across North Northamptonshire;*
- Proposals should demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the impact of development on heritage assets and their setting in order to minimise harm to these assets and their setting. Where loss of historic features or archaeological remains is unavoidable and justified, provision should be made for recording and the production of a suitable archive and report;*
- Where appropriate, flexible solutions to the re-use of buildings and conservation of other types of heritage assets at risk will be encouraged, especially, where this will result in their removal from the 'at risk' register.*

POLICY 3 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Development should be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to its landscape setting, retaining and, where possible, enhancing the distinctive qualities of the landscape character area which it would affect.

POLICY 4 – BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY

A net gain in biodiversity will be sought and features of geological interest will be protected and enhanced.

Other relevant policies include: Local Green Infrastructure Corridors (Policy 19) – where development and investment will be managed to secure a net gain in green infrastructure which will be safeguarded and Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (Policy 4) – where existing biodiversity and geodiversity assets will be protected and development proposals have to take account of the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Supplementary Plan.

Wicksteed Park is identified in the Local Plan map as an area protected and/or reserved as public open space or environmentally important open space and includes nature conservation sites and Ise Valley Green Infrastructure Corridors as noted above. The SSP2 mentions Wicksteed as one of four Historic Parks and Gardens in the Borough; Wicksteed Park, a well-known tourist destination (Grade II)*5. The SSP2 states that Wicksteed Park is located within the Nature Improvement Area for Northamptonshire. Policies cover a housing allocation in the south west of the park: Policy KET9.

⁵ Site Specific Part 2 Local Plan (SSP2) page 67; policy map at <https://enc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4f2e1cec140a437f87bf9920cbb4e14f>



Plan 4: Hydrology

Environment Agency flood map 2018

The whole of the Lakes Activity area is in Flood zone 3 (3a and 3b)

Three areas of the park are covered by a General Permitted Development Order as an amusement park, and a Lawful Development Certificate for these areas was issued in 2015. Provided development is carried out in accordance with the terms of the Order, no application for planning permission needs to be made (see Designations Plan 2 above).

1.6 Geology and soils

See Plan 3 opposite.

The bedrock is Northampton Sand Ironstone overlaid by Upper Lias Clay. Around the lake are found areas of alluvium soils washed down the valley by river action. The lake bed is formed from the Lias clay of variable depth. The majority of the park is Whitby mudstone which overlies mudstone with alluvium clay and silt along the Lye valley, with sandstone in higher areas. There is also a small area of mudstone with sand and gravel south west of the lake, where Paradise Spinney and pond were previously shown. The springs may well occur at the geological junctions.

The topography of the park slopes down to the lake from high points in the north west. Flat areas are limited to the north west of the park, now used for car parking, the area around the main Pavilion and the area immediately around the lake.

1.7 Hydrology

Wicksteed Park lies on the western slope of the River Lye Valley which is regulated by the Environment Agency. The watermeadows north of the Barton Road provide a significant area of floodplain storage. The main lake was formed by excavating, widening and flooding the valley around the former meandering course of the River Lye, leaving a few areas with their trees as islands. The Lye was canalised, to the east of the lake. Springs occur at the junction of sandstone and mudstone with much of the park saturated for much of the year. Piped springs and surface water drainage and land drains flow into the lakes. The fishing lake is fed by natural ground water. The drainage of Castle Field is via a number of spring fed streams which converge at the north western gate of the field.⁶ The lake is examined under the Reservoirs Act and controls were upgraded as part of the Lakes project.

The area around the lake is prone to flooding and climate change projections suggest that intense rainfall and flooding are likely to increase.

The River Lye corridor, lakes and surrounding area are in Flood zone 3 which includes:

Zone 3a High Probability: Land having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding; (Land shown in dark blue on the Flood Map);

Zone 3b The Functional Floodplain: This zone comprises land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood. (Not separately distinguished from Zone 3a on the Flood Map, opposite).

1.8 Definitions

The Burra Charter 1999: (revision of 1988 charter) includes the following widely accepted definitions:

Place includes site, area, land, landscape, group, spaces and views, may include memorials, trees, gardens, parks, places of historical events, urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places.

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. The term cultural significance is synonymous with heritage significance and cultural heritage value.

Conservation means all the processes of looking after a *place* so as to retain its *cultural significance*.

Maintenance means the continuous protective care of the *fabric* and *setting* of a *place*, and is to be

⁶ John Pegg, Wicksteed Park Landscape Master Plan 6th January 2017



Plan 5: 1727 furlongs of Kettering

Showing names on strip fields

courtesy of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

distinguished from repair. Repair involves *restoration* or *reconstruction*.

Preservation means maintaining the *fabric* of a *place* in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

Restoration means returning the existing *fabric* of a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

Reconstruction means returning a *place* to a known earlier state and is distinguished from *restoration* by the introduction of new material into the *fabric*.

Adaptation means modifying a *place* to suit the existing *use* or a proposed *use*.

David Jacques also discusses repair and conjectural detailing, ie when there is no site evidence.

1.9 Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in the text are as follows:

CMP	Conservation Management Plan
CP	Conservation Plan
PMMP	Park Management and Maintenance Plan
WCT	Wicksteed Charitable Trust
WPL	Wicksteed Park Ltd now replaced by
WTL	Wicksteed Trading Limited.

1.10 Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges with thanks advice given by a great many people including:

Past and present staff of Wicksteed Park Ltd and Wicksteed Trading Limited. Liz Brandon Jones (for the original CMP), Oliver Wicksteed, Paul Stamper, Linden Groves, Chris Bowen, John Pegg, and other past and present members of the Wicksteed Trust.

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1.11 Copyright of illustrations

All reasonable efforts have been made to contact copyright holders of material reproduced in this study and acknowledgements are printed with the illustrations as appropriate.

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1.12 Adoption of the Plan

The earlier CMP was adopted by the Wicksteed Trust on 5th August 2011. It has been used as the basis for the future development, enhancement and maintenance of the landscape. In particular the policies outlined in the Plan and the summary and recommendations will be used to inform ongoing design and management decisions. The policies in this revised CP were adopted by the Trustees in June 2022.



Plan 6: Lidar survey

This appears to show many of the features of the pre park landscape, including strip fields and the curved bank of Church Headland.

2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

2.1 Summary of history

The history of the site has already been set out in many documents including the Barton Seagrave Conservation Plan and LDA's Restoration plan of 2004. It is not intended to repeat all of this information here. An expanded history based on the 2012 CMP and an updated chronology are included below and relevant points are used to inform the analysis in later sections of this CP. In essence, the history of the site falls into two main periods, before and after the creation of the park from c1914.

2.1.1 Early history and archaeology

There is only one recorded archaeological find within the park, a roman period burial urn.⁷ However, there have been Iron Age, Anglo Saxon and Roman finds in the area and two scheduled moated medieval enclosures and fishponds in Castle Field are within the ownership of the Wicksteed Village Trust. The earlier history of the site, its relationship with Barton Seagrave Hall and the development of the Manor and Barton Seagrave village are set out in the Barton Seagrave Conservation Statement.

Prior to the creation of the park this was an agricultural and hunting landscape, with a pattern of fields derived from the enclosures of the early nineteenth century and small copses, along the Ise valley. The open fields of Kettering had been worked in common during the medieval period, but were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1804; the site still displays the post enclosure landscape with field boundaries surviving. Slight earthwork traces of medieval ridge and furrow fields have been recognised by Graham Keevill, on the west side of the Ise valley within Wicksteed Park.⁸ The individual units or strips within these open fields were normally arranged in coherent blocks of arable or pasture known as furlongs, and separated from others by shallow parallel ditches or by raised ridges or ledges called 'headlands'.⁹ This arrangement can be seen in the 1727 plan of the park, (Plan 5, above). In recent years Lidar (Light Detection and Ranging) surveys have become more widely available and are very useful for revealing field archaeology as they plot ground modelling without vegetation. The Lidar of Wicksteed Park (Plan 6, opposite) appears to show many of the features of the pre park landscape, including strip fields in Red-Grass and Queachy Furlongs and the curved bank associated with Church Headland. There is the possibility of much earlier remains. There are also records of a mill on the River Ise.¹⁰ In some areas field archaeology will have been disturbed, by eg the former skateboard area near the Arena made in the 1970s and the former golf course in the south of the park.

2022: An archaeological survey and investigation carried out in connection with the proposed retirement village in the south of the site describes archaeological evidence probably stretching back to the Bronze Age with evidence of medieval and probable prehistoric field systems and tracks. It concluded:

'The evaluation has been successful in identifying potential archaeological features in six of the twenty trenches opened on the roughly 10ha site. The features recorded took the form of ditches, gullies and postholes. Apart from post-medieval furrows, only two features could be dated and these appear to indicate prehistoric (likely Bronze Age) occupation on site. One cluster of archaeological

⁷ An urn, of rough light brown ware, and filled with earth and burnt bones was found 2ft down in the southern part of field 59 near Kettering. It is 7" high and tapers from 5" at the neck to 3" at the base; it has been dated by Reginald Smith, to the 2nd cent. (Sited to area SP 878772 from OS 1:2500, 1900). (1) The indicated find spot now falls in Wicksteed Park recreation ground. The present location of the urn is not known. Unique Identifier: 345738 NMR Number: SP 87 NE 11; Field observation on SP 87 NE 11 Field Observation (Visual Assessment)- 15 October 1969

⁸ TtT Cultural Heritage, 'Barton Seagrave Hall, Castle Field and Wicksteed Park: Conservation Statement', 2000

⁹ English Heritage, *Field Systems* Introductions to Heritage Assets May 2011

¹⁰ John Pegg pers.comm. 22 August 2018



Plan 7: 1727 maps of Kettering and Barton Seagrave

Showing maps overlaid; indicating open fields (Furlongs) on the site of Wicksteed Park and Church Headland defining part of the west boundary and pre Repton park at Barton Hall with avenue (A).
Reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

features partly corresponded with geophysical anomalies, in particular two linear features forming a possible trackway orientated NW-SE. These ditches and gullies contained a small assemblage of late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age pottery. Other undated linear features corresponded with geophysical anomalies suggesting another trackway running roughly NE-SW... A geophysical survey of the site (TigerGeo 2020) located clear evidence of medieval agriculture in the form of ridge and furrow. In addition, anomalies suggest a probable prehistoric field system together with trackways.¹¹ This appears to confirm the field archaeology shown in the Lidar image above and the potential for early evidence.

2.1.2 Repton's Red Book for Barton Seagrave

By the early eighteenth century, the site was part of Barton Seagrave Park. The estate was acquired by John Bridges (1642–1712) Squire of Barton Seagrave (English lawyer, antiquarian and topographer) in 1665.¹² Barton Hall (II*) was built in the early eighteenth century for the Bridges family. The initials WB and the date 1725 are on rainwater heads.¹³ In common with many parks of the period following the Restoration of 1660, it was laid out with geometric avenues including an axial avenue extending west from the hall towards what is now Wicksteed Park. See 1727 plan opposite and Red Book plan below.



Plan from Repton's Red Book for Barton Seagrave of 1793-4
(copy courtesy of John Pegg/ Holden Arboretum in Ohio)

The manors of Barton seem to have been sold and came into the possession of Richard Tibbits before 1793.¹⁴ Charles Tibbits, his son, took over management in 1791. Repton, who was working for John English Dolben at nearby Finedon at the same time, delivered the Red Book for Barton Seagrave to Charles Tibbits in April 1794.¹⁵ The plan above and view below illustrate his

- 11 TVAS 'Land at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire An Archaeological Evaluation' March 2021
- 12 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3395> Accessed 30.08.18 His eldest son John (bap. 1666, d.1724) historian was one of 12 children. Presumably "WB" are the initials of his brother William following the younger John's death.
- 13 Historic England Listing description <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1372597> accessed 28.08.18
- 14 <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp176-180> accessed 30.08.18
- 15 Stephen Radley, 'Repton at Barton Seagrave Hall' 2018 and 'A Landscape of Aspiration: Charles Tibbits, Humphry Repton and Barton Hall, Northamptonshire' for Northamptonshire Gardens Trust Journal, 2018



recommendation to break up the existing avenue: 'The avenues and rows of tree surrounding this Place, are specimens of that mistaken taste which delighted in giving natural objects an artificial appearance... Yet large and venerable trees are not to be condemned because they unfortunately stand in rows...It is not for the sake of breaking the trees only, that I recommend removal of some tree at Barton Seagrave; but to change the character of gloom and confinement, to more cheerful and extensive landscape.'¹⁶

From limited field work and map analysis it seems that the avenue was indeed broken up in a way similar to Repton's recommendation, although other proposals such as realigning the road, perimeter walk and diverting the river 'to give the appearance of a respectable river' were not carried out. Two mature limes could be remnants of the former avenue, or perhaps it was elm, as common lime and elm were the two most favoured avenue trees of the later seventeenth century/early eighteenth century avenue planting period.

Even if Repton was not directly involved, the later eighteenth century/early nineteenth century landscape was parkland in the English landscape style. The view illustrated by Repton (below) would have taken in the land where Wicksteed Park was laid out. In the same year Repton was advising at Barton Seagrave, he wrote about 'breaking the line' of the avenue at Langley Park in his *Sketches and Hints*.¹⁷ Repton also described creating a walk past the green-house at Barton which he said 'will add to the extent and importance of the building' suggesting that the splendid orangery was also planned at that time, although the architect is unknown.. The listing description describes the orangery as 'late eighteenth century in Adam manner' (Grade II), with delicately traceried fanlights, slender ribbed cast iron 'Tower of the Winds' colonnettes and 3 glazed saucer domes.¹⁸ Repton often proposed 'glass-houses', and designs with the help of his sons George and John Adey, eg at Woburn Abbey.¹⁹ It bears similarities with the Blickling Hall Orangery of 1782, which was 'probably designed by Humphry Repton.'²⁰ Although unproved, the Orangery may have been designed by Repton or his sons. The Orangery had been on the Heritage at Risk Register but was restored in 2014.²¹

Left: Langley from Repton *Sketches and Hints* (1794) Langley Plate VIII states A and B
Right: Loudon's version published in *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphry Repton* (1840). NB the images are reversed



Sketch taken from view in Repton's view for his Red Book for Barton Seagrave of 1793-4 from Microfilm held in the British Library. It shows the lines of the existing avenue extending west from the hall and his proposal to remove some trees to break up the line.

- 16 Transcript of Barton Seagrave Red Book held at the Holden Arboretum in Ohio, USA
- 17 Repton, Humphry, 1752-1818 / *Sketches and hints on landscape gardening : collected from designs and observations now in the possession of the different noblemen and gentlemen, for whose use they were originally made : the whole tending to establish fixed principles in the art of laying out ground* (1794) <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/DLDecArts.ReptonSketches> accessed 28.08.18. A version of the Langley drawings was reproduced in JC Loudon's *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphry Repton* (1840) p64 quoting from *Sketches and Hints*
- 18 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1051650> accessed 28.08.18. 1. GV 2. Late Eighteenth century in Adam manner. 1 storey, ashlar. Arched French windows with delicately traceried fanlights, diamond pattern glazing to marginal lights. Pairs of slender ribbed cast iron 'Tower of the Winds' colonnettes divide windows. Interior: apse opposite canted bay; 3 glazed saucer domes.
- 19 Sarah Rutherford *Georgian Garden Buildings* 2012, p81.
- 20 Listing description. Accessed 28.08.18
- 21 <https://www.northantstelegraph.co.uk/news/hotel-s-orangery-is-awarded-civic-prize-after-restoration-1-6088994> Accessed 28.08.18



Basire, Barton Seagrave 1791 seat of Joseph Wilcocks



Plan 8: Barton Seagrave Suburb Estate 1914

Reproduced by permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

This unimplemented housing plan shows several features of the park as built including the lake with island, Sunk Garden and tennis courts and 'playing grounds' in the north west corner, perimeter housing on Paradise Lane, as well as nurseries and hothouses in an octagonal enclosure



Charles Wicksteed's plan for the People's Park, for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, Reproduced by permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

2.1.3 Charles Wicksteed's values and the creation of Wicksteed Park

Charles Wicksteed, the creator of Wicksteed Park, had an engineering background; his experience and values had a profound impact on the park he created. His daughter Hilda's Biography of Charles Wicksteed gives some insight into the values and motivation that lay behind the creation of the park.²² At an early age he was 'making machines' and his love of engineering and railways developed with his apprenticeship to a railway locomotive engineering works at the age of 16. The seventh son of a Unitarian minister, from an early age he wanted to be 'in a situation to do good' (p38). He respected the natural world and wrote to his sister Anne that, unlike others, he saw no wrong in the 'innocent amusement' of skating on a Sunday (p35). At 21 he raised money to begin his steam ploughing business. He worked for wealthy landowners, such as at Holkham and Sandringham in Norfolk, but he was unsettled by the injustice of enclosures and the treatment of tenants. He became an active Liberal and supported land nationalisation: 'land should be held by the nation in trust for the people' (p67) and he wrote 'Land for the People' which became a standard text and 'Our mother earth'. He would however have seen some of the best designed landscapes during his work.

When he built Bryn Hafod in West Kettering as a family home it incorporated several features he would later use at Wicksteed Park, such as the use of sloping topography with house and terrace at the high point, tree planting, water for swimming and skating, including a summer house with a fire to warm up afterwards: it would be open to the public on Sundays.

2.1.4 Phases of park development

Development of Wicksteed Park can be divided into phases:

1911-1931

This is the period when Charles Wicksteed had an active involvement.

Wicksteed had previously been behind the first public park in Kettering at Rockingham Road Pleasure Park and had previously attempted to found the People's Park, for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.²³ (See 4.2 Themes of Significance, Theme H and image opposite).

When he bought the agricultural land in Barton Seagrave in 1914, his original intention was to build a model garden suburb to provide workers' housing with large gardens in a park setting, much as was done by philanthropic industrialists at Port Sunlight, Cadbury's Bournville, Saltaire in New Lanark or Rowntree's New Earswick at York. However, after the first world war, local authorities took on the responsibility of housing and Wicksteed concentrated on creating a public park unlike others. From early days he provided experimental play equipment and a sandpit and he was passionate about providing opportunities for all to play with minimal supervision on all days of the week, unlike the limited and tightly controlled play opportunities elsewhere. Within three years the Wicksteed Village Trust was founded and its objectives have underpinned the management and development of the park to this day.

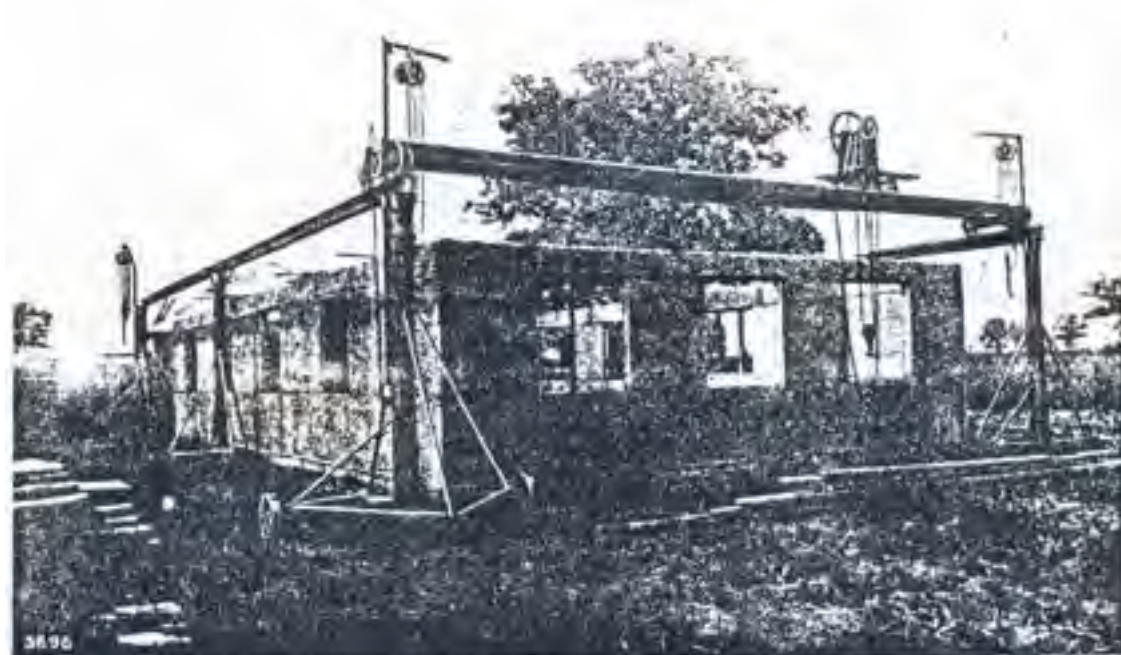
Wicksteed turned to local practice Gotch and Saunders for much of the building design. The liberal JA Gotch had already designed Bryn Hafod for Charles in 1898. The firm produced the plan for the proposed Barton Seagrave Suburb Estate in 1914 (reproduced below) and went on to design the Lodge at the junction of Barton Road and Pytchley Road, where it still stands.

²² Hilda M Wicksteed, *Charles Wicksteed*, 1933

²³ Ian Addiss, part draft for planned book, 2011: 'The Colourful history of the North Park, Kettering and other diversions' and pers.comm. April and May 2011. Rockingham Road Pleasure Park was provided for the people of Kettering in 1894, as a result of the efforts of Mr John Bryan, a local shoe manufacturer who persuaded the Kettering Local Government Board to purchase the land from him.



Aerial photograph of the park in c1926, showing the first phase of the Pavilion, enclosed Octagon with four cottages, theatre, playground, sycamore circle, Rose Garden, terrace, lake and boathouses, field boundary oaks (with the original Tea Pavilion below one of the trees) Spinney Lane bungalows and tennis grounds (Wicksteed archive)



Concrete cottage under construction from Charles Wicksteed, 'Concrete Cottages' *The Machine Tool Review* July-August 1920

The latest version of Pevsner suggests that 'in 1921 Gotch designed a pavilion with a wing added 1927-35, largely by Gotch, Saunders and Surridge'.²⁴ Gotch also designed the rowing club and a theatre, now lost. £4,000 was spent on buildings.²⁵ Initially the park had the character largely of a country park, and the attractive valley landscape was soon beautified by the excavation of a large, shallow recreation lake, providing opportunities for swimming, paddling and boating. Many trees were cleared but some mature field oaks retained and more trees planted, for instance the sycamore circle shown on the aerial photograph of c1926 below, and a beech lined approach avenue leading from a lodge and gates from Kettering.

There were soon a Pavilion, terrace and enclosed Rose Garden, as well as a range of formal recreational facilities, such as tennis courts, as many other parks of the period provided. The square, symmetrical Rose Garden was created in 1924, cut into the slope below the Pavilion. It was enclosed by hedges and featured distinctive timber towers reminiscent of engineer-designed cross braced girders, yet constructed from rough timber poles, and planted with climbing roses. There were concentric beds of flowering perennials and annuals, providing a peaceful retreat, specifically for tired mothers to rest. The edge of the terrace was retained by an ingenious pre cast concrete and steel retaining wall with a low wide coping.²⁶ After Charles died in 1931, his memorial was placed in the centre of the garden and became its focus. A memorial to Charles's famous and beloved dog Jerry also became a distinctive feature of the garden.

In 1926 the Fountain Garden was laid out on the terrace above the Rose Garden, immediately in front of the Pavilion, allowing visitors to enjoy views over the Rose Garden and park to the lake. The garden enjoyed a lawn and Italianate statues and urns filled with plants. A small bandstand built against the retaining wall was used for concerts on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. While areas around the Pavilion and lake were developed, in the early years of the park the southern part remained in agricultural use and much was let. Paradise Lodge, present in 1887, stood in the south of the park until at least 1927.²⁷

The concrete cottages

Charles Wicksteed also took care of his staff, building precast prefabricated concrete cottages west of the Pavilion in the 1920s. These were of pioneering if utilitarian construction, which he described in a magazine during construction in 1920.²⁸ His intention was to save labour by using engineering techniques, and he described his method of precasting the walls in horizontal sections in a shed on site. The blocks were reinforced, 6 inches thick and the cement mixed with 'Pudlo', to make an 'absolutely damp proof' outer wall. 2 inches of loose cinders trapped air to aid insulation. Then finally another 2 inches of ordinary cinder concrete is added. The cottages had concrete raft foundations overlain with tar and a wooden floorboards. Ceilings were of dry construction 'Beaver boarding', and there were picture rails and cornices. Initially window frames were wood but he switched to iron for durability. Red asbestos slates were used for the roofs and concrete chimneys. They were complete with kitchen and bathroom. The outer walls were built in three courses; first to the window sills, the second between the windows and the 'cornice' course right over the windows. He said four men could erect one cottage in twelve hours. Inner walls were made of cinder concrete, 2 1/2 inch thick, the full height of the room, 18 inch wide with have tongued joints. Flooring was 3/4 inch tongued planks, cut in length nailed down on the cinder concrete, with a layer of tar in-between.

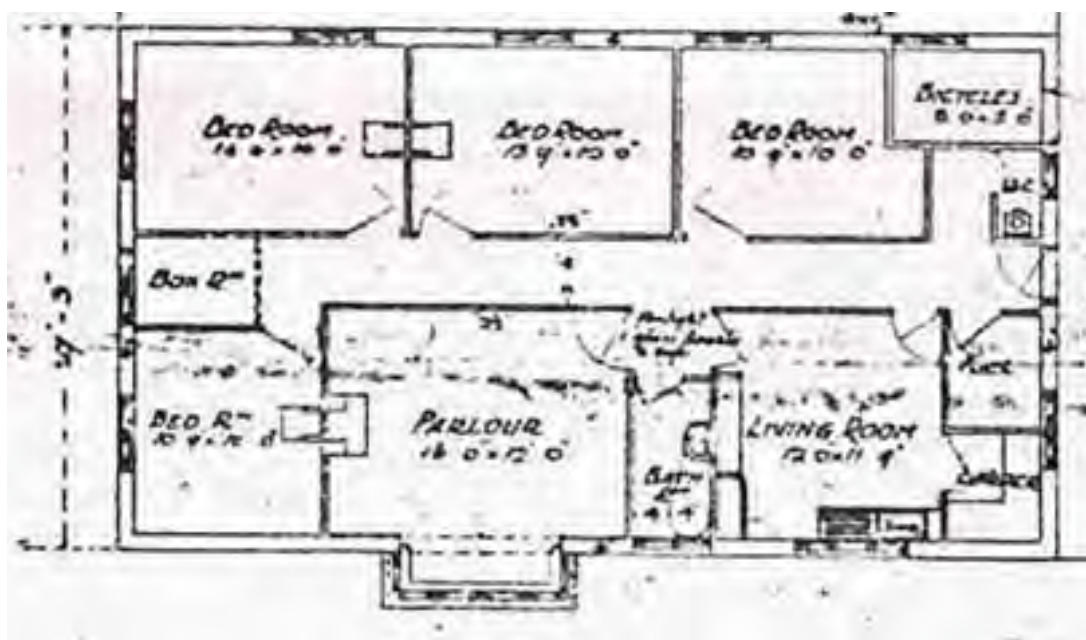
24 Bailey B, Cherry B, Pevsner N, *The Buildings of England*, Northamptonshire, 2013

25 Jean Wilson 'Charles Wicksteed and the Wicksteed Park, Kettering' Diploma, University of Cambridge ICE

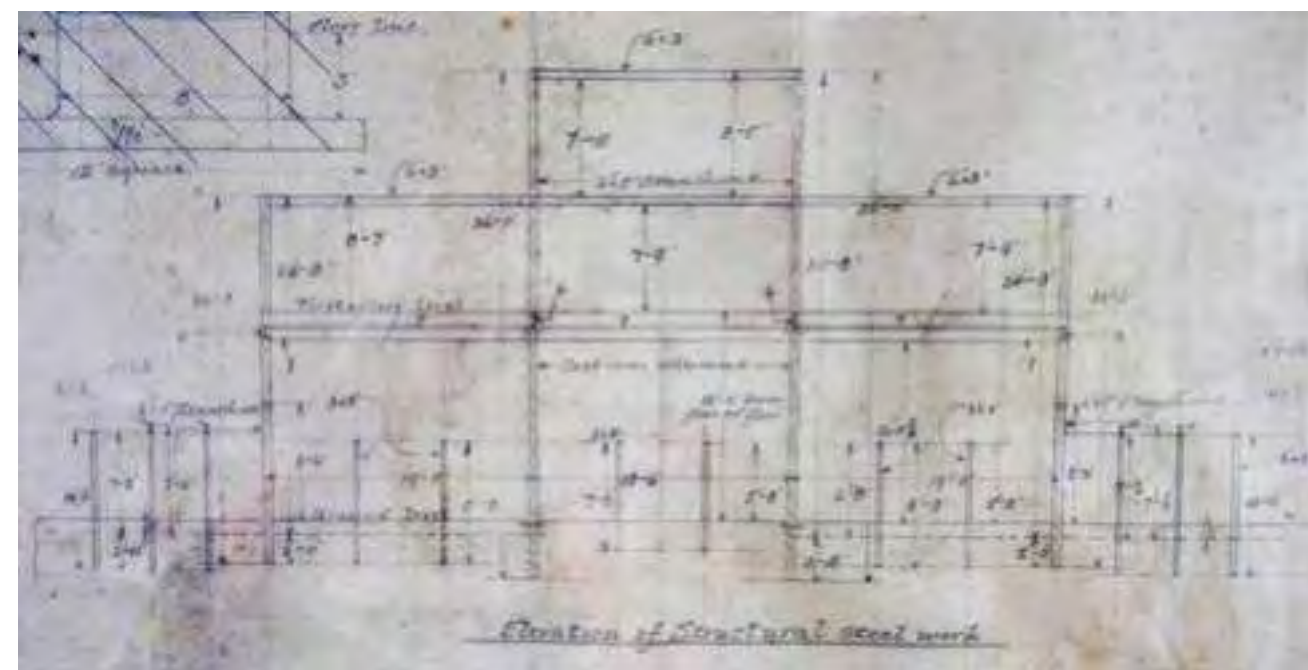
26 David Smith Associates, report on Rose Garden retaining wall, May 2018. It is a kingpost cantilever retaining wall, constructed from 75x85 RSJ posts spaced at 2.7m c/c which support a pre-cast concrete infill panel spanning horizontally between them. The retaining wall then is finished with a 370mm wide domed coping.

27 Ordnance Survey 1887, 1926, 1927; plan of land sold and let 1920-30, Wicksteed Trust Archive

28 Charles Wicksteed, 'Concrete Cottages' *The Machine Tool Review* July- August 1920; Lathams, (Octagon) Historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts October 2017



Charles said they took overall 2-3 months to complete and saved 25-30% of the cost of traditional construction. Four cottages were built near the Pavilion, some in Paradise Lane and more on the far side of the lake.²⁹ Twelve more prefabricated concrete cottages were built on Spinney Lane and offered on a 999 year lease from 1921, and offered at an affordable rent to staff. A peppercorn rent is still payable to the Wicksteed Trust who have to give permission for some alterations/demolition.³⁰



Working drawing for Pavilion showing structural section, Wicksteed Park archive

Illustrations of concrete cottages from Charles Wicksteed, 'Concrete Cottages' The Machine Tool Review July- August 1920

29 Pre-fabricated bungalows which were commissioned by Wicksteed Park in the 1930s and which were subject to archaeological recording in 2005 MOLA 2017 quoting Upson-Smith, T, 2005 Buildings Recording at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire, June 2005, Northamptonshire Archaeology report, 05/103. They have since been demolished.

30 <https://www.onthemarket.com/details/2753325/> Accessed 29 August 2018. Four cottages on Spinney Lane have been on the market in recent years and 7 Spinney Lane was recommended for rebuilding due to not of traditional construction, and overall poor condition; consent needed from Wicksteed Village Trust. Held on a 999 year lease from 1921 with a peppercorn rent of £3 per annum payable to the Trust. It was sold in 2016. Some cottages showed the original layout and possibly the Beaver boarding' dry construction panelled ceiling.



View from the east from Park Guide of 1929, showing original pavilion with open verandah
Below: upper dining room on the 'garden floor' with enclosed verandah (Wicksteed Park archive)

The Pavilion

A tea pavilion was built in 1918, but by 1923 this was supplemented by the main Pavilion built in a commanding position at the top of the site. Original construction drawings survive showing cast iron columns, steel frame and timber cladding which creates the impression of a seaside holiday building. The building was designed with a distinctive stepped section leading to the clocktower, a landmark and symbol of Wicksteed Park. It housed "Pulsematic" clocks presented to Charles Wicksteed by the people of Kettering in 1921. The Pavilion was soon extended to the north (1927) and south (1935). This much larger building was able to cater for enormous numbers. Originally the smaller first floor was an open veranda for customers to take tea and enjoy the view, with the perimeter sheltered by a roof but with an opening in its centre. The veranda had a timber balustrade with a cross pattern adding a seaside character. 'And on the roof of the canteen, partly sheltered from the wind or the sun, would be fewer people, having teas at little tables with shiny tops, on which they laid flowered cups and saucers and plates. They would be looking at the view of the lake and the village beyond, and at the old Hall that could be seen between the trees in the distance.' ³¹ Around 1935 the large opening in the roof was enclosed with a new 'top hat' section, with clerestorey, to make the space wind and weathertight. It was used as a select upper dining room. There was a simple timber cross pattern balustrade around the veranda. By the 1950s the veranda was enclosed to extend the restaurant. The open belvedere was enclosed with a perimeter screen of glass and timber, concealing the timber cross pattern balustrade, but rediscovered during works in 2020-1. Over the years the space has been used as café, tea rooms, ice cream parlour, classrooms offices and dressing room and became known as the Captain's Lounge.

Further extensions were added to the Pavilion to house kiosks selling ice creams, toys and fruit. In 1976 a long extension with small gabled roofs was added to the eastern frontage, truncating the fountain to make space for a road. The Pavilion was used throughout the year; it not only fed hundreds of diners seated at long tables in the canteen and the more exclusive first floor dining room, it also hosted balls, shows, concerts, dinners, dances, conferences and exhibitions.

Outside people would be buying jugs of tea to drink with the food they had brought with them, and parties of picnickers would be sitting on seats or on the grass, laughing and eating. Inside several hundred people might be seated at long tables, with white cups and saucers, and eating bread-and-butter, and fishpaste, and jam, and cakes. ...Behind the scenes was a great big boiler that made steam. The steam boiled the water that made the tea, and the tea ran down pipes to the taps that filled the white enamel jugs that were fetched from the counter by the picnickers. Better than that was the bread-and-butter machine that cut and buttered a slice a second, and even better still were the trays of fancy cakes with bright-coloured icing. There were always bits of bread-and-butter and cake for [Charles' dog] Jerry, and for that reason he was fatter in the summer than in the winter, when the canteen was closed. ³²

³¹ Oliver Wicksteed 'A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park' 2015
³² Quotation from 'A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park'



The first slide designed and erected in Wicksteed Park in 1922, with shelter behind, Wicksteed Park archive



GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND
AT THE WICKSTEED VILLAGE TRUST PARK

★ A visit is well worth while, we welcome you

Brochure c 1930, Wicksteed Park archive

Development of the playground

Initially Charles gave low priority to creating a playground, until he explained they 'had a Sunday School Treat in the park and put up primitive swings with larch poles, tied together at the top with chains. Fortunately they were not cleared away with the other things the day after the treat, and I ultimately found them so popular that instead of pulling them down I added more to them. But these were not enough for the children, I found them piling up forms one above another on a slope under a tree to form a slide, and breaking them. As a consequence I thought I would make a slide: first for the boys. This was so much appreciated that I made a better one for the girls: the boys got jealous of this, so I made a still better one for them.'³³

The success of the improvised play equipment led Charles to design and install more and more equipment in the free playground, regularly updated with the newest Wicksteed equipment, using the park as both a testing ground and showcase for his playground manufacture. A significant addition was the erection of the first water chute in 1927, which still provides an exciting experience, and cycle track in 1930. Steam and then the new diesel railways were a particular passion and it is fitting that his last work at Wicksteed was the planning and construction of the diesel railway circuit in the park, opened just after his death.³⁴

Charles later described how having a good playground became key: 'The park has attained a success I never for a moment contemplated in the original formation. When completed, as it soon will be, it will provide for almost every amusement ... But the playground is more important than all the rest put together. When I first opened the park, which is in a beautiful situation, I was disappointed to find how little it was visited: it was not until after the playground was started that the people came. It gradually dawned upon me that to enjoy a holiday people want something to do or look at. As the playground developed so did the children and mothers come in increasing numbers, followed by the general public. With the development of charabancs Sunday School treats came more and more, let alone parties of other descriptions'.³⁵

1930s to 1950s

This could be seen as the heyday of the park as a traditional family park providing a mixture of extensive free play and recreation opportunities around the lake, with an aviary and later a children's zoo, as well as paying rides including mini cars (1955), paddle boats, railway, and pony rides, which had a relatively low impact on the landscape. It was advertised as 'the Gateway to Health and Happiness'. By the 1930s, the playground was described as being of '2 acres in extent ... provided with all sorts of playthings. There are plane swings, plank swings, see-saw swings and – just swings; rowing see-saws, see-saw ladders and non-bumper see-saws; giant-strides, ocean waves, merry-go-rounds, joy wheels, whirling platforms, slides, trapeze rings, horizontal bars, horizontal ladders, parallel bars, leapfrog bucks, jungle-gyms and rocking horses'.³⁶

The Pavilion was extended and the dining rooms catered for thousands of visitors, supplied by Wicksteed's bread and butter machine and Ice Cream Factory. Visitors arrived in large

³³ Linden Groves, 'Just Child's Play?' *Historic Gardens Review* Issue 22

³⁴ David Nelson, *75 Years of the Wicksteed Park Railway* gives a good account of the railway's history. Diesel engines did not become mainstream until after the second world war. Wicksteed Park Miniature Railway is recorded by NMR Number: SP 57 NE 32, Unique Identifier: 507154; 'A two foot gauge miniature railway which runs for one and a half miles around the lake in Wicksteed Park.'

³⁵ Charles Wicksteed, *A Plea for Children's Recreation after School Hours and after School Age* 1928

³⁶ Brochure, 1930s, Wicksteed Archive Oliver Wicksteed 'A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park' 2015



Hilda and Charles, with dog, walking in the park (Wicksteed Park archive)



Wicksteed ice cream staff, pre war (Wicksteed Park archive)

numbers by charabanc, also by bus, cycle or on foot and increasing numbers of private vehicles. In this period the main entrance was changed from the Kettering Lodge and avenue to a new entrance on Barton Road, dedicated to Hilda Wicksteed, with coach parking and then car parking to the east of the new entrance (Area C). From the early days charges were made for parking. In 1934, car and charabanc parking cost 1/-, motor cycles with side car 6d, motor cycles 3d and bicycles 2d.³⁷ During the second world war the park accommodated a troop billet and transport depot for a Quartermaster company.³⁸

Hilda Wicksteed

Recent research has revealed the role played by Charles' daughter Hilda (1884-1950). Following her parents' example, Hilda supported many charities and good causes and was also involved with the local Liberal Association. Hilda was District Commissioner for the Guides and organised a very successful rally at Wicksteed Park in 1921. Like her father she loved animals and in 1924 she started a new local branch of the RSPCA. She wrote three books including one about of Charles' beloved dog Jerry, immortalised in the statue in the Rose Garden. Her last book was her biography of Charles in 1933 and her passion for Wicksteed Park was clear. Hilda took responsibility for the re-writing of booklets about the park when she was Chair of the Wicksteed Village Trust and she usually wrote up the minutes of meetings. She was one of the original Trustees and took over as Chair on the death of her father, proposing another female Trustee in 1933 and holding the post until 1940. Hilda's responsibilities and interests included animals (in the minutes of meetings she discussed the monkey house, new aviary and donkeys), trees and gardens, the hotel owned by the Trust and the management and rewarding of staff. Under her chairmanship, the park increased its output of ice cream made on site, arranged dog shows, and bought and sold plots of land. Changing rooms for runners and cyclists were erected in her memory, as were the entrance gates.³⁹

All of these aspects have a legacy in the park Wicksteed made at Kettering (see Significance, Section 4).

Later Twentieth century

From c1960 and particularly from c1980, larger fairground equipment was added in an extension of the playground and also inside the sports arena, the area inside the cycle track, making use of the existing structure. The size of the rides and also the increase in numbers of private vehicles changed the balance between country park and attraction, although free access to the playground, park and lake as well as other countryside pursuits, such as fishing, were maintained.

Twenty-first century

In recent years the Trust has undertaken major changes to put the park on a sustainable footing. Barton Hall was sold to become a hotel and land east of the lake was sold for housing of approximately 450 homes, built by Redrow Homes. In 2012 the Trust secured Heritage Lottery funding of just over £1m for the lake restoration project which has given new life to an important part of the park. Contributions were also received from Kettering Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council towards this project. In the spring of 2015, bronze statues of two children in the paddling area were unveiled to symbolise the endurance and joy of simple children's play.

The lake restoration became a £3m project and work included:

- Lake dredged, replanted and access for all around the lake perimeter
- Floating pontoon bridge, pier and boardwalk
- New entrance into the arboretum
- New bridge into the newly enlarged arboretum
- New computerised water control systems

37 1934 Brochure, Wicksteed archive

38 Information from the Carpetbagger Harrington Aviation Museum, Northamptonshire, courtesy John Pegg

39 Tracey Clarke (Community Link Manager, Wicksteed Park) Timeline of Hilda Wicksteed Summary of research

- 300 seat grass amphitheatre
- Restored shingle beach
- Restored paddling area
- Restored roundhouse shelter
- Greater activities, volunteers and archive project
- Greater use of the lake

The lakes restoration project 'has been transformative in its delivery, it has been recognised as being a catalyst for challenging and changing perceptions of the park and a stimulus for future longer term development...it has raised the profile at a local and national level and contributed to significantly increasing visitors numbers to the park, with a 40% increase over the last two years to 700,000 in 2017 and enhancing opportunities to raise awareness of the parks special heritage.'⁴⁰

Other recent interventions outside the project include a fleet of new rowing boats and a second hand life boat in use as a ferry boat; a water and sand play area near the small boating lake funded by WREN with a new tea room in the former aviary; and a new cycle path to Barton Hall park which connects to the county network of cycle paths.⁴¹ New attractions were added to extend the season including indoor play, timber clad towers supporting the 'Rush' zipwire; the timber clad 'Snakes and Ladders' building and adjacent tree top walk.

In c2015 Oliver Wicksteed set out 'A Vision For the Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park'.

In accordance with this, in 2017-18 work to much of the Pavilion and precinct area was undertaken including:

- Opening up the area around the original concrete cottages and creation of a central landscaped Piazza ('the Octagon').
- Repairs and conversion of the cottages to create an archive/volunteer building, an ice cream parlour and a 'worker's cottage' and a new learning space.
- Internal remodelling of the Pavilion, including a new single storey extension at ground floor, to create a new visitor hub and new lift and stairs.
- Landscaping and new car parking provision with some areas returned to parkland.
- Reopening historic views.
- Resurfacing and landscaping the 'precinct' with retention of kiosks, keeping their original character and purpose.
- A large 'clip n climb' barn was erected near the Coronation Hall, and an improved operational/maintenance area created just beyond the line of Lombardy poplars adjacent to the camping field in Area M, recreation park.
- The reconstruction of the boathouse, which was burnt down in 2016, was planned, but later put on hold.

The HLF @Play project, (2020 -22) included other elements of the Historic Heart Project, including:

- Reinstating the Fountain Terrace with restored fountain basin and rebuilding the retaining wall.
- Creation of a Heritage Play Area, featuring original or replica Wicksteed play equipment.
- Restoration of the upper floor of the Pavilion (the Captain's Lounge) as a Learning Centre but with provision for other potential uses to ensure the possibility of a multi-use function, including reopening the external verandah.
- A new Activity Plan programme building on educational and community work.
- New staff posts, training, an expanded volunteer programme, enhanced archive project.
- Due to the difficult circumstances, the planned work to the Rose Garden and steps was omitted.

Other work since 2018 includes:

- Changes to parking and access with number plate recognition and pay on access which reduces queues; removal of parking south of the Pavilion with construction of a turfed 'squareabout' and coach drop off point.
- Pedestrian bridge to Arena (Thrill Zone) and go karts removed, providing level access and new Galaxy Invaders ride added; redecoration.
- Mini landrovers added to sycamore circle.
- Coronation Hall converted to include Wicky's theatre, using reclaimed theatre seats, replacing Laserquest.
- March 2021 elevated monorail/pedal cars around paddle boat pool removed.⁴²
- Phase 2 of holiday lodges east of the river.
- Meerkat Manor constructed, with the majority of the work completed inhouse by staff and park volunteers in fairground (current Adventure Zone), opened April 2021.⁴³
- General tidying, decluttering and redecoration to improve aesthetics.
- Construction of Wicky's animal barn in fairground (current Adventure Zone) opened April 2022.
- Modern play equipment installed in playground opened April 2022.

Plans in 2022 include:

- Clip n climb closed and building will house a pirate themed restaurant, providing undercover seating.
- Removal of Zip wire and towers (2022) and Oak Tree café and potential reintroduction of Pirate Ship ride.
- Chapel and lakeside toilets awaiting refurbishment.
- Retirement village development plans to be submitted for planning permission.
- Queen's Green Canopy planting in the former Paradise Spinney and along the campsite hedgerow
- Hoarding on west lake bank to be removed and lakeshore cafe to be rebuilt to take better advantage of lake views.

The most significant change will be the construction of the planned retirement village in the south of the park. The area (M, Outer recreation park) is relatively little used and is outside the registered park. It had previously been a golf course from the 1930s, used for rallies, barbecues and football. Part is currently the lower part of the camping field. Announced in April 2021, Wicksteed Charitable Trust entered a partnership with Northamptonshire-based retirement living provider New Chapter Villages. Crucially the charity will retain ownership of the land and it is hoped that the scheme will provide a much needed, sustainable annual income for the park.⁴⁴

40 Lakes Restoration Project Evaluation Report 2017

41 Oliver Wicksteed 'A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park' 2015

42 <https://www.northantstelegraph.co.uk/news/people/end-of-the-line-for-kettering-attraction-as-wicksteed-park-monorail-is-removed-3167818>

43 <https://wicksteedpark.org/new-meerkat-enclosure-at-wicksteed-park>

44 <https://wicksteedpark.org/wicksteed-charitable-trust-retirement-living/>



Early exercise equipment, Wicksteed archive



The beginning of the park: Aerial view 1926, showing bungalows in octagonal hedged enclosure, original theatre, first stage of pavilion and Rose Garden and circular clumps of trees (one survives), reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

2.2 Site chronology

Extracted from the Wicksteed Story plus some additional research

Pre medieval

Several prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon sites are noted in Barton Seagrave and Wicksteed Park by RCHME (1979) and on Northamptonshire's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). An early-middle Saxon settlement may have existed close to the south-west corner of Wicksteed Park, where a placename (Sharlecotes) of this era is recorded on the NSMR (ref 7424).⁴⁵

Medieval period

- 1086 Barton (Bertone) is mentioned in Domesday Book Bertone: Robert from Bishop of Coutances. 2 mills.
- C13 The Barton manor was divided into two (Seagrave and Hanred); two medieval mottes and other features in 'Castle Field'; one probably contained one of the manor houses. (NSMR 3777/2/1 and associated numbers) Other earthworks in the field comprise fishponds, watercourses, and remnants of the medieval village.
- 1433 The old manor house in Castle Field is last mentioned as inhabited.⁴⁶

Post medieval

- early C17 Barton Seagrave parish enclosure of medieval fields began
- 1793-4 Humphry Repton's Red Book for Barton Seagrave Hall includes a view showing the 'before' and 'after' view to the west with the thinning of avenues to widen the view over the Ise, including the fields of Wicksteed Park. Repton's proposals partly implemented.
- 1804 Kettering open fields enclosed by Act of Parliament leaving a more open landscape than in Barton, with less developed hedgerows and fewer spinneys. Paradise spinney (unnamed) shown on site of Wicksteed Park on 1804 enclosure map. Paradise Lodge was a farm to the north-west of the spinney (1885-7 OS). Paradise spinney (south west of current main lake) shown as copse with small pond, believed to be an old gravel working.

Wicksteed history

- 1847 Charles Wicksteed born in Leeds, seventh son of a Unitarian Minister
- 1868 Started steam ploughing and set up on his own, aged 21
- 1871 First visited Kettering having walked from Bedford
- 1884 Daughter Hilda M. Wicksteed born
- 1876 Founded Charles Wicksteed & Co. Engineers
- 1887 Wicksteed's attempt to found the People's Park in Kettering, for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (see opposite)
- 1898 The Wicksteed family move from 24 London Road to Bryn Hafod, a house commissioned by Charles
- 1911 Bought a large plot of land - Barton Hall estate (not the Hall)
Made first layouts of plans for a Park Estate (see following page). Charles' wife dies
- 1914-16 Plantations cleared and 3000 roots and stumps removed. Sites for playing-grounds, terraces and sports pitches levelled
- 1916 Wicksteed Village Trust formed
- 1917 First playground equipment erected
Sandpit built, more playground equipment erected. Lodge built
Tea Pavilion built in top field (burnt down c2004)
- 1919 First recorded Trustees meeting, Round Shelter built in free playground, lake opened at Whitsun; Jerry the dog is adopted as a puppy
Official opening of the park, the Clocktower donated by Clubmen of Kettering
Girl Guides rally at Wicksteed Park on 28th May, organised by Hilda as District Commissioner. Start of 30 acre lake excavation and stream diversion. Work continued for 2 years
- c1920 Boat house and wet dock constructed by 1930

⁴⁵ Barton Seagrave Conservation Statement

⁴⁶ Barton Seagrave Conservation Statement



Plan 9: 1926-7 overlay showing early development of the park

- 1920/21 12 Spinney Lane bungalows built. Pre-cast concrete bungalows provided for park staff.
- 1921 Lake opened to the public at Whitsuntide. Official opening of the park on Saturday 14th May, the 5 faced clock with a now rare Pulsematic system was donated by Clubmen of Kettering Paradise Lane bungalows built (not on 1926 OS)
- 1922 First part of main Pavilion started and the concrete cottages Theatre built to Gotch design for concert parties (originally stood near Coronation Hall, then moved to near Pony Field; demolished c 1999)
- 1923 First part of main Pavilion completed (originally the first floor was an open veranda for customers to take tea and enjoy the view, later enclosed as a restaurant)
- 1924 First part of Rose Gardens constructed
- 1925 Continuation of Rose Gardens
- 1926 Water chute designed and built, bandstand and fountain built
- 1927 Pavilion North Room built
- 1928/9 Barton Hall purchased for £6000
Lakeside bungalows designed and built
- 1930 Hilda Wicksteed's *Jerry and Grandpa* published, cycle track opened
- 1931 Charles Wicksteed dies 19th March, aged 83.
Hilda becomes Chairman of Wicksteed Village Trust
Main toilet block built

Wicksteed Park Ltd

- 1931 The railway is opened at Whitsun. Main toilet block is built and opened
- 1932 The golf course is completed
- 1933 The railway tunnel and Toy/Souvenir shop is completed (replaced 1938)
The Aviary and Monkey House built
Hilda's *Charles Wicksteed* published
- 1934 Bread and butter machine built (?) 3600 slices an hour
The Trust decided to discontinue the annual flower show as it made a loss. The dog show continued, although it made a greater loss
Plans to wider Town Gates (not executed)
Unimplemented plans to realign Barton Road further north (undated)
- 1935 The Pavilion South Room, the Motorboat House and the Lakeside Boathouse Toilet block completed. Upper dining room created on the 'garden floor' with the large opening in the roof enclosed with a new 'top hat' section of roof and clerestorey windows.
Toy/Souvenir shop enlarged, the Ice Cream plant in the extension to the North Room and Parlour extension
- 1936 New humped - back bridge over the lake, paddle boat pool enlarged and lakeside round shelter built
- 1937 Rowing club house below cycle track (since relocated), Pavilion shelter on North end and West side built
Drawing for new entrance gates with statues on Barton Road
- 1938 Central Ticket Office and Larger Souvenir Shop built
- 1939 Water chute rebuilt
- 1939-45 Wartime. Pavilion occupied by Military - U.K. and U.S.A., including Quartermaster Company with Bakery Company, so park only opened partially to the Public
- 1940 Hilda gives up her Chairmanship to Thomas Wallis, but is occasionally Chair in his absence.
- 1946 Lake backwater cutting began (spillway) including a lock system to manage the water levels around the Water Chute
- 1947 Mayflower drinking fountain (near reception) donated by the U.S.A. Forces as 'Thank You' for hospitality during the war, designed by John Brandon-Jones. Changing rooms altered, lily pond is filled and the park entrance is altered
- 1948 Paddling pools concreted, refurbished, paved, walled etc.
- 1950 Hilda dies and Robert Wicksteed takes over as Chair. Pool filter house and plant installed
- c1950 Extension to what became museum building in Octagon 1950s; used as stores, garage and

shed Barton Seagrave Hall used as residential home until 2002

1950s Pavilion extended significantly. Ballroom extended to provide a large function suite at lower ground level, opening onto the garden area. The second floor belvedere was enclosed with a perimeter screen of glass and timber, concealing the balustrade. 1951 Brick piers to entrance gates as Hilda M. Wicksteed Memorial Gates (current main entrance) Hilda bequeathed the copyright of her books to the Trust. Changing rooms for cyclists and runners to be built in memory of her

Cycle track constructed

1952-4 Coronation Hall built to be a 750 seater cinema (later converted to Central Stores and Workshops plus 2011 it was converted to the venue for Laser Quest activities)

1953 Pony Hut and the Arena built

1954 Lakeside Drying rooms and ladies toilets built

Layout of parking in A6 field and bus parking in 'longabout' inside entrance

1955 Mini cars and Ticket Office built, Ice cream factory built

1956 Pets corner opened

1958 Ice cream factory cold store extension

New larger Golf course

South Park toilet block built (with Charles Wicksteed weather vane)

1960 Wicksteed playground equipment business sold to Wicksteed Leisure

1960s Fishing lake created

Main gate security/operations office built

1962 Lake dredged

1963 Pavilion, North Room new entrance foyer and toilet block built

1963 New Golf Club and changing rooms block.

1967 Fountain shown in swimming pool by lake

1969 New Administration/Head Office building built

c1970 Carousel cafe canopy built.

1970 Swimming pool closed due to the excessive running cost and maintenance

1971 Bumper car building (later Roller Skates/slot machines)

1971 Arboretum commenced

1972 St. George's suite, Mal Maison, Kitchen block added to Pavilion

New East Front to Pavilion with series of gabled roofs; this required reduction in fountain basin on Fountain Lawn

1978 Skate board area (top of Area D above Arena, now gone) and Model world building

Considerable additions of large pieces of equipment: including Pirate Ship, Roller Coaster, Cine 2000, Paratrooper, 'Duck' Amphibian, Petrol cars on resurfaced cycle track, Bumper Boats

1980s Bandstand demolished and the base redesigned as a balustrade in brick and precast balusters. Rose towers removed from Rose Garden

1987 Water garden outside Main Office Building, golf course reopened, landscaped Mayflower area, re-laid much of the Railway track, started repairing the lake banks.

Widened and resurfaced the Beech Avenue, completely new free playground with safety surface (the playground underwent a major overhaul with equipment and new safety surfacing being provided by Wicksteed Leisure), continue railway track relaying and concreting of lake banks

1988 Continue railway track relaying and concreting of lake banks, Hall of Mirrors created

1989 Continue railway track relaying and concreting of lake banks, Cups and Saucers and Nautic Jets installed, Hexagon food outlet built, canal - type motor boat (Kingfisher) purchased

1990 Monorail installed, skateboard area levelled, continue railway track relaying and concreting of lake banks

1991 Continue refurbishment of Pavilion internally, continue railway track relaying and concreting of lake banks, new larger Roller coaster

1992 Upgrade catering areas, extensive Pavilion roof repairs, track laying finished continue with concreting of lake banks

1993 Main toilet block rebuilt internally, lake banks completed

2000 Main entrance altered, bog garden created at edge of lake, refurbished carriages on train to take wheelchairs, demolished swimming pool and small sandpit, planted many new trees after removal of rotten poplar avenue between the railway station and the lakeside area, Education Pack designed for schools, nature trail refurbished

2001 Complete renovation to both the Free Playground using Danish manufacturer Hag (costing £250,000) and the Pavilion.

2001 Bistro opened, new simulator added, new Swanboats and Swan Cruiser, new splashing seal ride, landtrain introduced, the 'Wicky Bear Show'

2002 Vintage carousel installed on trial basis, waterchute refurbished to original specifications, first outdoor summer concert held, more free playground equipment added and outdoor stage built.

Barton Seagrave Hall ceased to be used as residential home

2003 Park is runner up in the 'Northamptonshire Business of the Year' Award.

The Chairman of the Trust, Robert Wicksteed, dies at the age of 82.

2004 The Aviary and the Model boating pond are fully refurbished the latter funded by a grant from 'Living Spaces'. Wicksteed Model Boating Club reformed.

New train carriages are introduced and heavier track is laid. Many improvements are made to aid access for disabled people.

2005 Tea Pavilion burnt down, new gift shop is added into the Pavilion building, demolition of the old Arena brick bridge and the construction of the new wooden Arena bridge to improve access. "Mr. Wicksteed's Veteran Cars", and the Putting Green created.

2006 The golf course is closed due to falling demand and the whole area opened up for general public use as a BBQ area and dog exercise area. New higher boundary fence. New rides, games and events in Pavilion. The Mayflower garden is completely re-themed. 90th Anniversary of the Wicksteed Trust celebrated with the unveiling of a sculpture. Baguette Shop added.

2007 Pirate Ships rebranded. The park has its first 'Bastille Day' where the whole park (including the signage) turns French. 3000 school children come and experience life in France for a day. A new electronic barrier is erected at the exit point to enhance security. New seating area is created by the Aviaries near the lake. New Cornish Pasty Shop and the French Crepe stall.

2008 Rocky River Falls, other rides and ride photography added. The lakeside dock is redesigned and rebuilt and a new fleet of rowing boats is chosen to be introduced over a period of four years.

2009 New rides (Cups and Saucers) shows and circus.

2010 New campsite amenities block opened 28th May. New locomotive, Merlin, purchased and introduced in June. The Robert Bros. Famous Circus for the whole summer season.

2011 The synthetic ice rink, Magic Ice added, Lazer Xtreme moved from the dome to Wicky's Cave (Coronation Hall). Refurbished Clown coaster added to the Fairground area.

2012 The Pavilion interior was fully refurbished. Many original features were restored and many recent additions removed.

Conservation Management Plan for the park

A masterplan for the entire estate developed to inform all future plans.

A successful HLF bid gained £1m towards the £3m lake restoration project.

2013 Activity Plan written.

Lake restoration works commence with the removal of 50,000 cubic metres of silt from the lake. Community link manager appointed to manage volunteers, the archive and activity plans. Unnecessary signage removed from public areas. Park entrance tidied and opened up by the removal of hedging, flagpoles and security building, as recommended in CMP.

Re established relationship between the playground equipment manufacturer and the park.

2014 New lake water control systems added together with paths and a boardwalk around the lake. A floating pontoon and new reed beds were created together with a new bridge into the extended arboretum. A restored beach, roundhouse restored and paddling area were created with a grass amphitheatre and performance space.



New accessible path round the lake, July 2018



Repainted Pavilion appearing between concrete cottages, October 2018



'Rocky' the rocking horse, rescued in 2017



- A triple zip wire ('Rush') with climbing wall and 'leap of faith' opened with two refurbished cafes.
 Pay on exit parking system added. New entrance planting.
 Changes to the snakes and ladders slide including fully enclosing the building. The new Play Factory takes shape providing indoor soft play for under 5s
 Concrete walls near entrance replaced with local stone.
 The Pavilion tower restored
 Monorail refurbished
- 2015 A new sand and waterplay zone, co-funded by the Wren Trust, created on the aviary site with the existing central building converted into a café.
 Astroslide converted into covered triple activity area including drop slide.
 Arcade building converted into indoor play celebrating Charles Wicksteed's inventions.
 Fountain from original entrance restored and relocated at modern entrance to the park
 Bronze statues of two children in the paddling area
 Accessible pathway laid around the lake
 A new cycle path completed to allow cyclists to enjoy the Barton Hall parkland
 A second hand life boat been converted into a ferry boat
 Town entrance purchased by Wicksteed Trust
 Woolloomooloo aviary with 60 species of birds moved to the geodesic dome to replace the ice rink
- 2016 Wicksteed Charitable Trust celebrated its 100th anniversary with a ball
 Tree Top Walk opened and the arrival of sheep, goats and meerkats
 The timber boathouse was burnt down following an electrical fault on 15th October
 Water chute of 1926 listed Grade II
 The Pirate Ship ride replaced with carousel
 Indoor play area created
 Meerkat area and goats added
 Carousel cafe refurbished
 Sycamore circle ropes area for younger children
 "Pulsematic" clocks presented to Charles Wicksteed by the people of Kettering in 1921 restored by a local volunteer
- 2017 Gardeners compound moved to new maintenance area near Golf House with polytunnels and waste management
 The plastic corrugated roof outside the Ideas café removed
 New surfaced car park in top field
 'Rocky', a 70 year old Wicksteed playground rocking horse rescued, restored and installed.⁴⁷
 The new Sway Rider was installed; Shetland ponies and alpacas were introduced to the site; two wooden replica slides installed
- 2018 January, work starts on £4.5m Historic Heart Project including restoration of the concrete workers' cottages, Octagon area opened up with views to Pavilion, creation of Octagon Gardens, refurbishment of the pavilion reception and development of a new creative learning space. Precinct opened up and resurfaced, toilets and shops refurbished
 Clip n Climb building constructed
- 2019 May, Kettering Civic Society awarded its annual Rose Bowl environmental improvement award to Wicksteed Park, for its Historic Heart project
 Pavilion clock restored
 In June Wicksteed Park awarded £1.78 million grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for its @Play project and celebrated the completion of the Historic Heart project funded by Wicksteed Charitable Trust
 New Wicksteed Witch's Hat ride installed
 Clip n Climb and the New Wicky's Mini Rangers opened
 First first television advertising campaign

⁴⁷ Wicksteed blog and <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2017-09-14/countrys-oldest-playground-rocking-horse-returns-home>

- 2020 Soap Box Derby in its fifth year
Wicksteed Park awarded the Sandford Award for its heritage education programme
In March the park closed its attractions until further notice following the latest government advice on the coronavirus outbreak.
April, global appeal launched to recreate the World's first children's playground
Wicksteed Park Ltd goes into receivership and is replaced by Wicksteed Trading Ltd.
In June the Trust launched a fundraising appeal in a bid to save the park in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2021 Coronation Hall part converted to small theatre
April, Wicksteed Trust announced a partnership with New Chapter Villages for retirement village in south of park.
Elevated monorail removed; new Meerkat Manor enclosure created; 1956 toy roundabout restored by Wicksteed Volunteers; August, arrival of Galaxy invaders in the Thrill Zone
- 2022 New Animal Barn built open Easter 2022

3.0 CURRENT CONDITION

3.1 General condition of the landscape

Summary in 2022

Extraordinary progress has been made in the last twelve years with striking improvements to many of the most significant aspects of the park, all the more impressive given the impact of the pandemic. The centre of the park looks well cared for and uncluttered: the Pavilion is now a fitting focus for the park, set within high quality gardens and hard landscape which extends to the revived bungalows and heritage playground; access around the lake is a great success, views reopened and parking better controlled. Many priorities have been met, as reflected in the issues and policies sections below, although challenges remain, both in maintaining the park, its infrastructure and structures and balancing the care of the heritage with the imperative for revenue.

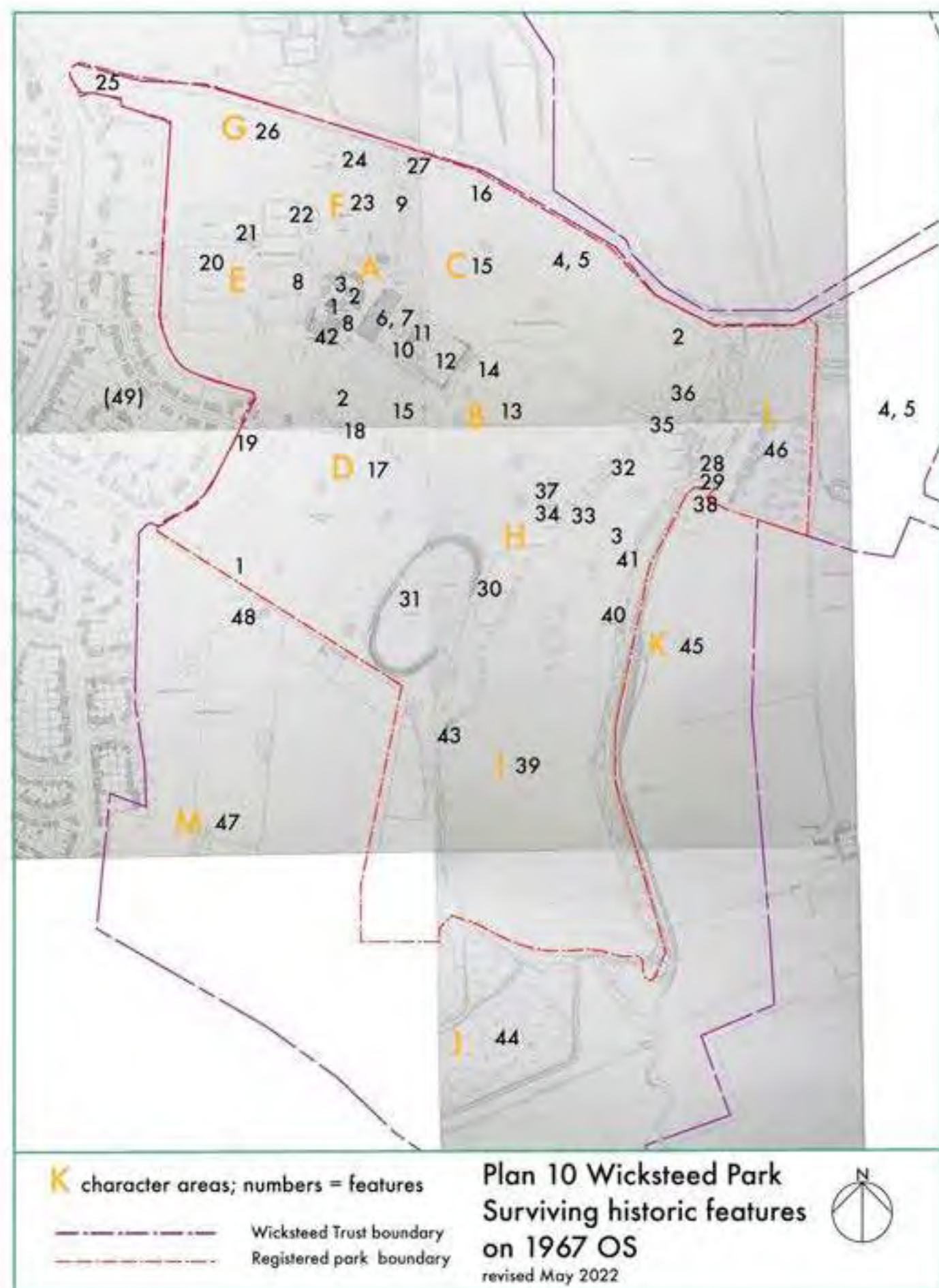
In summary, the overall layout and extent of the park as laid out in the early twentieth century survives, but in the later twentieth century its character and diversity of experience had changed from predominantly a countryside experience with an emphasis on play, recreation and well being for a range of visitors to that of a theme park attraction within a country park. It was struggling with its identity and to maintain standards, undertaking a range of new ventures with variable success. By 2018 this had been partly reversed with work which has focussed on the distinctive qualities created by Charles Wicksteed and more progress has been achieved by 2022. There has been an increase in opportunities for adventurous play, particularly in relation to the Lakes project, and the Historic Heart project is breathing new life into the historic core around the Pavilion and celebrates the park's special place in the development of play and recreation. Other plans under consideration in 2018 have been largely completed: activities and street furniture which reflect the heritage of the park; development of adventurous play and introduction of animals; improvement to the entrance to the funfair/playground area; further work to the Pavilion; new products building on the Wicksteed brand.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, there is still a need to generate income and the need to compete with the increasing range of 'attractions' available to young people. In the past this tended to reduce the impact of the unique historic origins and ethos of the park and eroded the site's distinctive character. However, with the Lakes project, the adoption of a masterplan and the Historic Heart and @Play projects, the balance is changing and the overall impression of a country park designed a hundred years ago by an innovative engineer for adventurous family play is returning.

Despite frequent change, a great many historic features remain, and the majority of these, and certainly the most significant, derive from the early years of the park. See the plan of surviving historic features (below). Thus, although some of the design is altered or overlaid with later features, the landscape still belongs firmly to its origins as laid out by Charles Wicksteed. Major progress has been made with achieving the ambitions set out in the masterplan and policies in the 2012 CMP and more work is underway.

The park now has a 10 year Management and Maintenance Plan updated in 2019 and undergoing a further update in 2022. Maintenance standards are generally high, although there were strains during the pandemic, and the historic character is being reinforced. Management of the new Wicksteed Trading Ltd is being established in 2022 and some specialist park management expertise will further enhance the quality of the park.

⁴⁸ Ian Bartlett presentation on the future of Wicksteed Park, 2018



The surviving historic features of the park are shown on the plan opposite

Features pre-dating the park

- 1 Field pattern and hedgerows (post 1804 enclosure)
- 2 Trees pre 1911
- 3 Ise valley
- 4 Setting and views of Barton Seagrave village and Castle Field post medieval
- 5 Setting and views of Barton Seagrave Hall eighteenth century, Repton landscape

Features from the early Twentieth century- Charles Wicksteed's work and park hey day

- 6 Clocktower 1921
- 7 Main Pavilion from 1923 with later additions; repaired 2020-21
- 8 Original cottages and kiosks from early 1920s; repaired 2019
- 9 Fountain basin moved here from near Lodge
- 10 Terrace 'Fountain Lawn' and base of bandstand 1926
- 11 Fountain basin 1926
- 12 Rose Garden 1924
- 13 Core park (Area B) 1919
- 14 Railway and station 1931 including the 2 locos King Arthur and Lady of the Lake (1931)
- 15 Ornamental park (Area C)- north 1919
- 16 WCs/store 1920s
- 17 Ornamental park- south (Area D) 1919
- 18 Chapel toilets 1960 with weathervane showing Wicksteed, a steam plough and Jerry, Charles' favourite dog
- 19 Pony field and sycamore avenue, with some tree losses
- 20 Recreation park (Area E) 1919
- 21 Site of the tea Pavilion 1918 (burnt down 2005)
- 22 Putting green by 1950
- 23 Playground from 1917; original Wicksteed equipment reintroduced 2021-2
- 24 Round shelter 1924 partly rebuilt in brick late 1970s / early 1980s, repaired 2020
- 25 Lodge and gates, drinking fountain in boundary and hedged garden, original site of fountain 1918 (lodge in private ownership, fountain moved to Area A outside Visitor Centre, now in entrance area)
- 26 Beech avenue 1918 with tree losses
- 27 Main gates by 1943
- 28 Site of boathouses burnt down 2016
- 29 Water chute 1926
- 30 Model yacht pond by 1926
- 31 Cycle track and arena 1930- part removed 2021
- 32 Paddling pool/sandpit 1930s
- 33 Bathing pool, repaired as paddling area 2015
- 34 Round shelter-lakeside 1936 repaired 2015
- 35 Bridge 1936
- 36 Paddle boat pool/Boating pond 1936
- 37 Pool filter house 1950
- 38 Lakeside drying rooms 1954
- 39 Main lake from 1919
- 40 Boathouse 1937 (former rowing club relocated)
- 41 Tunnel 1933
- 42 Coronation Hall 1952; Ice Cream Factory 1950s
- 43 Lakeside swimming area recreated 2015

Later twentieth/early twenty-first century

- 44 Fishing lake 1960s
- 45 Arboretum 1971
- 46 Lodge area 1930/2009
- 47 Recreation park 1920s camping from 2006 (Area M)
- 48 Golf house 1963

Off site

- 49 Paradise Lane/Spinney Lane bungalows 1921 (off site)



Lost historic features see plan opposite

- 50 Tea Pavilion (1918) burnt down 2005; the site was then cleared and became the compactor site; changes underway to create Wicky's barn (2022)
- 51 Gotch designed theatre (1922) moved and demolished c1999
- 52 Lakeside bungalows (1930); now lodge site
- 53 The original Wicksteed equipment was replaced on a rolling programme between 1917 and 1988 when the entire playground was replaced with more modern Wicksteed equipment. The majority of this Wicksteed equipment was then replaced in 2001 with Hags equipment; work in 2022 to reintroduce original equipment
- 54 Paddling pool filled in and turned into sandpit late 1990s
- 55 Lily ponds
- 56 Paradise spinney; partial replanting planned 2022/3
- 57 Aviary- now sand and water play and cafe
- 58 Boathouse destroyed by fire 2016
- 59 One cottage (much altered) demolished

3.2 Aspects of the site as a whole

3.2.1 Views and connections

See views plan below and refer to 'then and now' comparative photographs in Gazetteer view 1: gazetteer 10; view 2: gazetteer 10; view 3: gazetteer 12; view 4: gazetteer 36; view 5: gazetteer 36; view 6a: gazetteer 39; view 6b: gazetteer 32; view 7: gazetteer 17; view 8 gazetteer 3-5.

Views within and beyond the site as well as views into the site are one of the most important aspects of the overall landscape structure. Comparison of archive illustrations and photographs with the current views has helped identify key views. Other views have been derived from an analysis of the site and historic documents. Views may be desirable views, views which are to be maintained or are lost views, as well as intrusive views due to development within or outside the site.

When the park was laid out the site was very open, but planting soon began to define views, such as along the entrance avenue, but additional planting, tree and plant growth have tended to obscure some important connections over time. New buildings have also impacted on views within the site and the park has also been affected by intrusive views in its setting, with a change from rural to predominantly urban setting over the last 100 years (see plans 13 and 14 below).

In summary in 2012:

- Important long views to the lake were largely obscured by vegetation and structures
- Some structures within the park, commercial development to the south and residential development to the east impacted adversely on views
- Views across and into the park were affected by extensive car parking
- The park forms the setting of Barton Seagrave Hall and features in an important Repton view

Since 2012, there have been significant positive changes. Clearance of overgrown trees in the Rose Garden and around the lake has revealed connections between the Pavilion, gardens, lake and parkland; parking in some parkland areas has been restricted; much of the clutter in the entrance area and overgrown hedge have been removed and replanted. However new housing has been built east of the lake, impacting on views to a minor extent, the 'Rush' zipwire affects the connection between the park and Barton Hall, but is due to be removed (2022) and more could be made of visual connections to Barton Seagrave, Barton Hall and Castle Field.



Plan 12: views analysis

Views are shown on the plan opposite and the most important are summarised in the table below

Significance: A High significance B Moderate significance C Low significance D Damages the historic character

Condition: 1 Good 2 Fair 3 Poor 4 Obscured but recoverable 5 Lost

View no	CA see plan 15	View point (from)	Direction & Subject of view (to)	View date	Sign ifica nce	Cond ition	Comments/Issues
1	A, D	North of terrace	South over Fountain Lawn to parkland	1920s	B	2/4	Tree growth inevitably obscures long views, but lake views recently reopened; needs ongoing management; poplars and industrial buildings intrusive
2	A, B, I	Pavilion	South east over Rose Garden to parkland and lake	1920s	A	1	Trees in Rose Garden felled allowing wider views and glimpses of lake and hedge in Fountain garden removed, opening the view; needs ongoing management
3	A, B, C	Terrace/ Fountain Lawn	East and south east towards Barton Seagrave, park and lake	1920s	A	1/2	Tree felling in Rose Garden increased view and removal of hedge in Fountain garden has increased visibility
4,5	C,H,I	North of lake, from railway	South over boating pool to lake	1930s	A	2	Altered by changes to bridge but improved by removal of pedal cars; loss of boathouses; barrier removed since 2012
6	H, I	West coast of lake	North east towards bridge and boathouses	1930s	B	2/4	In 2018/22 part obscured by hoardings, due to be removed;boathouse lost but area cleared; removal of flat bridge improves view of bridge
7	A,B,D	Lawns south of Pavilion	North east to Pavilion,over Fountain Lawn and park	1920s	A	2	Altered by additions to Pavilion and loss of important tree; but unsightly café canopy removed; removal of parking and work to Fountain Lawn have improved view; trees needed; fountain pump house intrusive
8	C	Barton Hall and Barton Road	West south west to park, Pavilion and vice versa	C1800, altered 1920s	A	2/4	Some impact from 'Rush' zipwire but this is due to be removed, improved by reduction in parking; hedges along road block views
9	G,C	Town approach	East along avenue over park	1920s	A	2/4	Improvements to park entrance, but still interrupted by barrier across avenue and parking and hardstanding in park area C; loss of avenue trees; only used as vehicle exit
10	A,C	Current entrance	South towards Pavilion	1940s	B	2/4	Altered by new features, but much clutter cleared since 2012; park and Pavilion more visible but 'Rush' tower prominent, pending removal
11	A,C,G	North entrance to precinct	South to Pavilion and precinct	1920s	A	1/2	Major improvements to precinct since 2012
12	A, B, H, I	East bank of lake	West, north west to Pavilion	1920s	B	2	Reopened by recent work; structures in view
13	A, B, H, I	South bank of lake	North to Pavilion	1920s	A	2/4	Seating/reflection area at south of lake, views at risk of reed growth
14	M	North end Sycamore avenue	South to field and south east over park	1920s	B	2	Avenue needs replanting and protection from cars; impact of future development to be mitigated

View 3 comparative images



Left: Postcard of view over Rose Garden (formerly known as Sunk Gardens) towards Barton Seagrave, Right: Postcard of similar and earlier view south east over Rose Garden reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Left: Similar view in 2018 Right: View 3 in 2018 had been opened up since 2012



View 3 in 2022 further opened and more visible with removal of hedge on Fountain Lawn; in distant view hoarding on lake edge to be removed and lakeshore cafe upgraded

View 9 comparative images



Avenue looking east, 2011 and (right) 2018



From east end of avenue looking east, showing barriers, security vehicle and parking, 2011



From east end of avenue looking east to entrance area, showing new exit barriers and redesign, loss of beech tree on island, 2018



A similar view in 2022 showing further decluttering and planting on island. Area of parkland in far view could be further improved; zipwire due to be removed

View 10 comparative images



Main gates from brochure, mid twentieth century Wicksteed Archive



Entrance in 2011



Entrance in 2018 showing removal of hedge, security hut and parking, addition of 'Rush' tower



View from main entrance, 2011

A similar view, 2018.
Below: further removal of barriers and clutter, 2022, parking signs added

View 11 comparative images



Rear of pavilion and shops 1956-7, Wicksteed archive.



Right: a similar view, in poor cluttered condition in 2011



A greatly improved view in October 2018 showing redesign of Pavilion front, new seats, lamps and surfaces



A similar view in February 2022, after completion of works to Pavilion entrance and Captain's Lounge with veranda reopened: a great improvement since 2011



**Plan 13:
Setting in
1927**

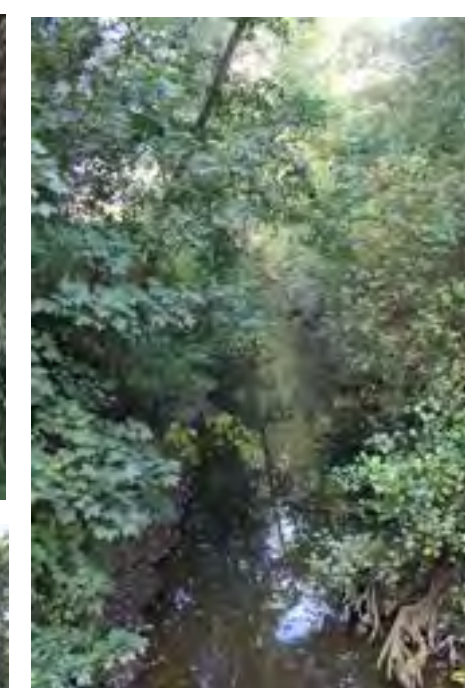
**Below: Plan 14
(left) setting in
2022 and
(right) 2010
showing recent
urbanisation**



3.2.2 Water bodies

Water is a major element of the park, with its extensive lake, children's boating pool, model boat pool, fishing lake and river. Water facilitates a great range of activities- a variety of boats, sea cadets, paddling, informal swimming, model boating, the water chute and fishing. The lakes were extensively surveyed prior to and as part of the Lakes project. In 2012, visually the main lake suffered from isolation from the landscape setting and views due to growth of bankside vegetation, unsightly concrete lake banks, and extensive algae (blanket weed). In addition, when the lake was drained down for maintenance inspections over much of the winter, the lake became unsightly. The ecological interest of the main lake was severely affected by poor water quality, siltation, algae and lack of emergent plants. The greatest ecological interest is found in the fishing lake (Area J), a County Wildlife Site.

During the Lakes project major work was undertaken, including removing 50,000 cubic metres of silt, tree clearance, extensive marginal planting, repairing and regrading banks and creating beaches, installing a new boardwalk and pontoon and new water controls. The work has been seen as a great success, both in terms of aesthetics and function, with use of the area greatly increased. However there are some ongoing management issues, particularly the impact of Canada geese, incoming water quality and the need to manage vegetation, which are discussed in Sections 5 and 6 below. Water flows are now better controlled but flooding is still likely. The re routed and high banked river has become a hidden, overgrown, utilitarian feature which contributes little to the experience of the landscape. It is most visible around the waterchute which uses the river for the water chute boat splash; this area has hard banks, a bridge, a mix of fences and water controls.



*Top left: new bridge over the Ise leading to meadow and new housing beyond
Below left: the river used for the water chute
Above right: much of the Ise is overgrown and hidden
2018*



Plan 15: Heritage Trees 2022

showing the most significant trees.

Dotted circles: significant trees recently lost

3.2.3 Tree cover

The last full arboriculture report was by Lockhart Garratt Ltd (2007), which recorded 234 individual trees and 90 groups of trees. It concluded that:

- The tree and woodland resource is a key element of the park, providing significant interest and amenity with a diverse tree species mix, structure and age range.
- The resource may be broadly divided into open parkland areas and small semi-mature internal groups/woods.
- The trees and groups are currently under-managed and work should be guided by the production of a detailed management plan.
- The predominant genus of individual trees surveyed are ash, lime, beech, oak, chestnut, poplar and maple and these make up over 50% of the entire species range.
- The two most dominant tree genres on the drier ground are oak and beech including groups.
- A number of trees have bleeding canker (which affects horse chestnut, beech, lime and oak, the predominant species within the park) and a number of horse chestnuts are infested by Guinardia leaf blotch, which is becoming more common and recognised throughout the country.
- Due to the informal nature of car movement through the park there has been considerable soil compaction round the base of the trees and this continues in some areas. This will reduce useful life expectancy.

Steve Plumb also concluded that many of the significant trees within the park are now reaching maturity and there is a shortage of appropriate new planting.⁴⁹

The most common trees around the lake are alder and willow, many self sown.

Subsequent annual safety condition surveys and maintenance programmes have been prepared by RGS Tree Services. These surveys cover the whole Wicksteed Estate and are presented as three separate reports for Wicksteed Park, Barton Seagrave (covers Wicksteed Park Nature Reserve) and Castle Field and the Lodge Site. The surveys are cross referenced with the Lockhart Garratt Ltd system of numbering and referencing, which is used here. There has been no comprehensive update of the 2007 survey. It is of concern that the very few mature trees are in decline, with regular need for whole tree removal and significant crown reduction and no plan for considered replacement.

Significant trees to the history of the park (Gazetteer 2)

See Plan 15 opposite.

Some of the most significant trees were examined for the 2012 CMP and girths recorded to give an indication of age. This established that there are very few trees from the nineteenth century for this size of site and since then there have been further losses: this increases their rarity and value. Only approximately 10 trees shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1885-7 survived and sadly some have been lost in recent years; the oldest trees are old field boundary oaks and include the magnificent T185 (former oak tree takeaway) and trees 87 and 97 (north of park), all approximately 200 years old. Oak 51 was one of the most important trees in the park which featured in an old view towards the Fountain Lawn (cover of this CP and Gazetteer 17) and stood near the Bistro car park (now Ideas Cafe and 'squareabout'). It was already suffering decline in 2012 and has since been felled. Trees 113-115 surveyed in 2007 may be the remnants of Paradise spinney, an old planting, but only T115 survives as a mature tree.

Trees which survive from Charles Wicksteed's planting of 1926-7 include the beech avenue G1 and the circular group of sycamores G54 (south of Coronation Hall) which were planted in the 1920s, the sycamore avenue (south row shown on aerial photograph in 1953) and approximately 15 individual trees. Both avenues continue to suffer damage and losses and urgently need a strategy

⁴⁹ Steve Plumb 'An assessment of the landscape, recreation and ecology value of Wicksteed Park and Estate and opportunities for their enhancement' October 2007



Oak tree in upper field used for parking (Area E) and parking below oak 58 (2018)



T185 (Oak tree takeaway) and memorial tree with tributes (2018)



View of Fountain Lawn looking south, before conifers and other trees had grown. Souvenir guide c1927, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service

for conservation and replanting. Annual surveys 2010-2018 reveal regular work to trees in the beech avenue (16 recommendations) with a total of four trees felled in 2010, 2013 and 2016. In the following years more work was required to major deadwood and one tree near the town entrance was felled. The estimated safe life of the beeches which are approaching 200 years in age is c50 years, although beeches can, rarely, survive to 300 years old. These original trees are few in number and therefore of great interest to the history of the site. There have also been continuing losses in the sycamore avenue and major deadwood as well as storm damage to sycamores in the avenue and circle and several mature oaks. There are also disease issues, with many horse chestnuts affected by bleeding canker and six felled, some in prominent positions; *Meripilus giganteus* was present in the felled beech but not seen more widely. Many of the trees are still impacted by parking and ground compaction which will shorten their lives. In 2021 one Lombardy poplar near the lake needed to be felled as well as two cherries in an important group screening the maintenance area and near the retirement village site; a mature sycamore near the astroslide was in poor condition and work was needed to two mature oaks.

Mature and veteran trees within the survey area that have some bat roost potential were identified and have considerable biodiversity interest. 17 had high potential to support bats.⁵⁰

In 2012 the planting of inappropriate memorial trees had been identified as an issue; there had been recent planting of groups of ornamental trees as memorials, as noted below. These have plaques and tend to attract tributes; they did not follow any agreed planting plan; many are small ornamentals which are out of character with the parkland. The policy has now changed to enhance the historic character of the park: 'A native tree species, which reflects the heritage of the Park, will be selected and planted by the Park staff during the autumn/winter planting season... The location of the memorial tree will be identifiable by a number on a map of the Park. No plaque will be affixed to the tree. Instead, a short dedication will be recorded in the Reflections Register alongside the map number identifying the location of the tree within the Park'.⁵¹ However, flowers and tributes were still being placed near trees in 2022 and there is an urgent need for a planting plan for appropriate donations of trees; this should include reinforcements to important structural planting such as the avenues, the sycamore circle and mature park trees.

A memorial tree area has been established near the former Paradise Spinney by 2022 with a choice of beech lime and oak; oak is the most frequent choice but it would be good to include more beech, given the history of beech trees in this area. There are areas of willow nearby which need regular coppicing. The ranger also hopes to manage the strip of woodland east of the lake.

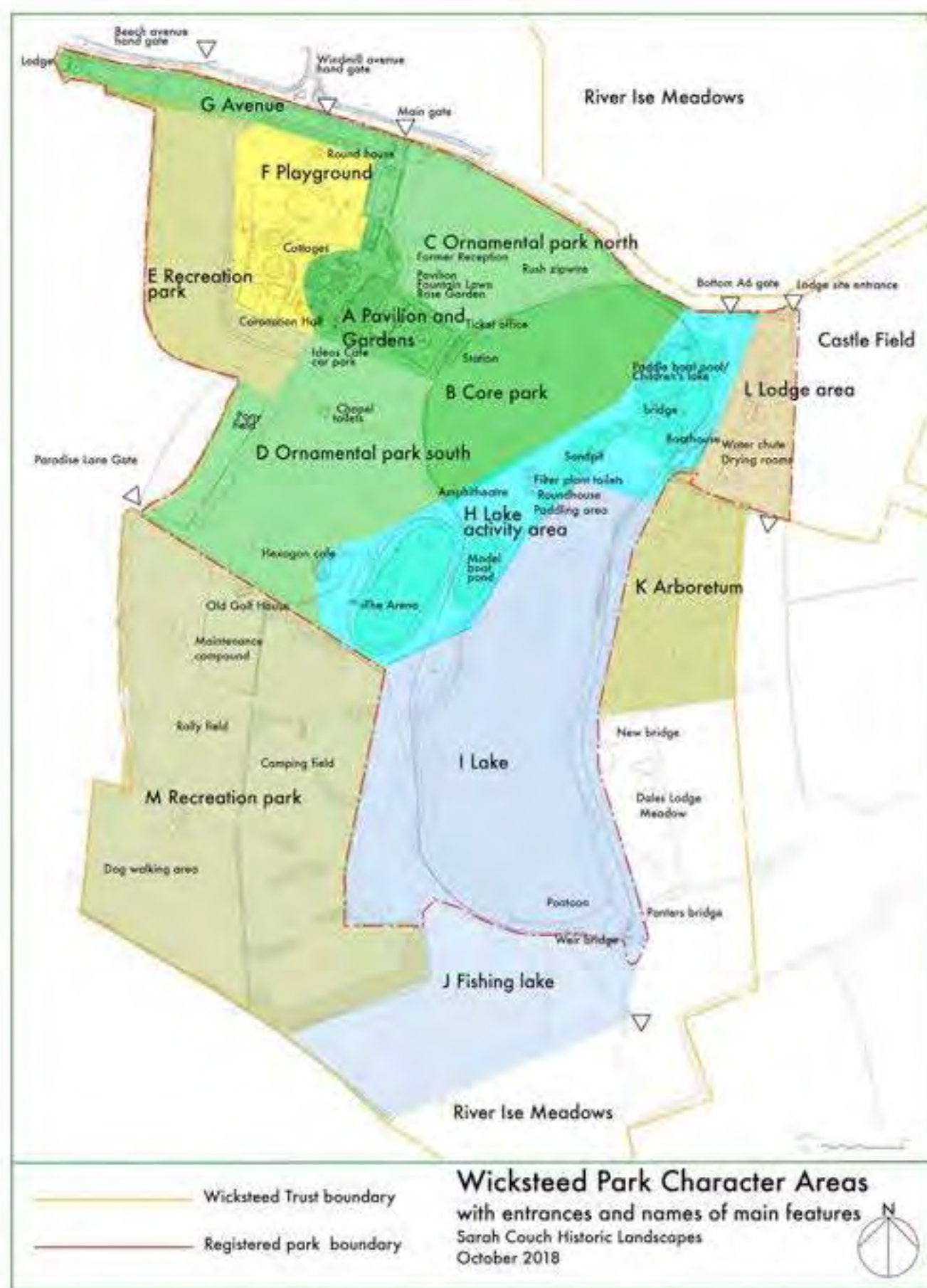
3.2.4 Grassland

A large proportion of Wicksteed Park is regularly mown, amenity grassland of low conservation interest. This is dominated by species-poor amenity grass mix of rye-grass and white clover (*Lolium perenne* and *Trifolium repens*) (white clover), with few other species occurring such as plantains. It is mown at least weekly during the summer. As a result in 2012 most of the main park had little ecological value. However, some areas of short mown grass near the lakes contain a more diverse flora and have potential for improvement. In recent years attempts to establish wild flower meadows near the Arena and along the railway track in areas C/B have not been successful in the long term, but further areas have been defined as wildflower meadows in the PMMP developed as a part of the Lakes project; management of areas around the lake has started and this was still work in progress in 2018.⁵² The programme had a setback during the pandemic and few wildflowers have established, although marsh orchids have appeared recently near the swimming beach. In 2022 the ranger has plans to develop more wet meadow areas west and south west of the lake. Management of the north meadow and the new south lse meadow will soon be the responsibility of the Trust, which will necessitate resources and equipment such as a flail collector.

⁵⁰ OHES 2011

⁵¹ Wicksteed Charitable Trust Memorials policy (from website August 2018)

⁵² Plumb 2007, OHES, 2011; PMMP 2017 update



Plan 16: Park Character Areas

3.3 Designed elements: condition by character area

See Gazetteer of images for further detail.

The site has been organised into character areas, as shown on the plan opposite, which relate to the historic design elements of the park and are used for descriptions of condition, issues and management options in the sections below. Current names are included as appropriate.

3.3.1 Area A Pavilion, 'precinct', terrace (Fountain Lawn) and Rose Garden

(Gazetteer 6-12)

Designed landscape character

The Pavilion was built between 1922-3 on the high point of the landscape as the focal point of the park, the arrival and orientation point, and provided a range of refreshment facilities; with its clocktower it became a distinguishing feature of the park. The north and south rooms and shelters were added 1927-35, providing ice creams, toys and fruit. More refined dining was provided by the upper dining room on the 'garden floor' with open verandah which looked out over the garden and park, later enclosed. To the east, the Pavilion opened onto the terrace or Fountain Lawn, with the fountain and bandstand added in 1926; people using the Pavilion looked over and spilled out onto the terrace. There were extensive views from the terrace over the Rose Garden and wider landscape and the early photographs show that these areas were very well used.

The Fountain Lawn was laid out as an ornamental setting to the Pavilion, with a large fountain basin, bedding displays and statues. Eight smaller ornamental fountains on pedestals surrounded the main basin, set in a gravel surround, and there was a series of planted urns. Either side of the open bandstand a wide coping on a low wall topped the steel and precast concrete retaining wall at the east edge. A low fence was later added to enclose the bandstand. Originally there were no railings; hoop top railings were probably added in the 1950s. Wicksteed benches were added; there were at least three kinds (Heavy cast iron, ornate cast iron and semi ornate wrought iron as shown in the Wicksteed catalogue). The ornate benches do not appear to have been used in other areas. Photographs also show people sitting on the low wall. The terrace was heavily used and the bandstand hosted concerts; it was demolished in the 1980s and the base redesigned as a balustrade in brick and precast balusters.

In 1924 Charles made a Rose Garden just below the Pavilion, as an enclosed and quiet place away from the hubbub, designed as a peaceful retreat for tired mothers to rest. There was no direct connection from the much busier Fountain Lawn, but it was accessed from two paths running down the slope from the Pavilion, with entrances in the centre of the hedges on either side. The hedged Rose Garden below the Pavilion featured distinctive rustic towers for climbing roses, clipped evergreens set in lawns, herbaceous borders and dwarf conifers in the outer beds, a hedge and shrubs on the bank below the retaining wall and bedding in the centre where the Charles Wicksteed memorial was added. It featured the more common heavy cast iron Wicksteed benches. There were views over the park.

The area west of the Pavilion became a street of shops and kiosks, in the manner of a funfair or seaside pier with Charles' concrete cottages in an octagonal hedged enclosure beyond. It became known as the precinct.

Current character and condition

The main elements survived but by 2012 the accretion of new buildings and accumulated changes had eroded the quality of the spaces and the connections between them. In 2018, major positive changes were underway and much has been completed in 2022, as detailed below. A rather sad and down at heel area has been transformed.



Above: Jerry statue flanked by figures from Hilda Wicksteed gates in Rose Garden and Ornae Wicksteed bench



Bandstand terrace (Gazetteer 10-11) and Fountain Lawn

To the east of the Pavilion; for the majority of visitors the former direct connection between the Pavilion and terrace has been lost, although those using the function room can open up doors onto the terrace. There is a road (which can be closed off) separating the terrace from the Pavilion and the extension of the Pavilion in 1976 involved the truncation of the fountain basin which is now a flower bed. Railings, unsightly bins and a smoking shelter have been added. The fountain in the large basin and the eight smaller fountain basins were removed by the mid twentieth century; the majority of urns and statues have been lost or relocated. With traffic passing and the loss of the bandstand in the 1980s, there has been little reason to spend time here.

This has been changing in recent years with greater use of the area and reopening views over the Rose Garden.

In 2022 work has been completed to the Fountain Lawn as part of the @Play project. This has successfully restricted traffic in front of the Pavilion; reinstated the fountain to its original symmetrical design with replacement fountain; reinforced the unusual steel and precast concrete retaining wall with a new structure; replaced the hedge and low rail on the terrace edge with new railings on top of the retaining wall; reinstated Wicksteed designed benches; and reinstated relocated sculptures. Many trees have been removed from the adjacent Rose Garden to restore the original views across to the lake.

The Fountain Lawn is once again an attractive space closely related to the Pavilion, with potential for greater use, as originally intended.

Rose Garden (memorial garden) (Gazetteer 12)

The character of the Rose Garden has changed over time; by 2012 the rose towers had gone, conifers, probably intended to be dwarf, had grown out of proportion, shading the beds below and the outer herbaceous beds had disappeared, some replaced with exotic planting and rockwork. Shrubs on the bank had been reduced to a grassy bank with overgrown conifers and a few rocks, perhaps remnants of a rockery. Since Charles Wicksteed's death in 1931 the garden has housed the memorial to Wicksteed (funded by public subscription) and also the statue of his dog Jerry. Jerry is now flanked by two statues which formerly stood on the Hilda Wicksteed gate piers at the entrance; these are important designs of the period but are out of scale with the Jerry memorial.

In recent year it had become a memorial garden and shrine to those commemorated there in dedicated benches. 'The current trend of decorating these benches with flowers and other inappropriate items has become a problem, many complaints are received and the garden has become more akin to a cemetery. The mood of the garden as it used to be in people's memories has been spoiled.'⁵³ A memorial policy was adopted to address this issue: 'No flower or similar memorials shall be permitted to mark the site at any time...The plaque [on memorial benches] will be removed from the bench by Park staff at the end of the agreed period and relocated to the Park's Reflection Area.'⁵⁴

In 2019 the gardening team maintained a colourful bedding display, although the planting on the bank and herbaceous beds had disappeared. As a result of the pandemic and management changes, in 2022 the gardens are maintained by volunteers. Volunteers raise plants in their polytunnel and a special display is planned for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, although the emphasis is now more generally on permanent planting. The replanting of the Rose Garden, including recreated rose towers, was part of the @Play project but omitted due to constraints as a result of the pandemic. Since 2012 several overgrown trees have been removed to reopen views and improve growing conditions.



Fountain Lawn showing altered and planted fountain basin and growth of conifers, 2018 (compare with 1927 image p58 above): original retaining wall, Rose Garden 2018



Fountain Lawn showing fountain restored in 2022



Repaired Fountain Lawn retaining wall from the Rose Garden, now maintained by volunteers, 2022

53 A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park' 2015

54 Wicksteed Charitable Trust Memorials policy (from website August 2018)



Top: refurbished west front of Pavilion seen between refurbished concrete cottages in Octagon, 2022
Below: 'Captain's Lounge' on garden floor with repaired balustrade and reopened and repaired veranda, 2022

Pavilion (Gazetteer 7)

The character of the Pavilion was established when the first phase of building was completed in 1923 but it has been subject to numerous additions which have detracted from the clarity and quality of the original design. Over the years the building was patched up and adhoc changes made, but despite a number of additions and alterations, it remains as the focal building in the park today. The photographs opposite (2018) show recent work to the west (precinct) side of the Pavilion, with the symmetrical design of the original Pavilion enhanced with new decoration. The 1970s Celebration suite provides much needed space but its form and design detract from the central building. Similarly the 1970s extension on the east front interrupts the simple lines of the main Pavilion and views from the upper floor.

Condition Surveys for the buildings and structures in 2014-15 highlighted a backlog of repairs. The main Pavilion interior, used for large events such as spectacular Asian weddings, dances shows and concerts was refurbished in 2012. Many original features were restored and many recent additions removed. The tower itself was also restored in 2014 and the original 'Pulsematic' clocks presented to Charles Wicksteed by the people of Kettering in 1921 have recently been restored by a local volunteer. However, upper parts of the Pavilion remain in a relatively poor state of repair. The splendid top floor room 'The Captain's Lounge' was out of public use in 2012 and had inadequate

access. It had not found a viable use due to the many access issues and DDA compliance. The roof and windows and much of the fabric are in a very poor state. In 2019 the space was unused and in urgent need of repair, which has been completed as part of the @Play project by 2022.

Condition Surveys in 2017 and 2018

Much of the section below is drawn from Latham's reports and structural surveys of 2017 and 2018 and is included as a record of condition prior to repairs carried out as part of the @Play project.⁵⁵ Symmetrical in design, the Pavilion is surmounted by a distinctive clock tower, which acts as an important landmark and orientation point for the park. Originally, the Pavilion was constructed with a viewing gallery at first floor level. With public access to this via an external stair, the viewing gallery afforded unique panoramic views of the parkland. In addition, the Pavilion featured a central terrace associated with the first floor tea room, with the terrace open to the sky. The structure still retains its primary form and fabric with its cast iron, steel and timber structure, including the distinctive clock tower. Unfortunately, both the viewing gallery and external terrace were enclosed in the mid twentieth century, and among the many alterations and extensions during its life, the building line to the western frontage (addressing the precinct) was changed c1950 and the east front extended in the 1970s. This west front was rebuilt in 2018 as part of the Historic Heart project.

The Captain's Lounge has lost its former open verandah, although the balustrade survived, concealed within a run of painted timber panels with a ribbon window above. The symmetry of the original composition has been lost through the desire to compartmentalise the building's interior. The 'top hat' roof - a central raised roof with clerestory windows in place of the original roof opening - is supported on three deep timber box beams that span between the paired timber posts, although there is evidence of sagging, with the roof prone to ponding after heavy rainfall. The thermal performance of the building is very poor, with low/minimal levels of insulation, leading to overheating in summer and difficulties in maintaining comfortable internal temperatures during the winter. A visual structural inspection was carried out and archive research was also carried out, including a review of historic construction drawings from the Wicksteed Archive. The floor structure is steel and timber, with the primary steel beams forming a regular grid. The timber structural posts to support the main roof of the Captain's Lounge and 'top hat' section are built off the robust steel and timber floor, with the Ballroom immediately below.

Street west of Pavilion or 'Precinct' (Gazetteer 6-8)

To the west of the Pavilion, the main part of the 'precinct' comprises the west side of the extended Pavilion with shops and kiosks opposite, which follow the style of painted timber columns and cladding. This area had the character of a traditional fairground or seaside shopping street and retained some original kiosks, but by 2012 a modern collection of signs, planters and street furniture in multiple colours had been added, tarmac was patched and it presented an unattractive run down and mismatched appearance. Additions to the west front of the Pavilion obscured the original design and altered the alignment of the 'street'. Most visitors had no reason to visit or enter the Pavilion which was once the focus of the park. In 2018 the original character was rekindled as part of the Historic Heart project, with the western extension of the Pavilion rebuilt as the main visitor information point, with new stairs and a lift. The street alignment has been restored. Shops along the street have been refurbished in consistent style, decoration and signage with new planting. Wicksteed benches have been installed and a gravel finish applied, greatly enhancing the area's appearance and character.

⁵⁵ Lathams, Historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts October 2017 ; Lathams, Captain's lounge historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts May 201 ; A visual structural inspection of the Captain's Lounge, DSA Structural Engineers, May 2018



Cottages in 2011



Worker's cottages refurbished and interior, opened 2019

Octagon and concrete cottages (Gazetteer 8)

Charles Wicksteed was very proud of the method of construction of the concrete cottages, writing an article in 1920 as described above.⁵⁶ The four cottages were built for staff and were set within an octagonal hedged enclosure. Until the current Historic Heart project, the space between the original concrete cottages was enclosed and used as the gardeners' compound with greenhouses and storage areas. This obscured views of the Pavilion from the west, where many visitors now park and enter the park. The information centre was housed in the eastern early precast concrete cottage (building 2 in recent survey), originally provided for park staff; the fountain basin, which originally stood near the Kettering entrance gates north of the Lodge, was used for seasonal bedding.

Condition of the cottages prior to work in 2017

The condition of the four buildings was reviewed as part of the Historic Heart project and this

section describes the condition of the buildings prior to current work.⁵⁷ Three cottages survived in more or less altered form; the information centre and the one inside the gardeners' work area appeared the most complete (Buildings 1 and 2); the first aid and Wicksteed story buildings had been altered and had flat roofs. The Wicksteed Story building was the most altered; it had been used as a garage and as storage with several additions.

Building 1 Volunteer Bungalow And Archive (archive)

Concrete panel construction, following principles described by Charles Wicksteed. The external walls are formed of pre-cast panels, constructed in three lifts, with later 'strap' pointed joints in cement mortar. The internal face of the external walls has a plaster skim finish. Internal partition walls are formed of circa 50mm thick pre-cast concrete panels, with plaster skim to both sides. The plan form of this building is largely intact, including the cellular spaces and external store. The hipped roof is supported on timber purlins, with intermediate struts/props. The original ceiling appears to be intact, along with simple picture rails and architraves. The original chimneys have been removed. Surface mounted mini-trunking for lighting and small power is a feature of the building, as the dense concrete wall construction with thin plaster skim means 'chasing' cables into walls is impractical. The building form reflecting the geometry of the original octagon garden enclosure, with the pairing of this building with Building 2, forming a gateway to the Pavilion. The structure still retains primary external walls, original window/door openings and roof form, although the windows and roof covering are not original.

Building 2 Guest Services (Ice Cream Parlour)

Concrete panel construction as Building 1. The external walls are formed of pre-cast panels. Alterations include the incorporation of the external store as part of the main internal space. uPVC replacement windows have been installed. Approximately 50% of the internal partitions have been removed and steel posts inserted to support the roof. The internal face of the external walls has a plaster skim finish. The hipped roof is supported on timber purlins, as per Building 1 with intermediate struts/props. The original chimneys have been removed. Building form reflecting the geometry of the octagon garden enclosure, with the pairing of this building with Building 1, forming a gateway to the Pavilion. The structure still retains its primary external walls and roof form, although a significant number of alterations have been made both internally and externally.

Building 3 First Aid Building (Workers Cottage) - now used by volunteers

Concrete panel construction – the external walls are formed of narrow width, full height pre-cast panels (similar to internal partition walls found in Buildings 1 and 2). Internally, there is evidence of alterations and 'improvements', including the addition of coving, window pelmets, internal door replacement and decorative plaster to ceilings. Windows are painted timber, with arched heads to create a distinctive appearance. The building has a flat roof, with expressed cornice line externally, cast in concrete to 'crown' the building and give it greater presence. The original chimneys can still be seen. Building form reflecting the geometry of the octagon garden enclosure, The structure still retains its primary external walls and cornices, chimneys and flat roof form. The internal configuration remains as originally designed.

Building 4 Museum ('Wicksteed story') now a newly built learning centre

This building differed from the other 3 buildings within the former octagon enclosure, in that it was not designed as a dwelling. It was originally built as a garage and stores, with access from the west. The building also differs in terms of its construction. It was built in brickwork and rendered with a rough-cast render, to match the appearance of the other bungalows. There is evidence that the building was extended to the east (c1950). The extensions were of poor quality and there was some evidence of movement and long-standing issues concerning water penetration. Building form reflecting the geometry of the octagon garden enclosure. The structure still retained its primary external walls and flat roof form, albeit later extensions can be seen.

56 Charles Wicksteed, 'Concrete Cottages', *Machine Tool Review* July-August 1920

57 Lathams, (Octagon) Historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts October 2017

Work in 2017-18

This is the first area experienced by many visitors and now forms an appropriate setting to the impressive Pavilion following completion of the Historic Heart project. The gardeners' compound has been relocated and the area between the cottages has been opened up to reveal better views of the Pavilion and access from the main, western car park. Three cottages have been refurbished to house the archive, Wicksteed Ice Cream and to display a worker's cottage, the latter used by volunteers (2022). The former cottage in the poorest condition, which housed the Wicksteed story (Building 4) was demolished and a new learning centre was built.

The area around the cottages was redesigned with accessible paving, seating and planting, now maintained by volunteers. They also plan and plant the kitchen garden of the worker's cottage. The area has an intimate and welcoming atmosphere.

Building 6 Gift Shop Date: c1938

This building is thought to be on the site of an earlier building, constructed in 1933. The existing building was designed as a toy shop and is constructed from timber with central steel supporting posts. The description in 2017 stated that it has a flat roof with a wide overhang, although it lacks the decorative eaves brackets that can be found on the kiosks adjacent the Pavilion (and the carousel cafe). The building has an extension to the rear which appears to have been constructed at the same time, although it curiously cuts through the original line of the octagon. The building frontage also projects into the existing plaza/street, creating tension between the historic octagon 'edge' and the Pavilion.

The building facade had been altered with the original full frontage of opening doors, replaced with a more conventional frontage of doors and windows. The structure still retained its primary external walls and flat roof form and has been repaired and updated as part of the Historic Heart project in 2018, with full width opening doors recreated.



Planting and seating in the central area, 2019

3.3.2 Area B: Core of ornamental park

(Gazetteer 13-14)

Designed landscape character

This is an important area linking the Pavilion and garden with the lake and waterside activities. Its overall character was of ornamental parkland with scattered trees, the park falling to the lake below. From the 1930s it has housed the railway station and the curving northern and western sections of the track now define the boundaries of the area. It also accommodates some events. The area has provided the principal route to the lake since c1950.

Current condition

This is one of the few areas which the public have not accessed by car and this has preserved its open parkland character; until recently important views to the park were blocked by the conifers in the Rose Garden. As noted above, relatively few trees from the early park or before survive; there are some important mature oaks in the north of the area, for instance T87 which was shown in 1885-7 and approaches 200 years old. Tree 97 near the boating pond is a similar age. Poplars that once lined the path to the bridge were felled in 2000 and have been replaced with a great mixture and greater density of trees than formerly, including silver birch, limes, willows, groups of purple maple and whitebeam. Planting did not follow a plan and the choice of trees, often dedicated as memorials, and groupings do not always harmonise with the traditional parkland character. Most successful are the clumps which echo Charles Wicksteed's early planting (as seen elsewhere in the park and in his plans for Jubilee Park). The daffodils of the Marie Curie Field of Hope in the north of the area were planted between ornamental flowering trees. A line of blue cedars has been planted along the railway line. Since the 2012 CMP, a Memorial Policy has been adopted which aims to end ad hoc planting and floral tributes, although they can still appear.

This CP, the Landscape Management Plan/tree management plan and PMMP will define the species and character of any future planting. The area is all close mown amenity grass but areas of wildflower meadow are defined in the PMMP and the ranger hopes to begin this work in 2022/3.



Area B the station in front of the Rose Garden, parking south of the Pavilion was visible but this is now restricted



Area B, Core Park: Left: the path leading from the station down to the bridge, with groups of young trees (2018)
Right: ancient oak T97 near paddle boat pool showing flooding (2022)



Left: Area C Preparation for silt disposal, 2013 Right: memorial trees in Area D



Car parking in Area E 2018; Right: flowers on memorial tree in 2022

3.3.3 Areas C and D Ornamental park

(Gazetteer 15-19)

Designed landscape character

This was open parkland falling to the lake, with long views, scattered trees, and used for informal recreation. Traces of ridge and furrow in the southern park (Area D) identified by Graham Keevill are now hard to distinguish but Lidar images show that there is archaeological potential. However considerable excavation for a skateboard area near the Arena in the 1970s will have damaged evidence. The area has been used for barbecues, picnics, dog walking and events. The northern Area C (A6 field) forms an important part of the setting of Barton Seagrave Hall as drawn by Humphry Repton and also of Barton Seagrave village and Castle Field, but was long used for extensive car parking. It was described as the picnic area in early guides.

Current condition

This area is open parkland sloping down to the east to the valley and Barton Seagrave. There are recent groups of memorial trees using ornamentals eg Prunus as noted above. An area of meadow planting was introduced west of the railway but not maintained. Parking throughout northern area C and west of Area D had a major impact on views in 2012 and on the condition of grass and trees, as do events use in Area D. Area C was relatively little used, apart from parking. The area close to the road was used for silt disposal when the lake was dredged in 2013. Since then, the 'Rush' zipwire has been added running across area C (A6 field). There was a fenced sheep pen for heritage breed Jacobs sheep below which effectively bisected the space. It appears that very few visitors explore the area north of the zipwire. However the zipwire and towers are due to be removed in 2022, making all areas more easily accessible.

Although it has reduced and is better defined, there is still informal parking in this area which detracts from appearance, amenity and the condition of trees. It is only used on busy ride days and there are better controls in place or to be introduced in 2022. The area just inside the entrance, at the eastern end of the avenue, still has some hardstanding and parking for coaches near the fuel pumps, and access to the waste enclosure. The location is practical but detracts from a key view along the avenue, visible from the main entrance.

The ornamental park south (Area D) is open parkland, but has suffered from random planting of memorial trees as above. At the top of the slope is the somewhat fragmented sycamore avenue running either side of the drive and screening the Pony Field to its west, an area identified in the Masterplan for parking. Some parking is still allowed east of the avenue in an area defined by timber posts. There have been more tree losses, especially on the east side and trees need replanting and protection from compaction by cars. The Octagon cafe had recently been refurbished in 2018. The area is all close mown amenity grass and is used for events. Poor drainage is an issue in the area.

3.3.4 Area E Recreation park

(Gazetteer 20-22)

Designed landscape character

This is a flat area, formerly two fields with an area of woodland to the west (Long Spinney) which was cleared by Charles Wicksteed. Early in the park's history it was laid out as tennis courts. There were six tennis courts and putting green shown in 1967; 27 hard courts were advertised in c1935 available for a charge.

Current condition

In 2012 it was all mown amenity grassland, used for informal parking on ride days; much of the former open area in the eastern section is taken up with rides. The area is enclosed by a hedge



Left: tree seat around oak tree T 45 and carving in 2018. Right: Pirate ship swingboat in 2011 ; since removed and due to be replaced with another swingboat



Left: wicker maze , 2018 Right: eastern entrance from precinct opened up and resurfaced, 2018



Wicksteed playground equipment installed in 2022, with colourful new safety surfacing; plank slides on the bank on the left

on the west side with housing beyond, with a few original concrete bungalows on Spinney Lane to the south west. There are a few fine former hedgerow oaks such as T51 and T57 remaining. Oak T45 has been affected by storage of maintenance equipment in the site of the original tea pavilion which was destroyed by fire; this area (former compactor yard) was unused in 2018 and due to be redesigned following relocation of maintenance functions. As part of the Masterplan of 2012 this field was allocated as the principal parking area. A surfaced parking area has been laid recently over a small part of the field with defined access and parking bays. Posts have been installed along the access road to restrict vehicle access. Nevertheless informal parking occurs on the grass areas, particularly below trees in sunny weather; many trees are not protected and one was recently lost to a storm. The area still suffers from some compaction and erosion.

3.3.5 Area F Playground and Fairground

(Gazetteer 23-4, 43)

Designed landscape character

Originally this was an open field. Development began with improvised play equipment set out in a circular arrangement around a circular sandpit, which proved so successful that this led to the development of the Wicksteed playground equipment company. The round shelter was provided in 1924 and permanent play equipment was provided in a large open grass area. Over the years this has been supplemented with paying fairground rides and attractions and the area has expanded to the west to enclose the putting green. In 2012, the enclosure which originally contained the workers' cottages was a working area for the gardeners with glasshouses without public access but it is being opened up and conserved in 2018 as described above to link it more closely with the Pavilion and 'historic heart'. WCT and WPL have added substantially to the attractions within the playground and fairground to provide more covered and indoor facilities and thus extending the season.

Current condition

The playground in the north of this areas has been remodelled as part of the Historic Heart and @Play projects, reflecting its distinctive origins, with a new heritage play area and contemporary play equipment. Part is maintained as a free play area open all year round, plus separate paying rides (no longer fully enclosed). It is largely hard surfaced, and large expanses of tarmac are being replaced by safety surfaces with gravel at the eastern entrance area; the edges of the playground are grass, with some areas of ornamental planting. In 2012 there was no original Wicksteed equipment but replicas of the original Wicksteed plank slides were installed by 2018. The round shelter was also repaired as part of the @Play project.

In the paying fairground, there has been a move to more heritage themed and nature based attractions that will be attractive to all families year round. This approach will be reinforced in 2022 to appeal to all members of the family. For instance there is a traditional carousel, and a 'Sway Rider' with bespoke Wicksteed themed artwork. The former clip n climb was popular but had limited capacity and appealed to single interest customers who did not use or pay for the other attractions, so it was closed and a family friendly themes restaurant is planned in 2022, as there is a need for all year sheltered seating.⁵⁸ The pirate ship swingboat of 1982 was removed but there are plans to reintroduce a similar ride in 2022. Much of the area has been opened up, decluttered and surfaced in gravel. There also softer areas with wicker fences and carved wooden seats and a tree seat around a large oak (T220). There are areas of exotic planting, musical instruments and a small pond. The skating rink in the geodesic dome is now an attractive walk though aviary; areas for meerkats and goats have been added and Meerkat Manor rebuilt in 2021, reintroducing the Wicksteed traditions of animals and goat milk ice cream. Wicksteed ice cream has again been available since 2019 in one of the original workers' cottages. The pre-existing astroslide was

⁵⁸ pers. comm. Lee Scragg February 2022



New main gates from brochure, 1943, Wicksteed Archive



The main entrance in 2022; further removal of barriers and much clutter, with a greener view than in 2011



View east along beech avenue to entrance showing gaps in avenue in 2018



Left: hedged garden at lodge. Right: tree recently felled in west end of avenue, 2022

enclosed in a timber clad structure, a new enclosed drop slide added with links to a new tree top walk by 2018. Younger children had a play area among the sycamore circle; this was replaced by mini landrovers and may again be changed.

Some mature trees shown 1885-7 and 1926-7 survive, but there have also been recent losses and generally there are relatively few trees and little shade.

3.3.6 Area G Avenue and entrance area

(Gazetteer 25-27)

Designed landscape character

This is the original entrance to the park from Kettering Lodge and provides an impressive avenue approach, framing the view of the park and over the Ise valley and with glimpses to the side, indicating Wicksteed's grand aspirations for the visitor experience. A lodge and substantial gates led to the broad beech avenue. The lodge was used by the park manager. A new entrance further to the east was made in the mid twentieth century and the Hilda M. Wicksteed Memorial Gates and statues were added in 1950 (since removed) and this is now the main entrance, east of the avenue. Later, the steel gates were added and the entrance widened with the larger piers rebuilt and side piers removed to facilitate increased vehicle use. The drive along the avenue was widened in 1987.

Current condition

The avenue is no longer used as the park entrance from Kettering since the creation of the mid twentieth century entrance. In 2012 the eastern part was used as an exit only and circulation to car parks was complex and varied with ride and non ride days. Options were considered in the 2012 masterplan; a new entrance opposite Windmill Avenue was discussed and is no longer an option as the junction is being repaired without a roundabout. The option of reopening the lodge entrance was considered unsuitable due to traffic constraints but it could be used for cyclists and pedestrians only. However there is a locked gate across the avenue, which is the park security boundary, meaning the top part of the avenue is a dead end and pedestrians have to walk along the road for this section. Pedestrians appear to use a variety of routes, some of which cross the avenue. Work to the roundabout at the Kettering gate is due in 2022.

Parking control and access have been simplified. The route via the 'longabout' inside the gates is no longer needed for queuing traffic, but is retained at present. Thus in 2018 and 2022 vehicle visitors use the main entrance on the Barton Road via the Hilda Wicksteed gates and the eastern part of the avenue is used in both directions to give access to the main parking area in Area E (the top field). The modern visitor arriving by car does not experience the intended dramatic approach, but does travel along part of the avenue and sees part of the intended view over parkland on exit only; this view and the main entrance has been improved since 2012 by the removal of the security base, parking, hedges and barriers, although it is still damaged by hardstanding and some parking in the view at the east end of the avenue, as discussed above in Area C (A6 Field).

Avenue

There have been several recent losses of avenue beech trees due to safety concerns; the trees planted in the early years of the twentieth century were seen to have about 50 years' life expectancy, which is at the lower end for this species. Beech has a typical lifespan of 150–200 years, although they can live up to 300 years. Beech are shallow rooted and susceptible to drought which is an increasing issue due to extremes of weather; these trees will also have been affected by compaction and the widening of the avenue in 1987. Since the last complete tree survey in 2007 six mature trees have been lost and there are still some gaps, notably in the west of the avenue where only six trees remain. Annual tree risk assessments have recommended work to major deadwood in the beech trees. There are some gaps and some recent replacements in the main section, but it is still an impressive feature.



Left: lodge and gates in 2022, still in need of repair. Right: Water chute, c 1940, Wicksteed archive



Lake and boathouse postcard c1920, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Left: silt removal in 2013. Right: a similar view after loss of boathouse, 2018



A similar view in 2022. The boathouse site has been cleared and is in use by sea cadets; temporary fencing on the left

The Lodge

This is a pebbledash house behind a high hedge; the entrance has impressive stone piers with stone sphere finials and substantial decorative timber gates, showing some damage. One sphere has been dislodged but still exists on site. The fountain which originally stood in a circular hedged garden here has been relocated to the main entrance area. The Lodge had been in separate ownership but has been acquired by the Trust; and a barrier divides the avenue in two (locked in 2018). A modern house is unfortunately located next to the Lodge projecting into the avenue.

Main entrance

This area has been opened up, simplified and improved since 2012 (see photo above) and although wider, it is closer to the 1943 image with a greener outlook, but without the trees. In 2012 the brick piers and ornamental steel gates were partly obscured by barriers and signage, and this entrance led to two timber kiosks, where a parking fee was charged and directions given to parking areas. The kiosks, security hut, parking, tall hedge and barriers have been removed and the automatic barriers in use in 2018 have been replaced by a new numberplate recognition (ANPR) parking control system, which avoids queuing for tickets at the entrance, and is working well in 2022.

The statues which were originally on the gate piers now stand in the Rose Garden. The entrance loop is flanked by ornamental bedding in lawns which house the fountain relocated from the Lodge entrance. There is a beech hedge separating the area from the parkland, newly planted in 2018, now established well. Since 2018 signage has been moved inside the hedge at the entrance splay.

3.3.7 Area H Lake activity area

Designed landscape character

North lake area (Gazetteer 28-9, 35, 36, 38, 42)

This has been the centre for water based activity since the creation of the lake. With the building of the gabled boathouse and pleasure boating on the lake it began to develop a traditional seaside quality. Other attractions were added in this area, including the popular early Wicksteed designed water chute, using the river, and children's shallow boating pond in an enlarged area at the north of the lake, with circular planted islands and space to picnic on the grassy banks. The arched bridge (1936) was an attractive feature and this period also saw the addition of the aviary. This period could be seen as its hey day. Further rides, buildings and fencing have been added over time.

West shore (Gazetteer 30-34)

The shore of the lake was laid out with a series of round lily ponds and inlets for paddling and swimming pools, which were later formalised, and an oval model boating lake. The area was very open but retained one mature tree near the boating lake, which still survives.

East shore

The area east of the lake was accessed via a hump-backed bridge. The first attractions were the pioneering water chute and the gabled boathouse, making use of the river and lake for water based activities. Over time the area beyond the boating lake was developed with an aviary and various rides.

The boathouse

The boathouse of c1920 was destroyed by fire in 2016. It was a three gabled steel and precast concrete panel structure with timber clad gables, decorative wood finials and sliding doors.⁵⁹ There were various extensions including an enclosed area which formerly housed the children's zoo.

Arena (Gazetteer 31)

Originally an open cycling track which held major sporting events, the oval area has been enclosed since 1953 and developed for a series of larger rides.

⁵⁹ MOLA Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering Northamptonshire, 2017



Paddle boat pool in 2022, following removal of overhead monorail pedal cars, is closer to original design



Paddling area in 2022: geese fouling is a continuing problem and vegetation is encroaching



A major change has been the removal of the bridge to allow level access across the arena track and closure of the track, 2022

Current condition

There have been major changes in this area since 2012 and more work is planned. The area contains some important and attractive early features but by 2012 suffered from the accretion of buildings, fencing, rides and redundant features which eroded the attractive character of the area. The river area and connection with the lake were obscured with barriers and buildings. In 2018 the boating lake was surrounded by the high level monorail so had lost its rural setting but this has now been cleared; the islands are overgrown.

West shore

Positive changes were made to the former bathing and paddling areas on the west shore as part of the Lakes project. In 2012 there were no longer any wet play facilities here; the paddling pool was a very popular large free-access sandpit and the area retained the character of a seaside promenade. The bathing area was derelict and neglected but has been restored as a paddling area as part of the Lakes project. The dock formerly used by larger pleasure

boats was unused in 2012 but was back in use in 2018, although there is no ferry use in 2022. The paddling area has a concrete base, a modern bronze sculpture of two children and is roped off from the main lake; the restored shelter and new amphitheatre are nearby. The area has not been entirely successful due to continuing problems with geese fouling, water quality issues and high temperatures leading to blanket weed, as well as drainage issues in the amphitheatre. The popular sand and water play and adjacent cafe on the east shore appeared to have drawn people away from the sandpit in the former rectangular paddling pool in 2018; the closure of the lakeside diner also decreases use of this area.

The amphitheatre is occasionally used for events such as story telling, but considerable preparation is needed before this and the paddling area can be used. The performance area is considered too far from the seating and power and a changing/resource area needs to be provided to enable regular use.⁶⁰

The restored round shelter was used in the Repton play and picnic day and the shelter is useful for educational activities such as Nature Tots. Issues in this area are still under review. The intrusive red diner on the west lake shore is due to be replaced with a more sympathetic structure taking advantage of the lakeside location. The hoarded area has been vacated by the Sea Cadets in 2022 and is also due to be cleared, which will improve visual connection to the Pavilion and gardens (View 3). Play equipment here is also intrusive in the view.

East shore

Various recent changes have opened up and improved the quality of the fabric in this area. However, in 2018 much of the area was out of use since the fire which destroyed the boathouses in 2016 and new designs were being developed. Building plans are on hold, but the site has been cleared and tidied and is use by the Sea Cadets in 2022. The hump-backed bridge has less impact than formerly due to the new flat bridge to its north but the lake-level walkway to the south, present in 2012, has been removed so it is once again reflected in the water. The aviary was recently removed to make way for a cafe and adjacent popular new sand and water play area, making a more open and attractive area. Mr Wicksteed's cars also cater for younger children. The water chute remains popular, with the repaired changing rooms (now toilets) and water controls nearby. Repair programmes prioritise most significant elements and most at risk such as the waterchute. The sand and water play area, closed in March 2022, is due to be repaired and reopened along with a new pony ride to be installed beside the Paddle Boat Pool (planned 2022).

Arena

The former cycling track was used for go-kart racing in 2018, meaning that access was via a timber bridge. The bridge was in poor condition and has now been removed to allow more open, level access, but it does mean that the track is no longer in use and creative reuse is needed. The whole area is still largely cut off from its landscape and contains large ride structures as part of the 'Thrill Zone', with a recent addition of a new ride. Part of the centre of the track is enclosed as an unsightly maintenance area although this will be relocated to the new maintenance compound. The scale and enclosure of the area create a visual barrier. The track had occasionally been used for cycling in recent years but there was no regular use for cycling.

Ecology

As with the main lake (see below), there had been limited ecological interest due to poor water quality, although waterbirds including swans nest on the islands in the boating pond. There has been no update of the ecological survey, but one of the main aims of the Lakes project was to improve water quality, which has had some success. There is a continuing problem with large numbers of Canada Geese who graze and foul the mown grass to the west of the lake.



Visitors enjoying views across the lake, with reeds recently cut back, February 2022

3.3.8 Area I Main lake

(Gazetteer 39-42)

Designed landscape character

This was the major landscape feature created by Charles Wicksteed by diverting the River Ise to its current course and excavating the river valley. From the outset it was used for recreation including large scale regattas. The site of the largest island and its trees were saved from the former landscape and the two smaller islands were created and planted. In the early days boats moored at the islands and visitors went ashore.

Current condition

The River Ise corridor runs through the park from north to south on its diverted course parallel to the lake's eastern shore. It is a largely overgrown and hidden feature as described in 3.2.2 above. The main lake in Wicksteed Park is the largest area (9.3ha) of open water within the park. It had been the subject of much study prior to the Lakes project. In essence, before recent work, the lake suffered from siltation, with 400-500mm accumulated silt over upper Lias clay, poor water quality, and excessive algal growth. It had last been dredged in the 1960s, apparently with limited success. There was very little emergent, marginal and aquatic vegetation, limited diversity of habitat and poor conditions for eg macro-invertebrates. Trees and shrubs had grown up along the banks obscuring views; islands were overgrown and inaccessible and concrete banks were unsightly. There was no access to the water for swimming or paddling but there were still rowing boats and Sea Cadets have used the lake as a base since 2011. It had limited ecological value because the water quality was poor with nutrient enrichment that led to frequent algal blooms and its continuous concrete edge prevented the establishment and growth of marginal vegetation. The habitats to the south of the main lake were considered suitable for reptiles and there are extensive areas of habitat that would provide suitable nesting sites for a range of bird species.

There has been a long term problem associated with large numbers of Canada geese on site throughout the year. The fish population of the lake was low and was dominated by small roach.⁶¹

As part of the Lakes Project major improvements were made that have addressed many of these issues. The concrete banks were softened with planting of emergent, marginal and aquatic vegetation which has thrived. A well used and accessible path was created around the lake with a pontoon walkaway at the southern end. This has doubled the number of people walking around the

lake, up to 259,000 pa. A commemorative 'reflections' area was created south of the lake at a viewpoint as part of the new memorial policy. Marginal self sown trees were felled and vegetation cleared to open up views. In some areas marginal vegetation has established too well and needs to be managed to retain views and the pandemic caused a backlog of maintenance, underway in 2022. Access to the water for swimming or paddling was created with the paddling area (see above) and 'Paradise' swimming beach. However, as with the paddling area, there are issues with weed and goose fouling restricting use; however there was some informal swimming in 2018 using the pontoons to access the water. The lake is used by rowing boats, Sea Cadets and until recently by the ferry; at present there is no access to the islands which have been planted to encourage wildlife.

Ecology

The completed works have restored and enhanced habitats, with increased marginal vegetation, bird nesting sites on the islands and improved water quality. There have been no formal surveys, but casual observation reports reed and sedge warblers and reed bunting, spreading from the fishing lake. There are also reports of up to nine species of bats.⁶²

Nevertheless possible upstream pollution and enrichment of the water leading to ongoing growth of blanket weed algae in 2018 and geese numbers have an adverse impact.

3.3.9 Area J Fishing lake/South lake/Wicksteed lagoon

(Gazetteer 44)

Designed landscape character

Created to accommodate silt from dredging the lake in the 1960s, this became a naturalistic lake.

Current condition

This is an attractive naturalistic and informal lake valued for its wildlife and used for fishing by the angling association, which manages the pond and will take on a role in the main lake too. An area of largely unmanaged woodland between the lakes had been used as a dump for landscape materials including reed cuttings. Anglers are allowed to drive to the lake via the campsite and this will continue under current plans. This lake has a mosaic of open water, marginal swamp, scrub and woodland and supports noticeably more dragonflies and damselflies than the main lake. Its importance for local biodiversity is reflected in its designation as a Local Wildlife Site. Smooth newts and toads were present in the lake and it is a suitable water vole habitat. When last surveyed it appeared to hold the greatest diversity of bird species and there are extensive areas of habitat that would provide suitable nesting sites for a range of bird species during the nesting season.⁶³

3.3.10 Area K Arboretum

(Gazetteer 45)

Designed landscape character

Created from the 1970s this area was planted with a great range of trees including pines, lime, lilac, whitebeam, hornbeam, beeches, cedar, maples, planes, Judas tree, laburnum, hickory, swamp cypress.

Current condition

Good range of semi mature trees, which would benefit from active management and some thinning; there have been a few losses. Used by walkers, dog walkers, but somewhat isolated from the rest of the park and new ideas for activities have been sought. The former unsightly approach and gateway to the park near the waterchute have been replaced and the area is increasingly used for informal recreation following recent house building; however this affects the setting of the park.

61 OHES 2011

62 Meeting with Park Ranger, October 2018
63 OHES 2011



Lodges behind the water chute, 2022



Aboretum, 2022



Outer recreation park looking towards the new maintenance area and into retirement village site 2022

3.3.11 Area L Lodge area

(Gazetteer 46)

Designed landscape character

An area of early prefabricated concrete bungalows built in the 1930s on the river and forming the backdrop to the lakes activity area; the bungalows were demolished and have been replaced by holiday lodges for sale.

Current condition

Privately occupied with holiday lodges built by Wicksteed Park Ltd, under development in 2011 and originally with 15 lodges; a second phase is on sale in 2022 making a total of 30 lodges. It provides the setting for one of the most significant areas of the park and lodges are visible behind the water chute, but impact should reduce as planting matures. The layout is shown in the draft masterplan pages 158-9 below.

3.3.12 Area M Outer recreation park

(Gazetteer 47-48)

Designed landscape character

Open parkland for informal recreation, part developed as golf course from 1930s which was closed in 2006. Recent uses have included a barbecue area, football pitch and boot fairs.

Current condition

Now a large area of largely short mown grass which accommodates a popular informal campsite with facilities building built in 2010. The area has excellent views to the lake and glimpses to the landscape as well as to recent housing development on the east side of the Ise valley. Major industrial development to the south affects views and setting. Native perimeter and island planting was carried out as part of the Lakes project to create privacy and to screen views. There are reported to be springs in the camping field. Higher to the north west of the field a large maintenance area has been created, which needs better organisation. Trees near the former golf house are in poor condition; their replacement, reinforcement and screening need attention.

Planning permission (2006) was received for 25+ 100 touring caravans and 50 tent sites with roads and planting; this was not implemented but plans for creating caravan hookups are under review in 2022. There is a current plan to lease a large area to create a retirement village. Further details in 3.44 below and the layout is shown in the draft masterplan pages 158-9 below.

Ecology

Original hedgerows dating from the Enclosure period survive in this area. Most are not species rich with an average of 2-3 woody species per 30m section. The hedge forming the boundary between the camping field and former golf course has been left to grow taller than most of the others in the park, allowing more flowers on the hawthorn thereby providing a greater source of nectar, with more berries in the autumn. There is a short section of species-rich hedge on the southern side of the road leading from the Paradise Road access. There are 7 species per 30m and two mature oaks in this section. Outside archaeology, is likely to be the oldest landscape feature within the park.⁶⁴ 2022: An ecological survey of 2021 conducted for the area of the proposed retirement village recorded that the trees, hedgerows, scrub, rough grass and tall ruderal vegetation on site provide potential suitable habitat for nesting birds and that the tree lines, hedgerows, waterbodies and grassland on site, as well as the adjacent railway line, provide suitable habitat for foraging/commuting bats. There are several mature trees on site which have potential for roosting bats. Further surveys carried out in September and October 2020 and April and May 2021, made multiple records of high numbers of common and soprano pipistrelle, also Natterer's bat, brown long eared bat and Myotis species were recorded on site. This reflects other observations in the park. Early results revealed that there was no evidence of roosting bats on site. The survey also found smooth

newts were found under the survey refugia. The site has suitable habitat for reptiles, invertebrates, hedgehogs and water voles. The site forms part of the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NV NIA). The site is important for connectivity: it forms part of both sub-regional and local Green Infrastructure corridors and is also designated as a public open space under Kettering's Local Plan and falls within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for local SSSIs.⁶⁵

3.4 Current management and maintenance of the site as a whole

The whole of the park is owned by Wicksteed Charitable Trust (registered charity No. 1142103), having taken over the Wicksteed Village Trust. The Wicksteed Charitable Trust consists of a Board of nine Trustees (2018) which meets every 2 months. This reduced to five by 2022 but new Trustees from a range of backgrounds are being recruited.

Wicksteed Park Ltd operated Wicksteed Park as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trust until it ceased trading as a result of the pandemic. Pre pandemic it had a managing director and in November 2018 there was a permanent staff of 67, with another 106 on fixed term contracts. There were approximately 300 additional seasonal employees during the summer months. With the help of fundraising and an emergency grant from the NLHF the Trust managed to keep the park open as a much needed local resource. Over the last 12 years there have been several changes in management and the recent crisis has been an opportunity to reset.

3.4.1 The Management Structure

The new company Wicksteed Trading Limited created a new slimmed down management structure, re-employing key staff. For a year there were only 16 permanent staff. In 2022 this had grown to 33 including Play Factory (indoor play) staff. Previously there were separate managers responsible for the operation and management of the three main attraction/activity areas of the park (the Arena, Fairground and the Lakeside), as well as the reintroduced animals and 'Rush' tower. There were also a buildings and structures maintenance team and an Engineering Team which undertaking management and maintenance of the buildings, rides and structures around the park. Now there is a simpler more flexible structure.

Management of all the Trust's land is the responsibility of the Head of Estate and Engineering responsible for all maintenance operations. The permanent maintenance staff has been reduced from 25 to 10. The grounds team includes the Park Ranger (see below), sometimes assisted by volunteers and one groundsman (in place of 3 or 4) for grass cutting. Previously there was a hard landscape team of four, grass cutter and wardens who undertook maintenance tasks, litter clearing etc and also assisted the Park Ranger.

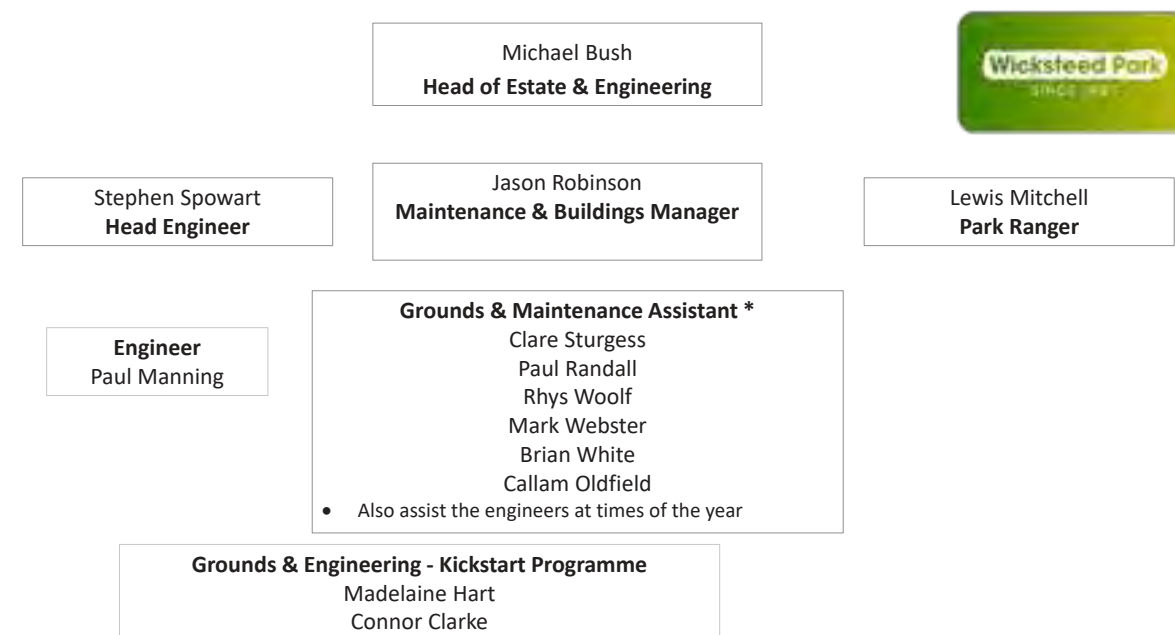
A major change has been in gardening. Previously there was a gardens team of four (maintenance of the rose/garden and the fountain lawn, ornamental planting and propagating bedding plants). In 2022 there is no gardener in place and gardening tasks including plant propagation are undertaken by volunteers. Tree surveys and risk assessments are outsourced, as is catering. A long term maintenance programme is in preparation.

Before the first lottery funded project, work was undertaken without the benefit of a heritage and landscape based overall long term masterplan or management plan for guidance and there was little management for wildlife interest. Following the completion of the MMP in 2012, a full-time experienced Park Ranger was appointed and recently re-appointed. The overall purpose of this post is to 'To deliver an agreed annual programme of maintenance, monitoring, preservation and enhancement of various habitats, greenspaces and nominated built structures within Wicksteed Park and parts of the wider estate owned by the Wicksteed Charitable Trust (WCT).'

The Park Ranger brings new skills and leads on the following:

- To maintain, manage, protect and enhance various greenspace environments, habitats and built structures within Wicksteed Park and the wider WCT estate including the 24 acre lake and its immediate environment, parts of the fishing lake – a county wildlife site, the newly established reed-beds and associated marginal aquatic species, new shingle beech, new paddling area and amphitheatre, marginal lakeside planting, the newly created footpaths surrounding the lake, the pontoon, the arboretum, newly established planting regime in the campsite, and other new sites as they arise, and lake levels.
- Carry out day-to-day practical site management and maintenance in order to comply with the parks management and maintenance plan
- To help deliver aspects of the park's Masterplan
- To help Wicksteed park achieve Green Flag status
- Undertake site patrols and be responsible for security checks and safety inspections to ensure the allocated areas are safe and well-managed.
- Responsible for safety inspections, safe storage and maintenance of tools and equipment to comply with H&S and corporate requirements.
- Carry out duties connected to visitors if requested such as guided talks when requested
- Involvement in recruitment, training and supervision of volunteers, students and work placements carrying out a wide range of site management activities.
- To manage and assist in the creation of new footpaths allowing public access into new areas of the park and the wider WCT estate
- To manage and develop a planting plan for replacing trees, developing new orchards and winter gardens in accordance with the wishes of the Trust (possibly with external help)
- To assist the community officer develop greenspace volunteers for the park and manage their work programme
- To give talks to stakeholder groups when required
- To ensure the park's growing biodiversity is enhanced
- To help promote Wicksteed Park when required
- To work with the Trust and its wider estate in maintaining key nominated areas

This is a very wide role and new areas are being brought into management, such as reedbeds, areas of woodland and new areas of watermeadow will soon be added to this role. The Wildlife Trust have been involved with managing the Meadows to the north but this is due to end in 2023.



Interim maintenance structure February 2022

⁶⁵ Greenwillows Associates 'Preliminary Ecological Assessment of Wicksteed Park, Kettering' February 2021; Greenwillows Associates 'Survey Results for Bat Surveys at The Southern End of Wicksteed Park, Kettering' 7th July 2021.

Berry's Land Agent have advised on outer areas of the Trust's ownership; a local farmer takes a hay cut from the cricket field to the north east of the park and the field below the Redrow housing, east of the lake. The angling club will be undertaking some maintenance to the main lake.

3.4.2 Management and Maintenance Plan

There is a Park Management and Maintenance Plan (PMMP) in place which addresses the whole of Wicksteed Park, originally prepared in association with the Development Phase for the Lake Restoration Project (2013). The 2017 review was prepared by Michael Bush (Operations Director), Tracey Clarke (Community Link Manager, now Community and Heritage Manager) and Trevor McHugh (Trust Fundraiser) under the direction of the Trust Chairman, Oliver Wicksteed and it was further updated as part of the @Play project, in parallel with this updated CP in 2019 by Trevor McHugh. There will be a new MMP in 2022 covering the @Play project work to the new NLHF format.⁶⁶ Park staff will extend this format for the rest of the park.

A management plan was also prepared for areas of open space by Hankinson Duckett for Redrow Homes Ltd (April 2012), as part of the Section 106 Agreement associated with the housing development, with ecological, recreational objectives and to maintain and enhance the landscape attributes in keeping with the character of the lower valley slopes and floodplain of the River Ise. The River Ise (Revital-ISE, a partner of River Nene Regional Park) project included Wicksteed Park Nature Reserve, to the north of the park.

Major progress has been achieved since 2012 and some tasks which were not being addressed in 2017 are being taken on again by the Park Ranger, after the pandemic break, and are discussed in section 5.2.2 below.⁶⁷ Dedicated budgets are being developed which should assist with short and longer term planning of management and maintenance.

3.4.3 Volunteers

There is a history of active volunteers working in the park, many involved with conserving renovating and operating the engines and others worked in the gardens, fairground, lake entertainments, publicity and market research. Volunteer groups including school groups have also worked on projects such as hedge planting and maintenance of willow whip hedging. The Probation Service have also been involved in volunteering and Groundwork Northants, the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough have collaborated on the Water Meadow project, north of the park.

Progress since 2012

The Lakes project led to a major increase in volunteering and in 2016 the Wicksteed Volunteer Network was established, providing volunteers with a dedicated space to meet, share experiences, have access to lockers and a central information point. The network has proved very popular with existing volunteers and provides a focus for training and support alongside opportunities to learn new skills and share expertise.

During the Lakes project, the Trust recruited over 212 volunteers, providing training and support. The volunteers contributed over 8,970 hours of their time with an equivalent value of over £56,000. They undertook a broad range of activities from weed clearance, creating wildflower meadows to litter collection, engineering with the railway, painting and decorating, archive cataloguing, hosting daytime shows and supporting older communities, to assisting with talks, walks, education and interpretation events, sometimes in costume. Over 100 volunteers were trained during the project.⁶⁸ The Park Ranger coordinated specialist training with a team

of volunteers to assist with tasks such as coppicing, meadow raking, tree planting, work to benches etc.⁶⁹ Following the completion of the Lakes project, a new Community Link Manager (a post created in the project) was recruited in 2016 to maintain and develop the community programme and this role has continued. Volunteers are well supported with training, volunteer clothing, refreshments, discounts and events and facilities were improved as part of the @Play project. A Newsletter scheme was launched in September 2018.

Impact of the Pandemic

Volunteering was also boosted during the pandemic. On the first day 120 arrived and in March 2022 there is a core of 45, with Wednesday the main day. Using the low lottery rates of £50 unskilled and £150 skilled/day they have contributed £195,000 of work over 3 years. There is a part time activities co-ordinator skilled in gardening and the volunteers have taken on care of garden areas such as the Octagon garden, workers' cottage garden, Rose Garden and Fountain Lawn. They occasionally help in the park too. The volunteers are well supported with resources, newsletters, an active facebook page and training. Training has continued including planting schemes, welcome host, guided tours, creating stories and oral history. They are gradually shifting to more permanent rather than seasonal planting. Last year volunteers grew 500 plants from seed and one volunteer raised £290 from seeds. The volunteers were based in the education building but now use the workers' cottage. In 2022 the Rose Garden will be planted on a Jubilee theme. There are also corporate, school and special needs groups, Community Payback and Kickstart programmes who contribute to maintaining the park.⁷⁰

3.4.4 Planned work

Following completion of the Historic Heart and @ Play projects, the following are planned or under consideration in 2022:

- Retirement village in outer recreation park, the least used area and outside the registered park; land will be leased and should provide regular revenue. Charles Wicksteed's original idea had been to build workers' housing.
- Arena: the engineering department and buildings to be moved out of the arena and relocated to the new maintenance compound, to make space for additional rides/attractions over the next 1-3 years.
- Clip n Climb to accommodate a themed restaurant.
- Development of the campsite – hard standing pitches with electric hook ups.
- Queen's Green Canopy planting near Paradise Spinney with volunteers.⁷¹
- Wicky's Farmyard opening Easter 2022.
- Condition surveys and repairs to chapel toilets.
- Remove zipwire and towers and Oaktree diner.
- Install pirate ship ride in their place- focus on family friendly rides.
- Remove Lakeside diner and compound and replace with new cafe.
- Improvements to campsite facilities with motorhome hook ups.
- Considering relocating road in top field further west to reduce conflict with pedestrians.
- Charles Wicksteed statue in octagon and interpretation markers.
- Some plans under consideration in 2018 have not progressed significantly: additional water activities on the lake; new train stops; greater variety to food offer.⁷²

⁶⁶ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/management-and-maintenance-plan-guidance-landscapes-parks-and-gardens#heading-6> Accessed 15 March 2022

⁶⁷ PMMP 2017 update

⁶⁸ Lakes Restoration Project Evaluation Report 2017

⁶⁹ Meeting 4 October 2018

⁷⁰ Meetings with Lee Scragg, Mick Bush, Tracey Clarke, Lewis Mitchell and Trustees February/March 2022

⁷¹ <https://www.northantstelegraph.co.uk/news/people/volunteer-at-wicksteed-parks-green-canopy-tree-planting-day-3590262> Accessed 15 March 2022

⁷² Ian Bartlett presentation on the future of Wicksteed Park, 2018



3.4.5 Sources of Income

Income is derived from parking charges, sale of ride tickets and wristbands, several catering outlets, concerts and events in the main Pavilion and Celebration Suite (an addition to the Pavilion), weddings, in particular large Asian weddings, outdoor events, camping, park entertainments, shows etc and sale of Lodges (4 of 15 in second phase reserved March 2022⁷³).

During the pandemic the park had no income for 18 months and it costs £1.5m a year just to keep the free country park open, absorbing all funds. In July 2020 the National Lottery Heritage Fund came to Wicksteed Park's aid, providing Heritage Emergency Fund support of £247,000.⁷⁴ This supported continuing free access to the park, funding staff, security, insurance, utility bills, maintenance, refuse collection and caring for animals, while a new company was set up to run the park and build for the future. The park's plight and its welcome role during the pandemic triggered an outpouring of affection and support for the park, with plenty of press coverage and fundraising activity. A fundraising appeal raised £165,000: an impressive sum, especially as Kettering is not affluent, with areas of low disposable income, but even this sum only covers about six weeks' running cost.

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) funding covering the period April 2011 to March 2021 was in place to restore the Water Meadow as 'the finest example of a working water meadow in Northamptonshire' and Castle field. There is potential for HLS or to be renewed/replaced and extended to include the Ise watermeadow and Redrow field. This will increase the ecological value of the site as a country park and increase carbon capture.⁷⁵

⁷³ <https://www.wicksteedlodges.co.uk/> accessed 16 March 2022

⁷⁴ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/wicksteed-park-receives-emergency-funding-lifeline> accessed 16 March 2022

⁷⁵ Wicksteed Park Limited Business Plan - March 2011 OU research on role in carbon capture <https://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/>

3.5 Current use

The extent and diversity of use is a great strength. Wicksteed Park is the largest and most diverse open space serving the Borough of Kettering and its surroundings. The park has a very special place in the memories of people from a wide area and has a strong association with fun.⁷⁶ The philanthropic origins of the park and its continued free access to local and regional visitors to events and the paying attractions have resulted in an exceptional level of public use. It is a large area with a rural character but very close to centres of population and the local population is increasing. The park is used daily by local residents as a country park for informal recreation (walking, picnics, sports activities), particularly by families with young children, using the extensive large playgrounds and sand and water play area, or for informal games and for picnicking. There are many entrances for pedestrians and many people use the park regularly as a link between the residential areas to the south-west and the east, including new housing. There is increasing use of the path network for jogging or cycling around the lake early and late⁷⁷ and other exercise.

3.5.1 Visitor Surveys 2017 and 2021

The 2017 survey found that many visitors remember Wicksteed from childhood and value the continuity of many attractions and buildings and as a popular venue for large family gatherings, as well as attracting first time visitors from the range of socio-economic groups. The majority visited as a 'special occasion' with only 9% of residents surveyed visiting the park once a week or more (18% in 2011). Many visitors valued the park for its leisure and walking interest and as an alternative to the larger theme parks and highlighted the potential for 'heritage' being a major part of the park's attraction. Significant numbers considered themselves disabled (over 12%) and 8% of visitors questioned had an ethnic background.

The 2021 visitor survey⁷⁸ was conducted in June 2021 when COVID restrictions were in place, rides were closed and there had been no events for 12 months; the majority of visitors were therefore local, reinforcing the value to the local community and as local heritage.

- Of the 356 responses the vast majority visited regularly, mainly every week, most visiting with children or young people and using the park to enjoy nature and relax, as well as for dog walking and the playground.
- Most agreed that the quality was good overall but there was some criticism of food and toilets.
- Wicksteed is valued highly by the local community for improving their quality of life, its longstanding history as a place to enjoy nature and spend time with family, with over half of the respondents believing they have a good understanding of Wicksteed's Heritage.
- Other comments included the problem of goose fouling, rubbish, antisocial behaviour/youths on summer evenings on the pontoon, wanting more use of the lake, swimming, water play, missing rides for older children such as the dodgems and pirate ship, request for disabled access rides, attention to the muddy lake path, information on walks, cycle tracks, recycling, lower carbon footprint and better/upmarket or more healthy food.

Visitor numbers

Surveys show that annual visitor numbers have fluctuated from 600,00 in 2005-7, reaching 750,000 in 2011, dropping to 500,000 visits in 2015 and rising again to 700,000 in 2017. In 2017 over 31,000 people attended events in the Pavilion.

The number of people walking round the Lake had approximately doubled since the Lake Project was completed; with about 100,000 extra visitors doing so in 2017. The route around the lake was highly valued in the pandemic and is still popular. There are no comparable recent surveys of visitor numbers.

⁷⁶ An Activity Plan for Wicksteed Park Pathways Consultancy August 2011 and Activity Plan update 2022

⁷⁷ You can cycle around the lake path before the rides open at 10:30am or after they close at 6pm. Please watch out for pedestrians at all times. <https://wicksteedpark.org/terms-and-conditions/> accessed 12 May 2022

⁷⁸ CFP, Wicksteed Park Visitor Survey Report 2021

Selected comments from the 2021 Visitor Survey

On its distinctive heritage:

- It feels nostalgic - it is brilliant for families not only because you don't cater for the same crowd that Alton Towers etc caters for. Also please bring back a paddling pool/ lido!
- I'd love more days about learning about the heritage and the impact Wicksteed had on play
- Please continue to respect its heritage. It is a massive part of Kettering life and is in the heart of all those who grow up there. It's heritage gives it amazing charm. It is not and should not be an Alton Towers, but an accessible place for people of all budgets, ages and abilities.
- I wouldn't like it to become overdeveloped and forget the ethos and spirit of why Charles Wicksteed left this facility for the people of Kettering in the first place
- Could the old velodrome track have open days for cyclists to use?
- Love the renovation of the fountain and Captains Lounge

On the lake wildlife and environment

- I was sad to see the beach area looking unkempt
- More wildlife areas, ie long grass meadows
- Don't like all the goose poo around the sandpit
- Please don't sell any of the land for housing. It is so important for wildlife and walkers
- Recycling of waste is non-existent. Carbon footprint and general environmental issues need addressing. Don't introduce any more rides which are not eco friendly

On facilities

- Electric hook up for camping? Wooden camping pods? camping essentials shop? Museum? Undercover picnic areas? Vintage Amusement?
- Would like to see less fencing...new fences everywhere that block the freedom of the park

Affection for the park

- My grandchildren and I love the open spaces and relaxed atmosphere. Even in lockdown we made memories here. I love that I used to bring my children here and now bring my grandchildren.
- We call it our happy place
- We feel very lucky to have Wicksteed so close by
- Fantastic park with something for everyone
- We are blessed to have free access to such a beautiful place
- As a family, we love the park! The children love the playground and the animals ... There are great views and lovely gardens to walk through. Great place that we as a town are so lucky to have on our doorstep!

The surveys also show that the park has developed a much broader appeal to visitors, with many visitors valuing its leisure and walking interest; its free access to an attractive and high quality environment as an alternative to country parks and as an alternative to the larger, more commercial, theme parks.⁷⁹ The park has a greater presence on social media and in 2017 there had been an increase in recommendations to visit via Trip Advisor, a greater interest in future activities and increased levels of visitor satisfaction.⁸⁰ Recent reviews have been mixed and reflect the difficulties of 2020-2021, with complaints about ride closures, lack of staff and the lake area with no boating.⁸¹ 2022 should be better.

3.5.2 Activities

The 2011 Activity Plan

The 2011 Activity Plan associated with the Lakes project identified five foundation projects intended to 'fundamentally change how people use Wicksteed Park' in a manner which would ensure that 'patterns of use will happen naturally and informally, with little or no worker engagement'.⁸² By the end of September 2017, 22,499 people had participated in 420 events. The activities explored new approaches to utilise the park's special landscape and heritage, focussed on use of the lake, water and natural play. The activities attracted new audiences, encouraged greater community engagement and participation and was instrumental in building the volunteer base as set out above. The project provided full access around the lake for all for the first time in its history, and the reinstatement of traditional lake activities such as paddling and natural swimming by clubs and individuals, the latter with mixed success.

The 2018 Activity and Interpretation Plans

New Activity and Interpretation Plans were developed in parallel with this CP as part of the @Play project.⁸³ Consultation on an off site had revealed nostalgia for the site but with little awareness of the heritage of the park, yet an appetite to learn more. Plans for interpretation focussed on experiencing and discovering the park through the senses rather than static displays with the message that this is more than a play park.

By 2018 activities had developed from and built on this experience and included:

- Collation of the archive, with exhibitions celebrating the special heritage of the Wicksteed story and its national significance in the history of outdoor recreation and children's play
- Regular family orienteering events
- Self-guided walks leaflet including nature trail and trees heritage talks and guided walks
- Popular soap box derby held annually. This event builds on the reputation of Charles as a successful engineer and inventor attracting 60 family teams participating in the 2017 event and attracting excited audiences of over 2500 to the far side of the park.
- Regular mini beast hunts and bat walks
- Explorer family events in partnership with British Orienteering
- The park has worked in partnership with Park Run hosting from September 2016 a weekly free park 5k run / walk having delivered 50 of the events over the last 12 months with 14,363 5k runs undertaken.
- Informal forest style activities within the park including den building
- Informal learning about wool, trees and books

79 Lakes Restoration Project Evaluation Report 2017 Evaluation Of The Lakes Restoration Project – Results Of Visitor Interview Surveys - 2015 Evaluation Of The Lakes Restoration Project and The @Play Project – Results Of Visitor Interview Surveys - 2017

80 As identified by Visit England and its externally assessed Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme

81 https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g504022-d2155640-Reviews-or20-Wicksteed_Park-Kettering_Northamptonshire_England.html

82 An Activity Plan for Wicksteed Park Pathways Consultancy August 2011 and PMMP 2017

83 Bowles Green, Interim Report on Public Consultation, September 2018 Simon Leach Design, Interpretation Plan and Design Workshop Summary / Interpretation Vision August 2018, Bowles Green Activity Plan draft 281118



Jogging round the lake, February 2022

- Growing demand for talks on the park's heritage to local groups off site including Women's Institute, U3A , Civic Societies as well as the heritage events
- New opportunities for outdoor activities are emerging including paddle boarding (potentially year round), archery and the clip and climb facility (2018, under conversion to a cafe 2022).
- Natural play

Events

Events in 2018 included Bee Day, Roald Dahl Day, Celebrating Hilda Wicksteed (Heritage Open Days) as well as a range of seasonal events and celebrations, with a total of 42 education and community events. In June 2018 a Repton picnic was held at the park with heritage games as well as information on Repton's role at Barton Seagrave, the estate where the park was built. The Pavilion hosted 27 weddings , the majority for c500 guests, as well as shows, parties and private events.

In 2022 a full activities programme will run during the summer June to September including exhibitions, wellbeing workshops, Jubilee, Soap box derby, Regatta, Model Mayhem, Heritage Open Weekends, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee (1950s), "DIG" Into our History exhibition and Concrete Cottages, Regatta (1920s), Roaring Wicksteed Ball (1920s) but Wicksteed at War was cancelled out of respect for the war in Ukraine.⁸⁴

Clubs

The park maintains relationships with organisations across many sections of the community and hosts many charitable events. This level of community involvement is very unusual in a privately owned park. Clubs include:

- The Wicksteed Park Railway is one of the defining rides and features of the park. The railway is operated by a combination of paid staff and volunteers, but in 2017 railway volunteers were low on numbers.
- The Wicksteed Park Model Boat Club was reformed in 2005 and grew to around 70 members. The club is based at the model boating lake. There is a limited amount of secure storage associated with the boating lake.
- The Kettering Sea Cadets have sailing boats moored on the lake and make use of the lake for sailing and other watersports activities. The links between the park and the Sea Cadets are becoming stronger. In 2018 following the loss of the boathouse, Sea Scouts took storage on the west bank of the lake and have recently moved to the boathouse site.
- The Edge Angling Club manages the Fishing Lake in association. Management is predominantly related to the maintenance of fishing platforms and access and in 2022 there are plans for them to play a role in maintaining the main lake.
- Kettering 5km parkrun every Saturday around the lake. After a pandemic break parkrun resumed in July 2021. Event number 194 was held on 5th February 2022.⁸⁵
- In 2021 there were many partnerships: working with Wicksteed Model Boaters, an exhibition of environmental improvements and weekly activities; Northamptonshire Guild of Designer Crafts Guild exhibitions; Princes Trust youth project; Jacobite Youth Theatre; Kettering Community Unit, community learning activities; Brightkidz, survey undertaken with staff and volunteers to identify training and learning needs; Kettering Eco Group, environmental activities project at Wicksteed Park.

The 2018 Activity Plan themes and April 2022 update⁸⁶

Despite the interruptions caused by the pandemic, the team have continued delivery of activities based on the 5 themes set out in the Activity Plan, with just a few of the activities listed below:

Theme 1 Caring for our heritage:

- ***Developing our Archive;*** Digital archive new template populated and going live on our website for a soft launch 16th March 2022; 4 heritage exhibitions shown to date with a further 4 in place for 2022; Souvenir guide and postcards in hand 2022; have joined the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum
- ***Young Curators*** in school or onsite training will be delivered by our heritage archive team and educators to include research methods
- ***The Oral History of Wicksteed Park*** 4 volunteers recruited. Oral History Training given, 12 Oral histories recorded to date

Theme 2 Interpreting our heritage

- ***Park explainers*** training uniforms, full delivery for peak season

Theme 3 Heritage events for the public

- ***Community, heritage and environment events programme:*** 350 sessions / events delivered, outdoors in 2021, exhibitions theatre, work with Kettering Cultural Consortium; Workers Cottage Allotment Garden new planting scheme; QR Code to learn more about the concrete cottages; Rose Garden planting new planting scheme developed to celebrate Jubilee, volunteers growing from seed over 5000 plants. Beech Avenue maintenance and interpretation information; Willow Coppicing and hurdle building; We will be working with the Northamptonshire Gardens trust to develop a plant identification template and training programme.
- ***Centenary celebrations:*** events in 2021
- Exploring Wicksteed's Heritage Days: Delivered 1 key event in 2021 "DIG" Into our history"
- Guided tours: The heritage trail was updated as a self-led family activity in 2021 regular tours programme 2022
- Heritage and high tea: in planning

⁸⁴ Update to Activity Delivery Plan 8 April 2022. <https://wicksteedpark.org/wicksteed-at-war-event-cancelled-due-to-war-in-ukraine/> accessed 10 May 2022

⁸⁵ <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/kettering/>

⁸⁶ Update to Activity Delivery Plan 8 April 2022

Theme 4 Heritage for learners and professionals

- **Around the world with Charles Wicksteed:** school based and family workshops
- **Wicksteed innovation awards:**
- **Heritage talks on tour; 6 talks delivered**
- **Festival of play:** 2021/2022; Conference March 2023
- **Education and learning activities:** 2022 Primary, Scouts, Guides, Brownies and Cubs programmes in place. Totally Nature Tots and Crafternoon from October 2021 and resumed at the end of February 2022. A short craft workshop programme to restart in September 2022.

Theme 5 Supporting activity

- **Staff training:** We delivered over 10 Heritage Induction training sessions for new and existing staff during 2021 with over 200 team members participating. John Winder PhD has created History of Play information and images for training. A full heritage induction training programme is in place for all new and seasonal employees for 2022 and a returners quiz has been developed for people returning for the new season.
- **Volunteers Training :** Digital resources in place, Multiple heritage induction workshops delivered, Poly tunnel inductions delivered, Trip planned to Stowe Gardens with head gardener, ongoing support from Kettering Borough Council Gardening team providing specialist advice, the new Ranger Lewis is providing additional skill-based training regarding habitats. The new Volunteers base is the focus for information sharing. Seed collection and storage. Northamptonshire Gardens Trust support ongoing. Oral History Training delivered. Welcome Host and Guided Tours Training delivered.

3.5.3 Development of the education programme up to 2018

The events above continue and expand the tradition of working with many thousands of school children and it a special feature of the park that all staff engage with visitors. Over the decades the park has provided the backdrop for groups, educators and individuals to learn through self-guided activity. A more formal education offer emerged in the early 2000s with the recruitment of an in-house part time education officer who delivered a number of primary school focused heritage days. There was also a display of the park's history ('The Wicksteed Story') which was not in a very prominent location, at the back of the Octagon. It was renovated and held a number of well-attended exhibitions during the Lakes project. In 2018 the archives and display are in temporary accommodation while new facilities are redeveloped in the Historic Heart and @Play projects.

As part of the Lakes project an element of informal education was embedded within the Activity Plan through the delivery of heritage talks, environmental projects, volunteer training and community engagement through craft based activities. There has been major progress in understanding the story and significance of the park and relating activities more closely to the park's heritage.

The Lakes project early outcomes led directly to the education offer being reimaged in 2016, moving from the delivery of 4 theme based days to the creation of a new accessible yet ambitious schools education programme. Since 2016 the education programme led by the community and education team offers an ambitious yet flexible programme of activities that reflect the park's wider social and its special heritage, habitats and its landscape, whilst meeting the curriculum. This has been positively received by schools and home educators alike and with growing interest seeking to the programme for 2019 will be expanded piloting new activities for pre-school and older student groups.

In 2017, 1822 children attended 32 Education Days, another 500 attended a Play Day and a further 13,596 visited the park as part of 211 booked school visits. Community performances have been held such as a specially commissioned contemporary performance of *A Midsummers Nights Dream* performed in the Amphitheatre; it was well attended although operational challenges had to be overcome.

The 2018 events and activities include Habitats at Wicksteed, Science and Design (including Fairgrounds and Rollercoasters), Art and Literature, and History including Charles Wicksteed Day, Wicksteed by the Sea and Wartime at Wicksteed. The new draft education programme has a range of activities, with new maths options for Key Stage One to Four, as well as History, Habitat, Art and Literature and Physics and Design *using the playground as a laboratory*. Activities have utilised the skills of ride staff and animal keepers to bring to life science and habitats. This has been well received by schools and home educators.

*Our education activities provide learners with excellent opportunities to ENGAGE, EXPLORE AND EXPERIMENT using the Park as a landscape for learning and play*⁸⁷

Wicksteed Park is committed to developing and delivering a wide range of learning opportunities for local communities and visitors that reflects and responds to the diverse range of provision the park offers. As a part of this commitment a learning and education strategy is being developed which that aims to:-

- Encourage further interest in our cultural heritage and environment
- Gain new skills, or broadening of current knowledge and understanding
- Develop personal confidence, building self-esteem or enable social inclusion
- Make learning accessible and fun
- Provide an enriching experience

The development of the learning and education strategy considers the following:-

- What is the current offer of learning activities being delivered at the park?
- What could we offer as part of our learning programme?
- How do we describe and market our learning activities?
- How do we assess the quality of the provision on offer?
- How is our formal learning offer developed, delivered and resourced?
- What are the barriers and enablers of delivering and sustaining a high quality learning offer?⁸⁸

The learning centre of 2019

The Wicksteed Trust recognised the social and economic value of learning and education within their natural environment, however to meet expectations there was a need to consider built resources. A new learning space was constructed in the Historic Heart and was opened in 2019. It is a modern design by Lathams and was shortlisted for AJ awards 2019: Project under the £250K category. It provides dedicated quality space for community groups and individuals to participate in hands on often messy activities, floor based activities or exhibitions in a safe space to meets the needs of the participants.

This has allowed the team to widen educational activities and supports the work of the volunteers.



Opening of the new learning centre in 2019

87 Educational Activities draft 2018

88 Tracey Clarke, report September 2018

3.6 Access

Accessibility

Wicksteed Park has an updated Access Statement, available on the website.⁸⁹ It includes a statement on public safety for disabled people. It reflects recent changes with accessible routes around the precinct and Octagon, new reception area and there is now a lift in the Pavilion. Following the lake project there are now accessible routes around the park including the lake, although accessibility is currently affected by drainage issues in some areas. There are accessible toilets in several locations and a Changing Places toilet to cater safely for multiple needs. The Access Statement notes that 'there are a lot of green areas, which are also used for car parking'; this needs to be carefully managed to reduce potential conflicts. It also acknowledges that not all rides may be suitable for all: 'As Members of the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions (BALPPA) we welcome visits by disabled people and will do all that is possible to ensure a safe and pleasurable stay; certain rides/attraction in our park can be physically demanding and vigorous. We therefore reserve the right to refuse admission to certain rides/attractions should we feel there is a danger to a particular individual ...' The issue of access to rides was also raised in the 2021 visitor survey⁹⁰ but the website states 'Many of our rides can accommodate some disabilities and the train can board wheelchairs. There are gentle slopes down to the lake's edge where you can pick up a flat path that takes you all around the park.'

Entrances

There are eight pedestrian entrances which are open during daylight hours, as well as some more informal access points from the south of the site.

Since the Lakes project there are increasing numbers of pedestrians accessing the lake from new housing and footpaths to the east, and from informal footpaths along the Ise valley linking to the nature reserve to the north and the public footpath on the dismantled railway line to the south. In 2012 the pedestrian entrances were uninviting with little or no signage to inform and orientate visitors. New entrances, information and direction signage has been developed across the park, linked to the park branding project and improvements in information and signage are ongoing.

The great majority of visitors to the attraction arrive by car via the main entrance from the A6003 Barton Road. In 2017 91% of visitors travelled by car (an increase on 2015); and 7% arrived on foot. The 2015 survey showed that off-peak visitors included a larger percentage who walked to the park (21%). In 2021 when rides were closed only half of respondents (56.1%) travelled to Wicksteed Park by car, followed by on foot (40.2%). The arrival experience is described in Character Area G above; it only makes partial use of the avenue but the new payment scheme has reduced congestion and enabled the removal of the clutter at the main entrance.

Footpaths

There are no Public Rights of Way running through the park but there are a number running through the Wicksteed Estate to the east of the park through and around Castle Field, the cricket field and along the dismantled railway line to the south.

These are all well used and many run towards the park, making good pedestrian and cycle access possible. There are also many well-established footpaths and roads used for pedestrians and maintenance access running through the estate. In recent years surfaces around the lake have been improved, increasing accessibility and use as set out in visitor numbers above. Surfaces vary from tarmac in the more intensively used areas, recent spray and chip and gravel surfaces in the Historic Heart Area to self binding gravel around the lake and mown paths across grass; drainage and maintenance are issues in some areas.

Cycling

There is currently no designated cycle route around the park or a cycling policy, although the lakeside path, provided as part of the Lakes project, provides a combined cycle/pedestrian route (cycling early and late in the day only), linked with the cycle path across Wicksteed Park Nature Reserve. Cycle tracks run along Barton Road on the northern boundary and along Polwell Lane to the east. In 2021 only 0.6% of respondents travelled by bicycle to Wicksteed Park. Electric scooters are not allowed in the park. They were introduced by the County Council for hire in Kettering in 2020 but can only be used legally on roads, cycle lanes or cycle tracks; private E-scooters may not be used on roads, pavements, or parks.⁹¹

Existing public transport routes

There are several bus routes passing the park and the station is 1.7 miles away. In 2021 only 2.5% of respondents used the bus to travel to Wicksteed Park. The great majority use private cars and there is no information on alternatives on the website (2022).

Car parking

Car parking has been a major use of the park for many decades. In 2012 parking was relatively unconstrained, affecting wide areas of the park and this was identified as a major issue. Visitors were directed to primary parking areas on grass in area E (top field) on ride days, and parts of the ornamental park areas C and D, partly on tarmac, but largely on grass. There was some parking in other areas, eg for access to the model boating lake, fishing lake and camping and adjacent areas (Area M). In recent years Wicksteed has introduced greater restrictions on parking. These controls are largely in line with the recommendations set out in the Park Masterplan with some new surfaced and delineated parking in the top field and north end of the pony field which is intended to be the main car parking area.⁹² Further controls are being introduced with timber bollards to protect the grass and trees, in progress in March 2022. Parking is at a premium on busy days and visitors value being able to picnic near their car. However this leads to potential conflict between cars and pedestrians and affects the ornamental park and trees in some areas including a part of area C and area D.

⁸⁹ Wicksteed Park Access Statement <https://wicksteedpark.org/access-statement/> accessed March 2022
⁹⁰ CFP, Wicksteed Park Visitor Survey Report 2021

⁹¹ https://www.kettering.gov.uk/news/article/1582/voi_shared_e-scooters_arrive_in_kettering
⁹² Park Masterplan SCHL December 2012 and updates

4.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This section follows HLF Guidance and also incorporates the types of significance set out in English Heritage's *Conservation Principles*.⁹³ A new version of *Conservation Principles* was issued for consultation in late 2017, but the revised version has not yet been published.⁹⁴ The determination of the significance is the core of the CP, as all decisions should flow from an understanding of the significance and values attached to the site. The determination of the significance of these assets is based on statutory designation and according to the 2008 guidance professional judgement against four broad values:

- **Evidential value:** Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. It includes physical remains, above and below ground (archaeology) as well as geology, landforms, species and habitats. Evidential value relates to the potential to contribute to people's understanding of the past and might take into account date, rarity, condition and relation to documentary evidence.
- **Historical value:** Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be *illustrative (visual) or associative*. The illustrative value of places tends to be greater if they incorporate the first, or only surviving, example of an innovation of consequence, whether related to design, technology or social organisation. For example if it illustrates a rare or early example, a unique style, complete survival, associated with significant people and events, association with other important assets or literature, art, music or film. It takes account of completeness and ability to illustrate connections, use and management.
- **Aesthetic value:** (design and artistic value) Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. It is related to periods of culture; quality of design, innovation, influence, role of architect and artist/craftsman, Design in accordance with landscape theories, such as the Picturesque), composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation) materials or planting. Sources and expression of concepts. Strong indicators of importance are quality of design and execution, and innovation, particularly if influential.
- **Communal value:** *Commemorative and symbolic values and Social value.* Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, along with and educational, social or economic values.

The Consultation draft of *Conservation Principles* suggests that 'The term 'significance' is used in conservation to mean the heritage value of an asset due to its heritage interest – in simple terms, it is the sum total of why a place matters from a heritage point of view. According to this definition, significance is encompassed by four headings: archaeological interest, architectural interest, artistic interest and historic interest.' We have retained the earlier versions as these best answer the values set out in HLF guidance, such as community values. Areas of significance are developed into themes for clarity.

Levels of significance

- **Very high:** Grade I sites and buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments; sites/features of international significance; fundamental to the design concept or to historic interest.
- **High:** Grade II sites and II* buildings; sites/features of national importance; essential parts or elements specific to the vocabulary of the design.
- **Medium:** Grade II buildings; sites/features of regional importance; of historic interest; contributes to design complexity
- **Low:** Sites /features of local importance, local listed buildings and landscapes
- **Negligible:** Sites/ features with no significant value
- **Negative:** Negative or intrusive features, which detract from the value of a site, such as impact on views

Significance is assessed in four ways below:

- 1 Overall statement of significance in the national context
- 2 Significance of the main phases of development
- 3 Significance of aspects of the site as whole in the national context
- 4 Relative significance of the main features

4.1 Overall Statement of significance

Overall Significance in the national context: high (national)

The park owes its highest significance to the vision of the pioneering industrialist and philanthropist Charles Wicksteed, his influence on the local area but also on the development of play in parks throughout the world in the early twentieth century. The park's intensive public use and memories associated with it since its foundation in 1916 are also significant. It is included in the *English Heritage Register of parks and gardens of special historic interest*, grade II, which denotes national significance. The registered park extends to c45ha and its extent has remained substantially intact during its known history. The most significant areas are those demonstrating the original values of the park and those associated with its development before the second world war. Its archaeological resource, its earlier history and links to the landscape associated with Humphry Repton add to its significance.

In addition to inclusion in the *English Heritage Register of parks and gardens of special historic interest*, the current edition of the *Pevsner Architectural Guide for Northamptonshire* includes the park.

4.2 Significance of the main phases of development

- The site is rich in archaeology and has evidence of medieval settlement and land use : medium-high
- The site was part of the Barton Seagrave Estate and features in views from Barton Hall, on which the landscape designer Humphry Repton advised: high
- In the early stages of Wicksteed Park it had the character of a landscape or country park in a rural setting with Pavilion, formal garden and playground added, and water play, including lakeside swimming, boating and the water chute; it incorporated early features of the outdoor swimming and lido movement of the 1930s : very high
- By the death of Charles Wicksteed in 1931, it was a showcase for playground equipment: very high
- From the 1930s and into the 1950s it flourished as a rural park with a range traditional outdoor family activities with a few rides integrated into the landscape : very high
- During the mid-late twentieth century its dominant character, especially at the entrance area, became one of an amusement park in a rural setting: medium/low with negative features.

93 English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* 2008; Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment 23 March 2010

94 *Conservation Principles Consultation Draft* 10th November 2017

4.2 Themes of significance

Evidential value

Theme A: Early history, medieval settlement and land use

Significance: Low, high and very high (local and national)

The earlier history of the site and its relationship with Barton Seagrave Hall and the development of the Manor and Barton Seagrave village are of great interest. While the site of the park itself was agricultural until the park was laid out, it formed the setting of Castle Field and the pattern of use derives from the medieval open fields of Barton Seagrave and Kettering.

- The open fields of Kettering had been worked in common during the medieval period, but were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1804 and the site still displays the post enclosure landscape with field boundaries surviving. Slight earthwork traces of medieval ridge and furrow fields have been recognised by Graham Keevill, on the west side of the Isle valley within Wicksteed Park and show clearly on LiDAR images. The area is rich in Bronze Age and Iron age remains suggesting further potential.

Significance: low (local) possibly medium

- The Castle Field adjoins the park and is within the ownership of the Wicksteed Village Trust. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and contains medieval earthwork remains of the manor of Barton Hanred including two medieval mottes and other features.⁹⁵ Castle Field is Kettering's only Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Significance: (high) national as setting to site of very high (national to international) significance

Evidential and historical value

Theme B: The eighteenth century: designed landscape history

Significance: high (national)

The site of Wicksteed Park features in the wide view included in Humphry Repton's *Red Book for Barton Seagrave Hall* prepared in 1793-4 (see View 8). This land is closely related to the grounds of Wicksteed Park both physically and historically. This view shows the 'before' and 'after' view to the west with the thinning of avenues to widen the view over the Isle, including the fields of Wicksteed Park. This indicates the park's essential part in forming the setting of the Grade II* listed Barton Seagrave Hall. Repton described this view as follows:

*The long sketch shews the general effect of the improvements ...as viewed from the apartments in the west front. The plantation [where the road crosses the river, looking towards Wicksteed park and Pytchley]... should never be suffered to grow so high as to hide any part of the view towards Pytchley, except the bottom, and the hills seen over such a foreground will appear to greater advantage. The high road will hardly be visible for reasons already hinted in describing the river, because it crosses the eye while the present line is naked quite from the house to the bridge, and is frequently crowded with dung carts and other disagreeable objects. The open field towards Kettering will also appear to more advantage if seen over a foreground of wood in the valley...*⁹⁶

Although much of Repton's advice was not followed, documentary and site evidence suggests that the avenue was broken up as Repton suggested.

Theme C: Wicksteed Park: Comparison with other parks made by industrialists

Significance: medium to high (regional to national)

Wicksteed Park can be compared with public parks funded by industrialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

Bournville, south Birmingham

The Bournville Village Trust was founded in 1900 by George Cadbury, the chocolate manufacturer and Quaker. He set out to prove that good quality housing in a natural, green environment was a necessity for the greater good of society.⁹⁷

Bournville works incorporated an earlier Palladian villa and its landscape and was laid out with separate, enclosed sports grounds for the men and a tennis lawn and gardens for the women or 'girls'. Great emphasis was laid on respectability and good working conditions in lieu of high wages; behaviour was tightly controlled.⁹⁸ Although designed for factory workers, it is estimated that throughout its history the proportion of Bournville Estate residents with a direct connection to the Cadbury factory has never reached more than 40%. They could make use of Bournville Park, laid out around the meandering Bourn Brook. Bournville Park is part of the Bournville Village Conservation Area whose physical environment is still tightly controlled, with covenants relating to hedge height, satellite dishes, window replacement and even the type of pets residents are allowed to keep.

Lord Leverhulme's work at Bolton and at Port Sunlight

Lever donated the 160 ha site for Lever Park Rivington to Bolton Corporation in 1902 and it opened in 1904; he also offered to maintain it in his lifetime.⁹⁹ Since 1974 it has been maintained by North West Water Authority as a public park. The 130ha model village of Port Sunlight was laid out for factory workers between 1884 and 1888 together with a new factory. The village includes parks at the Dell, the Diamond and the Causeway (completed by 1914). The open spaces, including front gardens, were maintained by the company, and appearance was tightly controlled (no fowls, dustbins or washing allowed) and play grounds and gymnasium were separately enclosed and kept away from the ornamental parks. The housing was initially for Port Sunlight workers only and the public spaces mainly used by residents. It is now managed by Port Sunlight Village Trust.¹⁰⁰

Rowntree Park

Wicksteed is contemporary with York's first municipal park and recreation ground: Rowntree Park was a gift to the City of York by Messrs Rowntree and Company. It was laid out on a former water meadow and opened in July 1921. The park was created as a memorial to the Cocoa Works staff who fell and suffered in World War 1 by the Rowntree Village Trust in consultation with the architect Frederick Rowntree. The layout included a formal garden area in the centre with original (1921), canal, formal ponds, parterres, and a tea room; there were also a small wading pool with a sun shelter and a swimming bath, 4 bowling greens, pergola, bandstand, 6 areas of tennis grounds and a long serpentine lake, created by the diversion of Clementhorpe Beck. The park was a public park from the outset and is now managed by the City of York Council Leisure Services.¹⁰¹

Kettering context

Wicksteed differed from the examples above in that it was not tied to a factory and its focus was on fun rather than improvement; it was less prescriptive in activities, access and appearance and has remained in private ownership and management- see below. Locally, there was a tradition of local

95 Tft Cultural Heritage, Barton Seagrave Hall, Castle Field and Wicksteed Park: Conservation Statement, 2000

96 Humphry Repton, *Red Book for Barton Seagrave*, 1793-4 (Microfilm at British Library)

97 The Bournville Story

98 Helena Chance, lecture to Oxfordshire Gardens Trust, 17 March 2011; other possible comparisons are with W. & R. Jacob in Aintree; Huntley and Palmer in Reading and Joseph Lucas in Birmingham (Moor Park Recreation Ground) or the parks laid out by the Miner's Welfare Committee in Tyne and Wear

99 It is registered grade II, designed by TH Mawson who designed several parks and gardens for Lever.

100 Fiona Green, 'Port Sunlight Conservation & Management Plan Landscape Report', Appraisal of Designed Landscape at Port Sunlight Village '2007 and pers.comm. 15 April 201

101 English Heritage Register description, 1931 Ordnance Survey plan

manufacturers purchasing and donating land for recreation. Land for North Park was purchased by boot machinist William Cattell in 1891 and it was acquired by the Local Authority c1922. Mill Road Park was opened in 1925 as the result of a gift from shoe manufacture Frank Wright. However neither of these were of the scale or ornamental nature of Wicksteed.¹⁰²

Theme D: Wicksteed Park's place in theme park and pleasure garden design

Significance: high (national)

Parks and gardens have always incorporated amusements. Fun was incorporated into ornamental parks, often making use of water; for instance the elaborate water jokes of Italian Renaissance gardens, which drenched unsuspecting visitors. This was enthusiastically taken up in seventeenth century and eighteenth century English designs, such as the famous willow tree fountain of 1693 at Chatsworth. Lakes have long been used for recreational boating in the landscape garden.¹⁰³ Not only elaborate boats and barges were essential and enjoyable ornaments, but entire naval battles would be re-enacted, with whole fleets and even forts at West Wycombe and Newstead Abbey. Rides had their origins in fairs such as seventeenth century Turkish fairs or Bartholomew's Fair in England in the fourteenth century and were later incorporated in pleasure gardens. Faster, more exciting rides were developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initially, these would make use of the existing landscape, such as the 1924 roller coaster at Kennywood Park, Pennsylvania which used natural ravines; later whole artificial, often interior, landscapes would be created.¹⁰⁴

In Britain, one of the first parks which could be described as a theme park and is a precedent for Wicksteed Park was *Crystal Palace Park*. Designed as a spectacular setting for the relocated Crystal Palace in the 1850s, it was a paying attraction rather than a public park, and from the outset incorporated a great range of amusements and attractions. A water funfair, the 'Fairy Archipelago' was opened in 1902, using one of the reservoirs for water chutes and rides on 'electric canoes'.¹⁰⁵ It is now a public park and none of these amusements survive, although sporting use has continued.

Another comparison can be made with *Margate Dreamland* which was the subject of a Lottery funded project to repair and was promoted as a heritage amusement park. In 1867 a Menagerie and Pleasure gardens were created adjoining 'The Hall By The Sea'. It opened as 'Dreamland' in 1920 with a scenic railway, following American examples; it is one of the oldest surviving examples in Europe. Further rides were added but in the 1980s the pleasure gardens were sold. It reopened in June 2015 and since then it has been 're-landscaped to provide a space that brings together lovingly restored vintage rides set against a backdrop of art installations'.¹⁰⁶ With the loss of the gardens, its setting is now very different from Wicksteed's and there was an entrance charge even for access to the menagerie and gardens only. Unlike Wicksteed, it was in the tradition of *Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens* or the earlier *Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens*, or the nineteenth century pleasure gardens such as *Cremorne* and *Rosherville*. These were paying attractions offering walks, garden areas, refreshments and entertainment but no rides.¹⁰⁷ Other early theme parks include the Luna Parks at Coney Island in New York (redeveloped from 1903), on Sydney Harbour (1935) and at Melbourne (as 'Dreamland' from 1906), which are all valued for their history, but unlike Wicksteed, these were amusement parks from the outset.¹⁰⁸

Wicksteed Park's theme park element falls into the earlier tradition of theme parks in that Wicksteed

adapted the landscape for pleasure, by building the lake and the rides and activities which made use of water in the landscape. One of these was the patent one-man waterchute (1926), one of many play structures designed by Charles Wicksteed. Early slides were also built into the natural slope. The tradition of rides has continued and expanded; Wicksteed holds an arguably unique place among theme park landscapes, incorporating traditional and heritage rides within an extensive ornamental landscape freely accessible to the public.

Theme E: Wicksteed's place in the history of outdoor recreation, swimming and cycling

Significance: high (national)

The earliest recreation facilities were centred on the lake, not only for boating, but with grass-edged paddling and swimming areas along the lake, later formalised (1947) into separate pools. The opening of the park was marked by a grand regatta and regattas became a regular feature of the park. Swimming at Wicksteed can be seen both in the context of the social aspirations of public parks and as a forerunner of the *lido* movement, which had its origins in 1920s Germany. There is a long tradition of swimming in public parks. For instance, when Victoria Park was opened in 1845 in the east end of London, there was a Bathing Lake (1846-7, extended 1868), and then a new (or Men's) Bathing Lake (1860s).¹⁰⁹ The bathing lakes were provided as baths were generally unknown in the area and thousands were known to swim early in the morning. Later public parks were to accommodate open air pools or *lidos*, a movement which began in the 1930s and 169 were built across the UK as recreational facilities by local councils.¹¹⁰ The Serpentine was opened for mixed bathing in 1929.¹¹¹

At Victoria Park a Lido was added in 1936, (demolished 1989) and more recently in the 1980s a water play area added; at Wicksteed the concreting of the pools followed the lido movement. But the swimming pool was closed in the 1970s due to high maintenance costs and interactive water play has been lost from the park.

Cycling

The park also contains a rare cycling track dating to 1930 and which hosted prestigious events and was opened by Olympic Gold medallist Lord Burghley. It is currently used for Go Karts but remains essentially intact. The first British cycle track was Putney Velodrome of 1868, but it was short lived, replaced with housing by 1907. The oldest surviving velodrome in the UK, at Preston Park, Brighton (1877), is a circuit of 579m. Although the popularity of the track declined in the 1970s and 1980s, a new league was formed in 2000 which has gone from strength to strength.¹¹² The 547m Herne Hill Track opened in 1891 followed by one in 1896 at Crystal Palace Park of 536m, later converted for motor racing. The Herne Hill track is a rare survival but under frequent threat.¹¹³ Between 1987, when the track at Paddington Recreation Ground was demolished, and 2011, when the London Velopark for the 2012 Summer Olympics opened, Herne Hill was the only track in London. An outdoor arena was characterised by a substantial length per lap (usually 400 yards/400 metres plus), shallow bankings (10-20 degrees maximum) and typically with a cement surface. Wicksteed's circuit is about 400m. During the twentieth century they were increasingly replaced by indoor velodromes and many early twentieth century cycling tracks and their associated events have disappeared. Nevertheless outdoor tracks are still used by clubs and for training. Olympic gold medallist and Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins started racing at Herne Hill when he was 12.¹¹⁴ Famous riders such as Sir Chris Hoy, Katie Archibald and Craig Maclean first tried track cycling at Meadowbank, Edinburgh, a 250m wooden outdoor velodrome in Edinburgh, built for the Commonwealth Games in 1970, sadly closed in 2017.¹¹⁵ Yet growing

- 102 Ian Addiss, part draft for planned book, 2011: 'The Colourful history of the North Park, Kettering and other diversions' and pers.comm. April and May 2011
- 103 Kate Felus, 'Boats and Boating in the Designed Landscape, 1720-1820, *Garden History*, 34:1 (2006), p22.
- 104 Young and Riley (ed) *Theme Park Landscapes: antecedents and variations*, 2002, p.240 et.seq.
- 105 Sarah Couch, 'Crystal Palace Park Conservation Management Plan', 2007
- 106 <https://www.dreamland.co.uk/about-dreamland> Accessed 3 September 2018
- 107 Information from Michael Symes, lecture at Oxford Victorian Garden conference, October 2011. See also Sarah Jane Dowling, *The English Pleasure Garden 1660-1860*, Shire, 2009; Jonathan Peacock, 'Rosherville Gardens: an Epitome of Victorian England', *Garden History* 39:1, 2011, pp64-82.
- 108 Examples suggested in Ray Hole Architects 'Wicksteed Park New Entry Strategy and Redevelopment of the Fairground Area', 2011

- 109 English Heritage Register description
- 110 Janet Smith, *Liquid Assets (Played in Britain)* 2005
- 111 Roger Deakin, *Waterlog*, 2000, p142
- 112 <http://scrl.co.uk/> accessed 4.09.18
- 113 <https://www.velouk.net/2012/05/05/history-of-cycle-sport-and-the-british-cycling-federation/> accessed 4.09.18
- 114 *Guardian*, 8 April 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2007/apr/08/cycling.news> Looking down from Herne Hill, I can see the future is bright
- 115 <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/end-of-an-era-as-meadowbank-velodrome-to-close-for-final-time-1-4546042> accessed 4.09.18



From its early days the park catered for the entertainment of large numbers of visitors; photos of early play equipment, paddling in the lake and crowds watching Punch and Judy (with tea pavilion in the background), from Wicksteed Park archive

interest in cycling has led to the creation of new tracks, such as a 250m outdoor tarmac cycle track built at Slades Farm, Bournemouth, Dorset that opened to the public in May 2011.¹¹⁶

Theme F: Charles Wicksteed's influence on children's play

Significance: very high (international)

In the development of children's play in public parks, Wicksteed had international significance. In the early twentieth century, provision of play equipment was very limited and opportunities for play strictly controlled; boys and girls were segregated and supervised and play on Sundays was prohibited. In many cases children's play had not been incorporated into new public pleasure grounds, and the popular solution was often a dedicated recreation ground elsewhere.¹¹⁷ Wicksteed found that the emphasis was on formal recreation with 'ample provision for football, cricket, tennis and bowls' and that parks were full of prohibitions. 'Charles Wicksteed ... gave a damning report of play equipment in municipally-owned parks around the time of the First World War: "I went on a tour all round the country to find what playthings were made for the children. The result was that I found very little was made, used or new, except the old-fashioned swing, a few broken down, dangerous giant strides and an exceedingly clumsy and dangerous bumper see-saw. It appeared that no one had devoted themselves to the bringing out and development of a variety of really good playthings."'¹¹⁸ He saw the possibility of child-centred play which he felt was more important than a beautifully laid out park. He began with experimental play equipment at Wicksteed Park and this led to the formation of Wicksteed Playgrounds with the equipment, especially swings, exported to over 80 countries around the world. By 1938 Wicksteeds had supplied 4,000 playgrounds, and by 1967 they were claiming to have supplied 10,000 at home and overseas (including Kuwait, Jamaica and South Africa). Wicksteed came to dominate the world of children's play in the 20th century, and contributed to a very public discussion about improving the welfare of children with his *Plea for Children's Recreation*. 'Thus the history of children's play equipment in public parks is virtually synonymous with that of Wicksteed's development'.¹¹⁹ Although no longer in the family, Wicksteed Playgrounds still manufactures play equipment and is celebrating its centenary in 2018.¹²⁰

Comparison with Coram's Fields

Like Wicksteed, Coram's Fields has a charitable origin and has become a site dedicated to children's play. In 1739 the philanthropist Captain Thomas Coram created the London Foundling Hospital to look after unwanted children in Bloomsbury. It is said to be the world's first incorporated charity and has attracted high profile supporters including Handel and Hogarth.

In the 1920s the hospital was relocated outside London and the land was sold to a developer who demolished the hospital building itself leaving only the single storey colonnaded Georgian buildings which surround the garden playground. Following a campaign and lengthy fundraising by local people Coram's Fields were bought by Lord Rothermere and others to be preserved as a children's playground. It may well have incorporated Wicksteed equipment. Coram's Fields is now owned and managed by an independent charitable trust. It is perhaps unique in being a playground which can only be entered by an adult in the company of children: it is one of London's most unusual and cherished playgrounds; it is a true place for children, much as Wicksteed intended for his park.¹²¹

It has, however, not had to use commercial revenue in the same way as Wicksteed.

The legacy of free and interactive play is being taken forward through the development of the @Play project. A mapping exercise was undertaken of museums and other projects providing interactive experiences related to children and children's play in Great Britain. It found that most

¹¹⁶ info@esca.uk.com accessed 4.09.18

¹¹⁷ Linden Groves, 'The History of Children's Play Provision in Public Parks', draft report for English Heritage, 2010

¹¹⁸ Linden Groves, draft report, 2010, with quotation from Charles Wicksteed, 'A Plea for Children's Recreation after School Hours and after School Age' 1928.

¹¹⁹ Linden Groves, draft report, 2010

¹²⁰ <https://wicksteed.co.uk/heritage/>

¹²¹ English Heritage Register description

places either addressed the history of children's play/toys or attempted an interactive museum that will be appealing for children, but no one has satisfactorily achieved both in one place. The team concluded that: 'Wicksteed's current project has no equivalent elsewhere in Great Britain. It will provide a unique experience as a free open-air interactive experience of children's play; celebrating the ideas and achievements of Charles Wicksteed.'

Historic and aesthetic value:

Theme G: Wicksteed Park's place in public park design

Significance: medium (regional)

Wicksteed follows a long tradition of provision of public parks, which began in the 1840s. For instance, London's Victoria Park was opened in 1845 following a public petition.¹²² Wicksteed falls quite late in the period of public park making and after the pioneering period of 1830-1885. Many more parks were created 1885-1914 and the emphasis was on providing space for sports. It is notable that Kettering had no public park until the foundation of Rockingham Road Pleasure Park in 1894, largely as a result of Wicksteed's influence. The park makes very good use of the landscape setting and the extensive views were enhanced by the creation of the lake, but as a public park design Wicksteed is not exceptional and the ornamental elements of the garden, lake and avenue etc are relatively limited. However, this is partly attributed to Wicksteed's unusual philosophy, which placed great emphasis on responding to need and providing opportunities for recreation in a healthy environment, and avoided the normal controls on access, behaviour and activities: this ethos is part of its interest. While initially the focus was on formal sports facilities for tennis, football and hockey, as at other contemporary parks, this soon changed to a wider focus on play, in response to the overwhelming success of Wicksteed's first temporary equipment.¹²³ The park is also highly unusual in that it has always been funded and managed by a Trust rather than a local authority.

Nevertheless, early on in the park's history Charles Wicksteed provided attractive, geometric garden areas of traditional design to provide a setting for his pavilion and to create peaceful retreats from crowds and activities. The reintroduction of flower gardens near the main house, sometimes geometric in design, was a feature of Repton's designs for landscape parks, making an unexpected link to the late Georgian period. However, the designs for the Fountain Lawn and Rose Garden may be better compared with other Arts and Crafts inspired designs of the period. For instance, Thomas Mawson designed early twentieth century formal terraced gardens for the nearby Rushton Hall estate in Northamptonshire (1905-1909). J A Gotch, who built Bryn Hafod for Charles Wicksteed and also buildings at Wicksteed Park, renovated the house. Mawson described this commission in *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (1926), using it as an example of providing 'a proper setting and base to the mansion' while at the same time forming 'the wilderness and later landscape part into a well-connected and harmonious whole'.¹²⁴ Mawson also applied these principles to public parks. Belle Vue Park, Newport was the first public park designed by Thomas Mawson in 1893 with a tea pavilion overlooking terraces and an ornamental water garden. Burslem Park was laid out by Mawson and opened to the public in 1894. The focus of the park is the pavilion, in the fashionable late nineteenth century Elizabethan style, which stands on the eastern edge of the Terrace. However, the formal gardens at Wicksteed Park also contrast with the Arts and Crafts style, with their use of traditional materials and complex planting. As an engineer, Charles Wicksteed chose to use concrete and steel in modular units to speed up production and to create the effect he desired, which is unusual for this style of gardening and could perhaps be seen as a forerunner of modern movement landscape design which celebrated modern materials. While the rose towers may be seen as traditional features, they also have their distinctive Wicksteed style. The horizontal components were the most unusual feature, and with the diagonal pattern they looked very like engineer-designed cross braced girders – but constructed from rustic poles complete with bark.

¹²² Hazel Conway, *Public Parks*, 1996

¹²³ Charles Wicksteed, 'A Plea for Children's Recreation after School Hours and after School Age' 1928, p5.

¹²⁴ Described in register description <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001663>. Fira suggested the Mawson comparison in Wicksteed Park @Play Statement of Significance July 2018 draft

Theme H: Wicksteed Park as a celebration of engineering and invention

Significance: high to very high (national)

Charles Wicksteed was an engineer and inventor and the park became his testing ground for his inventions. With a background in railway and steam engineering he brought these to the park, both in the steam excavation of the lake and the development of the railway. However he also loved trying out new ideas for play and soon broke away from the traditional gymnasium equipment, maypoles and 'giant strides', common in parks from the nineteenth century. He pushed the boundaries of adventurous play, inventing enormous swings, slides and roundabouts which became standard equipment throughout the world.

He also made exciting new, one-off rides such as the famous water chute of 1926. The water chute was listed Grade II in late 2016 for the following principal reasons:

- Date and rarity: it is the oldest water chute in Britain, and one of the oldest surviving water-based rides in the world;
- Architectural and design interest: the ride survives almost as it was built, and the rider experience is the same as when the ride first opened;
- Historic interest: designed and made by the manufacturer and philanthropist Charles Wicksteed, who was of national and international influence on attitudes to children's recreation, and the provision of purpose-designed play equipment;
- Group value: an important element of the overall design of Wicksteed Park, created in 1921 by Charles Wicksteed for the health and well being of the public (registered at Grade II, NHLE number 1001524).¹²⁵

Two other water chutes to his design are listed: East Park, Kingston upon Hull of 1929, listed 2003 and Northstead Manor Gardens Scarborough of 1932, listed in 2017.

Charles' earlier inventions are still being uncovered within the archive. Notable examples include tools and appliances that reduced manufacture time and waste including his patented tube expanders and saws with both hand and power operation; The Wicksteed 'hydraulic hacksaw', which was exhibited at Olympia could cut steel in five minutes instead of an hour (it was an instant commercial success enabling investment in the park); and the extraordinary bread buttering machine, which cuts and butters up to 400 slices an hour. A working version is still owned by the Trust.

Theme I Architectural interest

Significance: medium to high (regional to national)

Charles Wicksteed also applied his engineering mind to the construction of buildings and structures in the park. He seems to have been more interested in efficient, economical construction than architectural design, although some of the most distinctive buildings – the Pavilion and the recently lost three gabled boathouse and former bathing huts by the lake – all evoked a seaside holiday character which was no doubt intended, 'in a district where water is scarce'.¹²⁶ The Pavilion would have been at home on a seaside pier. All of these structures featured speedy 'dry' construction and prefabrication, particularly of concrete elements: the pioneering prefabricated concrete cottages; the steel and concrete construction of the Rose Garden retaining wall, the steel and precast concrete panel construction of the boathouse with timber clad gables,¹²⁷ and the cast iron steel and timber construction of the Pavilion, which brings seaside pier pavilion techniques to 'Kettering on Sea'.¹²⁸ All but the boathouse and bathing huts survive. The concrete cottages were an early example of prefabricated concrete buildings, which only became widespread after the second world war.¹²⁹ Three of the concrete cottages in the Octagon are substantially intact; they retain primary external walls, original window/door openings and roof form and much of the original layout and other original elements.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Listing description accessed <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1437706> 4.09.18

¹²⁶ *An Account of the Wicksteed Trust*, 1929

¹²⁷ MOLA Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering Northamptonshire, 2017

¹²⁸ Kettering town has run its own 'Kettering by the Sea' in the market place in recent years. <https://thisiskettering.com/bythesea/>

¹²⁹ E Blanchet and S Zhuravlyova *Prefabs* 2018; 30,000 PRC clad 'Cornish' units were built

¹³⁰ Lathams, Octagon report, 2017

Wicksteed often worked with local architect John Alfred Gotch who was eclectic in his designs, so he may have been willing to incorporate Wicksteed's ideas on construction and building character. It is likely that he designed the Pavilion and a rowing club house was designed in 1937 by Gotch, Saunders and Surridge. (Gazetteer 40) Other structures were designed by John Brandon-Jones. Charles Wicksteed also designed and built ergonomic seating, much in evidence at Wicksteed and around Kettering and the engineering inspired rose towers.

Theme J: The local context: importance to Kettering and region

Significance: medium (regional)

Charles Wicksteed was largely responsible for the first public park in Kettering. In 1884 as a local Board Councillor, he was instrumental in the founding of Kettering's first public park at Rockingham Road Pleasure Park.¹³¹ Prior to this there were public recreation or sports grounds, such as Northampton Road Recreation Ground (1871) and North Park (1891), but no ornamental public parks. Wicksteed had previously attempted to found the People's Park, for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. Charles Wicksteed's Plan was a proposal to the Kettering Urban District Council to persuade them to purchase the land and lay out a park for the benefit of the townspeople, however the Council felt they had insufficient funds at this time. His design was laid out along a railway line and around an existing brook, embellished with a circular planted island, bridges, winding paths, tennis courts, a bandstand, fountains, lodge, island beds and bounded by row of trees.¹³² Many of these features were later created at Wicksteed Park which remains a major free resource for the people of Kettering and region.

Charles also used the prolific local architect John Alfred Gotch (1852-1942) for many of his buildings. He was an important figure to Kettering, known as 'the town that Gotch built' and adopted many styles in a great range of buildings; this adds to Wicksteed's local distinctiveness.¹³³

The firm was responsible for the design of several WWI memorials, and the alteration and enlargement of numerous historic country houses.

Social or community value

Theme J: Social significance

Significance: Medium (regional) significance (and medium-high significance within the park)

Many thousands from a wide area have fond memories of visiting Wicksteed Park.

- The park has hosted many significant public events, such as regattas from 1922, attracting crowds of 15,000.
- The park has hosted significant sporting events and the opening of the cycle track in 1930 was a major addition to local sporting facilities. The track and football ground were opened by Olympic Gold medallist Lord Burghley. Prestigious cycling events were also held here.¹³⁴
- People value the combination of open space, good scenery and a good range of activities for all.
- The park continues to host a range of special events for large numbers.
- Very large numbers of users remember the park with great affection for events, sporting, family days out, educational visits, clubs, groups etc.
- People value the special character of the park, particularly the open space and feeling of freedom at Wicksteed Park.

¹³¹ Ian Addiss, part draft for planned book, 2011: *The Colourful history of the North Park, Kettering and other diversions* and pers.comm. April and May 2011. Rockingham Road Pleasure Park was provided for the people of Kettering in 1894, as a result of the efforts of Mr John Bryan, a local shoe manufacturer who persuaded the Kettering Local Government Board to purchase the land from him.

¹³² Kettering Library Local Studies Collection, Wicksteed's design for the People's Park, 1887

¹³³ The practice survives and 'is founded upon the legacy of the distinguished architect and scholar John Alfred Gotch'. He designed and supervised the construction of shoe factories and warehouses, shops, offices, banks, hospitals, schools, public houses, a coffee tavern and a temperance hall. He could turn his hand to almost any building type, from churches and chapels to working men's clubs and a party political club. His firm was responsible for a variety of sport and entertainment venues in Kettering: golf and cricket pavilions, the Kettering Town Football Club stand, the leisure facilities at Wicksteed Park, the Alfred East Art Gallery and the Victoria Hall. He built a wide range of housing, from simple terraces to detached middle-class homes. <http://www.gssarchitecture.com> accessed 3.09.18

¹³⁴ Information from Ian Addiss

Evidential value:

Theme K: Natural or scientific interest:

Significance: medium (regional)

The site contains an important stretch of the Rive lse valley with its mosaic of waterbodies and water meadows. Surveys have shown that the greatest ecological interest is found in the fishing lake (Area J), a Local Wildlife Site and in some hedges and trees dating to at least the early nineteenth century enclosures.

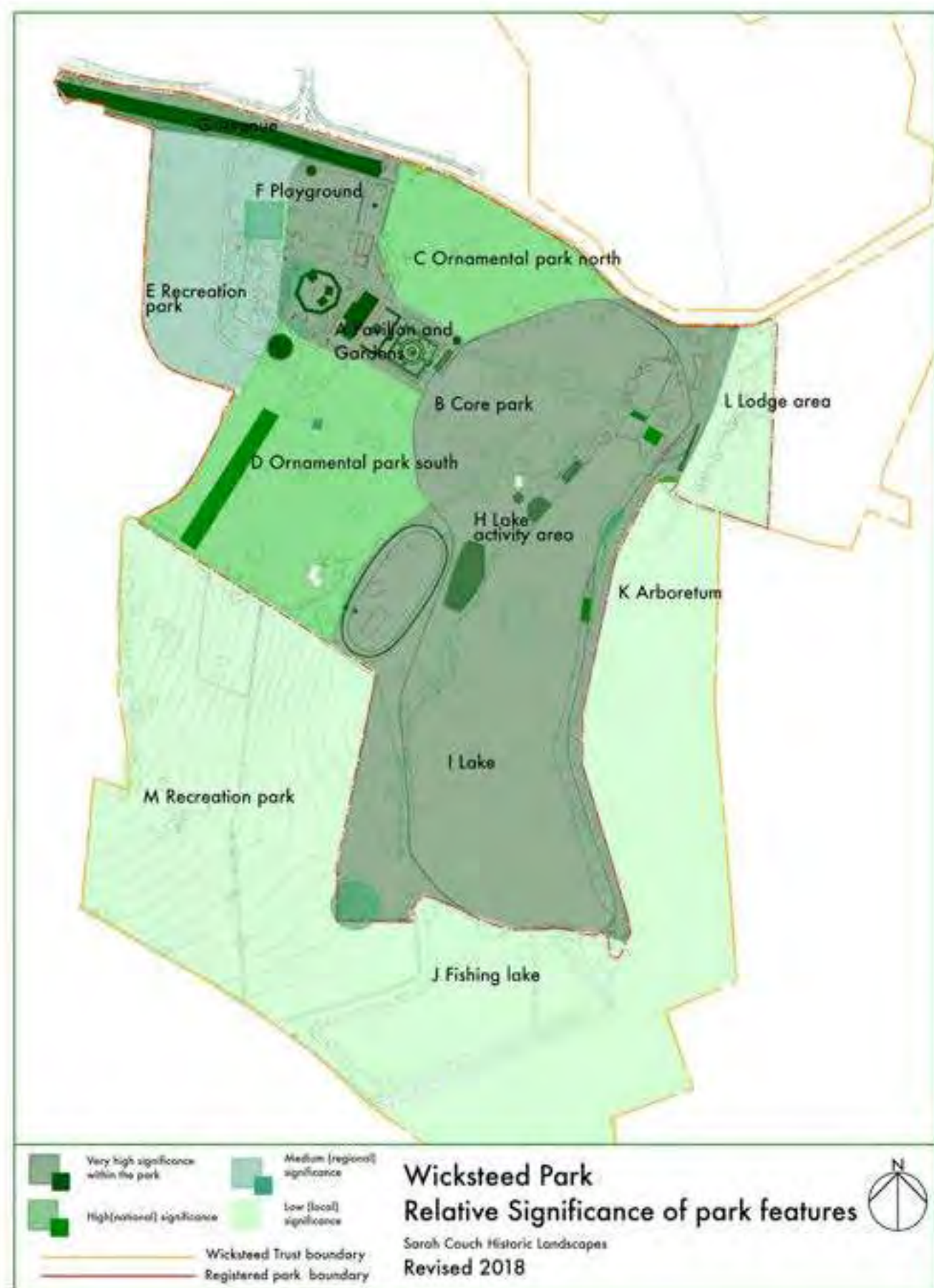
The main lake's previously limited ecological value has been enhanced by recent work and it has significant potential for invertebrates, reptiles and water fowl. There is also potential to establish more conservation interest in grassland through changes in management, to establish both damp and dry wild flower meadows, currently in progress.¹³⁵ The well used river lse corridor is part of the The Nene Valley Nature Improvement area which is re-creating and re-connecting natural areas along the Nene and its tributaries from Daventry to Peterborough and has regional significance.¹³⁶

4.3 Summary of unique features of Wicksteed Park

- Wicksteed is unique among industrialists' parks in that it was neither tied to a factory nor has it ever been in public ownership and management.
- It remains an unusual combination of traditional family pleasure park within a privately run but freely accessible public country park.
- Wicksteed believed children (and adults) should be given freedom, to play in unenclosed playgrounds in mixed ages and sexes, even on Sunday, without formal supervision and his approach to the design of the park was responsive rather than prescriptive, which seems to be pioneering at the time.
- Wicksteed had a unique philosophy: access, appearance, elements of layout and behaviour were not controlled as was seen at other comparable developments, but opportunities created to encourage wholesome activity.
- Wicksteed was the inspiration and source for playgrounds around the world. Before he established his playground equipment business, the only equipment was standard items generally made by local, non specialist contractors. The history of children's play equipment in public parks is virtually synonymous with that of Wicksteed Park.
- Its ethos of healthy recreation and emphasis on outdoor play around water can be seen as a precursor of the 1930s lidos movement and the cycle track is a rare survival of an early outdoor velodrome.
- The park demonstrates Charles Wicksteed's ingenuity as an engineer, in designing rides, notably the water chute and early prefabricated precast buildings in a distinctive, modest, utilitarian but attractive style, as well myriad practical inventions.
- Before the laying out of Wicksteed Park, the site was part of the Barton Seagrave estate; it was not a designed landscape but features in the long view sketched by Repton in his *Red Book* for Barton Seagrave Hall and is an essential part of its setting.
- It still displays the post enclosure landscape with field boundaries surviving, archaeological remains and forms the setting of the archaeologically significant Castle Field.
- The ecology of the lse valley is of high significance.
- The park has great social and community significance for many people.

¹³⁵ OHES 2011

¹³⁶ <http://www.nenevalleynia.org/project/about-nene-valley/> Accessed 3 September 2018



Plan 16: Significance

4.4 Significance of heritage elements within the park

See plan opposite

The whole of the registered park is of **high (national)** significance and the whole park has high **local** significance to park users; within these overall values, it can be helpful to distinguish relative levels of significance within the park to guide conservation decisions: however these levels should be treated with caution and seen in the light of the significant aspects and themes, which often interconnect with each other. These have been reviewed in the light of new evidence, particularly in relation to built structures.

Very high significance within the park: Charles Wicksteed's influence on children's play; fundamental to the design concept or to historic interest. (very dark green) (Gazetteer numbers in brackets)

Features related to the first phase of the park to 1939 (by Charles Wicksteed or following his influence). The core of the park, elements in areas A, B, F, G, H including:

- Original pavilion, garden floor (Captain's Lounge), clocktower, North Room 1921-27 (6, 7)
- Pavilion Elements :fluted columns/pilasters and eaves brackets, windows, clock tower, external and internal columns, original timber balustrade¹³⁷
- Playground and round shelter from 1917 (23, 24)
- Bandstand terrace (Fountain Lawn), fountain basin 1926, statues (10, 11)
- Rose Garden and retaining wall 1924 (12)
- Water chute 1926 (29)
- Lake activity area; paddling area (recreated 2015) paddle boat pool 1936 (32, 33, 36)
- Sandpit (former paddling pool) 1930s (32)
- Cycle track 1930 (31)
- Sycamore circle (20)
- Avenue, lodge, fountain basin (relocated), drinking fountain and gates 1918 (9, 25, 26)
- Model yacht pond by 1926 (30)
- Round shelter lakeside 1936 (34)
- Railway, station and ticket office c1931 (14)
- Main lake 1919 including bathing area (by 1927) (39)
- Intact workers' cottages and octagon enclosure 1920s (8)
- Charles Wicksteed and Jerry memorials (12)
- Core park (area B) (13)
- Setting and views including Castle Field and Barton Seagrave park (4, 5)
- Site of boathouse and wet dock behind the boathouse (28)

A high priority will be attached to the conservation of these elements and the physical and visual connections between them.

High significance within the park: essential parts or elements specific to the vocabulary of the design; following Wicksteed's influence (dark green)

Other features from park hey day 1930s-1950s (largely by CW or following his influence)

- Inner park areas C and D (15, 17)

Other original or early elements of the park including:

- Bridge 1936 (35)
- Tree collection, especially ancient trees from Eighteenth century and pre 1927 (2)
- Pavilion South Room 1935
- Rowing club house 1937
- Hilda Wicksteed gates and statues 1930s-1951 (27)

¹³⁷ Latham, Captain's lounge historic development, brief confirmation & initial concepts 2018

- Sycamore avenue mid twentieth century
- Fountain basin from lodge 1918 (9)
- Boatshed 1937 (40)
- Field pattern, field archaeology and hedgerows, Ise valley (1, 3)

Medium significance within the park contributes to design complexity (mid green)

- Putting green by 1950 (22)
- Site of Paradise Spinney (44)
- Gift shop c1938
- Coronation Hall 1952 (43)
- Ice Cream Factory 1950s (23)
- Area E (20)
- Chapel toilets 1960 (18)
- Tunnel 1933 (41)
- Original WCs (store) 1920s (16)
- Site of tea pavilion 1918 (21)
- Lakeside Drying rooms 1954 (38)
- Spinney Lane bungalows 1920s (off site) (49)

Local (low) significance within the park: (light green)

- Wider park areas M (47)
- Aviary 1933 (42)
- 1920s pool filter house 1950 (37)
- Fishing lake 1960s and meadow areas (44)
- Arboretum 1971 (45)
- Lodge area 1930, redeveloped early twenty-first century (46)
- Pony field 1950s (19)
- Golf house 1963 (48)
- Hexagon (1989)

Neutral significance:

The majority of recent additions and rides; Pavilion additions

Negative or poorly sited features:

Lakeside diner (due to be removed), some trees, parking especially in areas C and D, some signage (improvements underway), mix of fencing, remaining barriers and hard landscape 'clutter' such as bins; 1970s additions to Pavilion; utilitarian structures and some workshop areas.

Lost features are recorded in 3.1 above

5.0 GENERAL ISSUES– risks and opportunities

Summary of issues

Overall many issues have been addressed since 2012 and the focus on the unique heritage of the park has been successfully established with work to the core of the park, its lake, structures landscape and playground with accompanying activities. People understand and value Wicksteed's special qualities. In 2012 there was a risk of losing the essential qualities of the park in the ongoing struggle to raise income with a series of poorly co-ordinated interventions. To some extent the park was trying to compete with much larger theme parks which tended to undermine Wicksteed's unique qualities. As a result of the Lakes project and other actions of the Trust, there has been substantial new investment in the most significant parts of the park with the help of two National Lottery projects; a CMP, PMMP and masterplan were put in place allowing the Wicksteed Trust to set and review priorities; there is much wider understanding and creative interpretation of the park's significance and there is a substantial programme of work and activities, with revealing heritage at its core.

Nevertheless there remains the inherent tension of running the commercial operation which allows the Trust to achieve its charitable objectives of providing free access to the park's landscape and play facilities, and perpetuating the founder's ethos of healthy, adventurous play for all. The current park is an unusual combination of a public country park and paying attraction which has survived largely intact due to business activities and careful management. The dual roles of the Wicksteed Charitable Trust in caring for a unique historic park and the new slimmed down trading company (Wicksteed Trading Limited) in running a commercial venture in times of social and economic change subject the site to conflicting pressures. Many parks share the problem of inadequate ongoing revenue funding for maintenance, but at Wicksteed this all the more acute as there is no public subsidy for maintaining a freely accessible country park and playground, which was maintained during the pandemic while the revenue earning attraction was closed. There are challenges: there have been numerous changes in staff and management structures, most recently as a result of closure during the pandemic. Great progress has been made in addressing past issues, repairing historic fabric and rekindling an appreciation of the park's unique heritage. However some issues identified in 2012 persist, particularly the establishment and implementation of longer term strategies, and some well intentioned interventions have had unintended consequences and resulted in abortive work; the masterplan needs updating and a reduced number of options remain to be progressed; the backlog of repairs is not yet complete; there is an ongoing need for skilled and dedicated landscape management and longer term park management strategies; some important areas of the park are under review and plans need to be carefully assessed against their impact on the significant aspects of the site.

However the park is in a much stronger position than it was in 2012; it has refocused on its unique heritage and repaired its core, it has valuable and accessible archives, well informed and dedicated Trustees, management and staff, skilled volunteers and an impressive education programme. The new streamlined team has the opportunity to consolidate recent progress to reinforce Wicksteed Park's distinctive character and secure its future. There is also an opportunity to conserve and enhance Wicksteed's important network of habitats, to embed sustainable management and for the park to play its role in combatting the climate and nature emergency.

5.1 Introduction

This section describes an update of the general issues which affect the significant aspects of the site, as identified and described in the previous section 4. These conclusions are drawn from site surveys, specialist surveys and results of public consultation and visitor surveys. The next section (6) summarises more detailed issues related to the park character areas and sets out Policies, aims and

objectives to address the issues.

Although many issues have been addressed since the 2012 CMP, the Round one @Play HLF application explained the issues:

During the later twentieth century the park developed in response to social changes, public expectations and the need to generate more income for the continuance of its work. As a result, the balance of its character has changed from predominantly a countryside experience with an emphasis on play, recreation and well-being to that of a partially themed park attraction set within a country park. This piecemeal growth has tended to reduce the impact of the unique historic origins and ethos of the park and eroded or concealed important elements of the site's distinctive character which, if attended to, could have a major positive impact on the visitor experience and the integrity of this historic designed landscape. In particular:-

- *Many buildings have deteriorated over time, lacking purpose, and maintenance.*
- *Several areas of the park have suffered from inappropriate development.*
- *Key areas of the park are littered with visual detritus that has been added over many years without a clear sense of direction, design or heritage.*
- *The playground, precinct and gardens have lost some of their original Wicksteed character.*
- *With no regular external funding the Wicksteed Charitable Trust must continue to develop a sustainable model to allow the park to survive long into the future whilst continuing to provide free access. This project significantly enhances the model whilst restoring yet more free access features.*

Despite recent pressures, many of the issues have been addressed by 2022, as detailed below.

5.2 General issues

5.2.1 Understanding and protecting the Significance of the Site as a whole

This has been a major change since 2012, with new staff given information on the site's heritage and new planning and management documents in place. Free access has been maintained and enhanced, the unique ethos of the park is cherished, and there is evidence that the park's heritage now informs longer term decisions. The park makes more of this heritage to reinforce its distinctive character rather than compete directly with mainstream theme parks. Many educational activities and events relate directly to the legacy of Charles Wicksteed the engineer and pioneer of play, the history of the park and wider landscape and more recently, his daughter Hilda.

*The Lakes project 'set out to ensure that all those associated with the Park needed to increase their understanding and appreciation of the historic value and significance of the site. Trustees, staff, volunteers and visitors have all had the opportunity to do so and heritage awareness now forms a key part of our new staff induction training.'*¹³⁸

With the completion of the Historic Heart project, visitors no longer visit the park without gaining any impression of the park's heritage. The Community Link Manager (later Community and Heritage Manager) developed the education programme and events to place the heritage and landscape of the park at the core of its delivery, as set out in section 4 above.

In 2012 only 2% of visitors questioned valued the heritage of the park. By 2019 over half of the respondents believed they had a good understanding of Wicksteed's Heritage: an enormous change. Many visitors remember it from childhood and value the continuity of many attractions and buildings with comments including 'nostalgia' 'nowhere else like it' indicating that the park can continue to build on its unique heritage.

In 2022 the home page of the Wicksteed Park website states *'The park was founded in 1921 as part of the extraordinary legacy of Charles Wicksteed which extends beyond the Recreation Park*

*he created. As an entrepreneur & innovator Charles was also an inventor & respected successful engineer' and quotes Charles Wicksteed: 'We all know that pleasurable exercise is good for the mind and for the body. I have good reason to believe that the park I have formed in Kettering has changed the lives for the better.'*¹³⁹

In recent years, financial pressures have led to planned sales of outer parts of the estate, but also some acquisitions, to finance consolidation and enhancement of the natural and heritage core. Ongoing development of the surrounding area results in a risk that inappropriate development around the site could damage its setting and this needs ongoing vigilance. There is also a risk of development in the site itself impacting on fabric and views and fragmenting habitats within the park and wider landscape views. All proposals need to be carefully assessed to determine and mitigate their impact on the significance of the site in terms of its historic and natural fabric, use and views.

5.2.2 Management and maintenance issues

General management issues

Wicksteed Park Ltd was a wholly owned subsidiary of the charity, the Wicksteed Charitable Trust. Wicksteed Park Ltd went into receivership in 2020 and was replaced by Wicksteed Trading Ltd (WTL) which operates with a severely reduced but flexible, highly committed permanent workforce. The trading climate is still challenging. WTL is responsible for the management of the park and the Wicksteed Trust receives no public financial support for its public park provision.¹⁴⁰ Income from the rides and events in the park, as well as recent HLF grants, are the main source of income, supplemented recently by public donations. Despite difficult economic circumstances, the park is well maintained, and while Wicksteed Trading Limited's operation of the leisure facility has the primary purpose of generating income, it is in the understanding of the park's heritage and working towards a long term masterplan. Nevertheless, the unpredictable nature of the leisure industry and factors such as changing weather patterns and emergencies such as the recent pandemic, can make it difficult to achieve long term plans associated with the masterplan. The PMMP has been adopted and was updated in 2019. There have been several management changes and the new structure in place in 2022 has been effective in managing difficult financial circumstances. The previous business plan of Wicksteed Park Ltd recognised the need for planned maintenance and a longer term vision but this has been hard to achieve. A 5 year strategy document and co-ordinated maintenance plan are under development in 2022 with a focus on longer term infrastructure upgrades. Policy documents listed below would assist in this process. It is important that this is co-ordinated with this CP, PMMP and emerging masterplan to set short, medium and long term strategies to take account of significance and conservation priorities and to ensure that all actions work towards the agreed overall co-ordinated masterplan vision.

Maintenance is generally carried out by a directly employed workforce within the Maintenance Team which allows flexibility in responding to day to day issues. Unlike many purely commercial attractions, a significant amount of staff time is spent on educational and community events in support of the Trust's objectives, as well as normal commercial activities. This role as ambassador for the park is a great strength and an unusual and distinctive feature of the park but in the past it was a constraint on management planning, making it difficult to evaluate maintenance costs or efficiency or to plan for longer term activities.

Outstanding management policy documents

Major progress has been achieved since 2012. However some recommendations of the original CMP, taken forward by the Masterplan and PMMP, have not been completed in part or in full including:

¹³⁹ <https://wicksteedpark.org/> accessed 23 March 2022

¹⁴⁰ With the exception of charitable rate relief and lottery funding.



Top row: Park flooding, Easter 1998; the park was closed (Photos courtesy Liz Brandon Jones)
 Second row: drainage issues and muddy path south west of lake (March 2022)
 Third row: algae in river and barriers around water chute and new controls on River Ise (2018)
 Fourth row: overgrown River Ise (2018) and new maintenance area (2022)

- Use Heritage Impact Assessment to assess work: an alternative approach for smaller interventions is set as well as a fuller method are set out in 10.2 below.
- Establish a park Design Guide for furniture, signage, planting palette and materials as has been done for branding. Progress has been made in recent projects but there is no Design Guide as such. WCT and WPL developed Brand Guidelines for the Park as part of the Historic Heart project. The new Park Brand was incorporated in all park marketing, information and signage.¹⁴¹
- Develop and implement a tree and views management strategy which includes management of veteran trees, a tree palette and planting styles to guide future planting. There was some views work in the Lakes Project and in recent Park Ranger's work, but there is no up to date tree survey or tree strategy.
- Prepare and adopt an access, circulation parking and vehicle movement strategy. Access Statement in place, changes made and parking control in implementation in 2022.
- Develop sustainability and renewable energy strategy with a review of the opportunities to introduce more green technology utilising resources generated on site such as the lake, timber, river flow, solar, biomass etc. Final ESOS report expected in 2022.
- Implement and promote a Green Travel Plan, building on the Wicksteed Park Travel Plan December 2021.¹⁴²

Other outstanding managements actions

- Work towards achieving Green Flag status for the Park
- Work towards a Management Forum to involve user groups, River Nene / River Ise etc
- Staff training in specialist skills or knowledge, including ecological survey, monitoring use of CP using Heritage Impact Assessment.

Some issues which arise from detailed maintenance operations¹⁴³

Issues resolved since 2012

- New maintenance area established south of park with storage, large polytunnels and some composting facilities (Area M) although further work is required
- Park Ranger in post by 2018 and reinstated post pandemic lockdowns by WTL
- Waste is now recycled, although this is not obvious to users
- Great increase in volunteers, working with the Community Link Manager (Community and Heritage Manager; but post vacant May 2022) and Park Ranger
- Problem of Rose Garden shaded by conifers- many felled
- Water is tested once a year (externally) and complies with bathing water standard
- Park Ranger has resumed managing reeds on a 4 year cycle and other vegetation to maintain views and access to the lake edges.
- Park Ranger has commenced coppicing trees and willows and managing new planting in the campsite
- New lake controls are effective

Outstanding issues to be addressed via PMMP

- Training in ecological survey and monitoring and undertaking monitoring
- Organisation and screening of maintenance area and resisting general dumping (Area M)
- Skills for long term garden and park planning, including tree management in park and arboretum, replanting and protection (especially parking areas)

¹⁴¹ PMMP draft 2019; refers to Brand Guidelines for the Park in updated in 2018.

¹⁴² Wicksteed Park and Brightwayz social enterprise, Wicksteed Park Travel Plan December 2021, prepared with support from Northamptonshire Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

¹⁴³ Interview with Barry Priestley 5 May 2011 and Mick Bush and Park Ranger October 2018 and March 2022



Unintended consequences:

Top row: geese on the amphitheatre and usage to be resolved

Second row: left: intended paddling area and right: erosion of island banks, although most areas of reed are thriving February 2022)

Third row: left: settlement in and flooding of surfaces in precinct and

right: housing of pump for Fountain Lawn was unforeseen and is intrusive (March 2022)

Fourth row: overgrown River Ise (2018) and new maintenance area (2022)

- Woodland planting/management, further willow and hazel coppicing
- Work stalled on management of wildflower meadows (cut and collect) around lake and tussocky woodland edges, but flail collector needed to manage large areas; related reduction in close mowing
- Silt monitoring
- Lake weed and algae growth; in 2012 this was a major task and took 4-5 days a week; the issue is greatly reduced but has reoccurred to some extent especially in warm weather and in shallow water
- Long term use of substantial amounts of cut reed - currently stored between lakes
- Rainwater collection has improved and used by volunteers but more needed to avoid use of metered water for grounds watering
- Some roads in poor condition; much patching of potholes etc every year but strategy in hand
- Consolidate avoidance of peat, pesticides and herbicides by maintenance team
- Ongoing maintenance of structures and use /removal of redundant structures

Issues arising from recent changes

Some recent work has presented new unintended maintenance challenges:

- Heavy use of lake path including for Parkrun; some sections of Cedec lake path gets wet and muddy and requires top dressing and drainage improvements; raised in the 2021 visitor survey
- Paddling area and amphitheatre badly affected by goose fouling which limits use, although control measures undertaken; little used and under review 2022
- Weeding and cleaning of paddling beach and shingle beaches: not in use and under review 2022
- Layout and lack of servicing limit use of amphitheatre
- Some areas of reed bed are growing vigorously and need regular management; arisings need management
- Steel post and mesh protection of new planting impedes maintenance; removing protection has led to erosion of island
- Boardwalk and pontoon and balustrade need regular inspection
- Increase in wildlife, but no recent surveys
- Dales (Redrow) Meadow and newly acquired meadow south of the lakes need management and new paths; this may help secure equipment for wildflower meadow management in larger areas
- Management of informal swimming and use of pontoon, impact on other users
- Remedial work needed to recent precinct surfaces
- Intrusive housing of pump serving repaired fountain in Fountain Lawn
- Use and interpretation of former cycle track following removal of footbridge over track
- Records of changes including inventory of rides and play equipment
- Work to Rose Garden and interpretation structures omitted from @Play project
- The Community and Heritage Manager effected positive change but has now left the park and responsibilities are being reallocated.

Views of other park managers in 2011

In 2011 five senior green space and heritage project managers were invited to Wicksteed Park for a day as part of the Activity Plan development and then fed back to Pathways their thoughts on how the Park could best develop audiences. Their feedback fell into six main categories: the underpinning vision of the park; the management of the green space; the potential of the lake; play as the Park's 'Unique Selling Point'; harnessing the history of the Park; audience development and marketing.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Pathways Consultancy, 'Views from outside: a summary of the views given by visiting green space and heritage project managers' 2011



Top row: left: erosion of grass in top field parking area and right: new and old surfaces in fairground
Second row: left: newer features such as parking machine and bins around Pavilion are timber clad; rainwater butt on the left; above right: mix of new and old street furniture; lower right: rustic memorial bench near lake, made on site (all February- March 2022)

This highlighted the great potential of the park and its unique qualities, but also the need for a Masterplan underpinned by a strong vision. These findings have reinforced and informed recent strategy; much more is made of the park's 'Unique Selling Point'; a Masterplan was developed but needs further updating in coordination with this CP, the PMMP and emerging business plan.

5.2.3 General site issues

Along with its management, the park has undergone rapid change in an ambitious programme to rediscover its essential qualities and put the business on a long term sustainable footing.

Access and parking

- In 2011-12, the immediate impression at the main entry was of an amusement park and the

experience did not emphasise what is distinctive and unique about the park; the original avenue approach, framing the view over the Ise valley, would have emphasised the landscape character of the park. In 2018, although the lodge and avenue were no longer the main access, the experience had been improved with removal of clutter and redesign of the entrance area; the repaired Pavilion is now visible in the distance (the dominant Rush tower is due to be removed 2022) and the parkland running down to the lake can be glimpsed on the left, although the area still needs some improvement and more parking removed.

- Largely uncontrolled parking was a major issue in 2012. Parking and circulation have been improved but the control of parking areas is not fully implemented in early 2022. There is still some parking in the A6 field (Area C) near the entrance, primarily for coaches along with refuse management, and parking off the Sycamore Avenue in the Ornamental Park South (Area D). However parking south of the precinct close to the Pavilion has been removed since 2018.
- A small area of the main parking area in the top field (Area E) and another area north of the pony field, closer to the Pavilion has been surfaced since 2018 and appears well used. The ability to park in many areas of the site, including next to picnic sites, is a valued feature for visitors, but there are implications for the landscape.¹⁴⁵ However parking over areas of the park impacts on views, the condition of grassland and park trees and reduces the pedestrian experience. The provision of extensive parking on ride days is also seen as essential making impacts inevitable, but impacts could be reduced by further controls on access to parking areas and protection of trees and surfaces. The website assumes visitors will arrive by car and there were no obvious alternatives; "If you have a sat nav just enter the postcode NN15 6NJ and it'll find us in a jiffy on Barton Road."¹⁴⁶

Planting management

- Updated tree survey is still needed (2022).
- Trees need urgent active management and protection, with specialist advice and training, and an agreed replanting plan. There have been significant losses of aged, mature trees in recent years. Woodland areas need active management.
- Large areas are managed as close mown grass; the intention has been to vary management to increase biological and visual interest, especially away from core areas; this would also address issues of compaction, vehicle access and damage. This is only partly implemented and was paused during the pandemic.
- The former high emphasis on annual bedding with some exotic shrub planting is gradually being replaced by more permanent planting, as seen in recent projects such as the Historic Heart Octagon.
- Some important views have been reopened but this need active management; fewer intrusive views remain.

Water management

- Need for co-ordinated site wide management for a range of features
- Flooding and drainage issues relating to site hydrology and geology
- Ground conditions are often poor and saturated
- Some concerns about water quality in Ise upstream leading to growth of blanket weed and algae; impact of geese
- River Ise canalised, with high steep banks, overgrown and makes little contribution to landscape
- Ditches need maintenance¹⁴⁷
- Limited but improved rainwater capture and use

¹⁴⁵ Widespread parking is also likely to encourage picnics at the expense of onsite catering.

¹⁴⁶ <https://wicksteedpark.org/the-park/contact/>

¹⁴⁷ John Pegg, Wicksteed Park Landscape Master Plan 6th January 2017

General park design

- Wide palette of signage, seats, fences bins etc, is being addressed in recent work near the Pavilion and more rustic benches around the lake (see left); there is a need for differentiation between core park areas A-H and outer countryside areas I-M to be developed into a Design Guide.
- Recycling is not apparent to the public; currently (2022) mixed waste is sorted by a materials recovery/ recycling facility, (MRF) although there are plans to separate materials on site.
- There is still a mix of bin styles across the park but there have been some improvements in recent work.

Planning status

Three areas of the park are covered by a General Permitted Development Order as an amusement park (as shown on Plan 2 above), and a Lawful Development Certificate for these areas was issued in 2015. Provided development is carried out in accordance with the terms of the Order no application for planning permission needs to be made, giving greater flexibility in planning change in these areas but also the risk of inappropriate development which affects the historic character of the park.

5.2.4 Engagement with park users

Engagement is now more active than reported in the 2011 Activity Plan.¹⁴⁸ At that time there was little opportunity for more participative engagement with the natural environment and its heritage or engagement that stimulates learning (for example through ranger type activities, natural or water play). There was low awareness of the park's heritage. These issues have been largely addressed but recent surveys suggest that this aspect could be developed further.

Surveys

The main findings of the Visitor Surveys 2015/17 and 2019 are summarised in 3.5.1 above. Some of the comments made by the public capture the distinctive character of the park and its potential:

*"Love the idea of returning to the history of the park rather than putting in more rides. Wicksteed cannot compete with today's theme parks and a return to the early days of the park would be a unique selling point. Capitalise on those beautiful period buildings - Wicksteed as it was!"*¹⁴⁹

Respondents thought that there could be *"a fantastic celebration of Charles Wicksteed's legacy"* and *"a wonderful way to teach our children another part of English Heritage"*.

In addition, a questionnaire conducted in preparation of the @Play HLF application in 2016 found that 93% rated the importance of the history and heritage of the Park as high or very high. There was particularly strong support from children and adults for a heritage play area, bringing back Wicksteed Ice Cream; also for the Octagon community piazza, the restoration of the Rose Garden and the Learning Centre, all elements of the @Play project, all achieved with the exception of the Rose Garden which is now in the care of volunteers. The respondents supported a Treasure Trail for children based on the Park's history, *"guided tours with a Charles Wicksteed actor to tell his story"* and *"displays highlighting the fundamental role that Wicksteed has played in the development of play over the last Century"*.¹⁵⁰

Issues highlighted by visitors in the 2021 visitor survey included

- goose fouling
- antisocial behaviour/youths on summer evenings on the pontoon
- wanting more use of the lake, swimming and water play
- missing rides for older children such as the dodgems and pirate ship
- request for disabled access rides
- muddy lake path
- information on walks
- cycle track
- rubbish, recycling, lower carbon footprint
- better/upmarket or more healthy food.¹⁵¹

5.2.5 Barriers to access

The 2007 Audience Development Plan and Pathways' research conducted in spring 2011 identified various barriers to access including financial barriers, cultural barriers, intellectual and sensory barriers, barriers to physical access and organisational barriers and other issues such as limited range of food, a lack of accessible interpretation about the park, a lack of or poorly located accessible toilets and a variety of surfaces unsuitable to those with mobility difficulties, who would find it difficult to make a circuit of the lake and a lack of attractions/activities for older children.

The Lakes, Historic Heart and @Play projects have addressed many of these issues including significant improvements to access, activities, interpretation and events, catering for a wider range of audiences. There is evidence that the Park is developing a much broader appeal to visitors including greater use as a country park with better links to the surrounding area. The percentage saying that rides and attractions were the main purpose of their visit had fallen slightly 2007-2017 and this was exacerbated by pandemic restrictions. This was a welcome response to the Lakes project but the large (and increasing) percentage who spent very little on their visits was a cause for concern.¹⁵²

The Access Statement confirms that many barriers have been dealt with by new accessible paths, toilets and other measures. Access is now being considered at all levels to ensure that all feel welcome and secure. Links have been built with Isebrook SEN College. There is also a 'Changing Places' space for those with multiple disabilities and a multi faith toilet facility.¹⁵³ Using the park in the pandemic helped people understand that Wicksteed Park is also a country park and heritage destination with charitable objectives. The Community and Heritage Manager's work has aided this process enormously.

148 'An Activity Plan for Wicksteed Park' Pathways Consultancy August 2011

149 Wicksteed Park Visitor Survey 2015

150 HLF application

151 CFP, Wicksteed Park Visitor Survey Report 2021

152 Wicksteed Park Visitor Survey 2017

153 Meeting with Tracey Clarke 4.10.18 http://www.changing-places.org/the_campaign/what_are_changing_places_toilets.aspx
<https://www.isebrooksen.co.uk/>

5.3 Issues affecting significant aspects of the park

Many issues have reduced since 2012 and have been updated below.

Theme A: Early history, medieval settlement and land use

Significance: Low, high and very high (local and national)

- Recent Lidar images and archaeological investigation of the retirement village site (as in 2.1.1 above) suggest archaeological potential from many periods which is not fully understood or interpreted
- Groundworks may affect the archaeological resource
- Opportunity to interpret and hold activities related to the site's early history

Theme B: The eighteenth century: designed landscape history

Significance: high (national)

- Visual connections to Barton Park and the parkland tree structure (reflecting Humphry Repton's advice) are vulnerable to change
- There is an opportunity to improve the impression of parkland on both sides of Barton Road
- Opportunity to interpret the eighteenth century landscape history (partly achieved)
- Some ancient oaks are important remnants of this period but some have been lost in recent years and others need protection and management

Theme C: Wicksteed Park: Comparison with other parks made by industrialists

Significance: medium to high (regional to national)

- Opportunity to continue links with other parks and attractions
- Interpretation of other parks made by industrialists would reinforce the unique Wicksteed story, with its focus on fun and invention rather than moral improvement

Theme D: Wicksteed Park's place in theme park and pleasure garden design

Significance: high (national)

Theme F: Charles Wicksteed's influence on children's play

Significance: very high (international)

- Early equipment and rides of high significance eg listed waterchute, now with replaced Wicksteed equipment
- Ongoing accessibility and maintenance challenges of equipment
- Opportunity to build activities around play equipment design

Theme E: Wicksteed's place in the history of outdoor recreation, swimming and cycling

Significance: high (national)

- Lakes project raised profile of outdoor recreation and adventurous play
- Maintenance issues around use of paddling area, swimming beach, layout of amphitheatre and former paddling pool (current sandpit) still need resolution, including goose fouling, blanket weed algae, also servicing and form of amphitheatre, to facilitate use
- Boat house lost; ferry taken out of use; visitors miss opportunities for boating but lake boats (rowing, pedalo or canoe) to be reintroduced July 2022.¹⁵⁴
- Swimming sometimes takes place informally, but from pontoon rather than beach; large groups of youth can impede access to pontoon and have to climb barrier to access water; some antisocial behaviour reported by visitors
- Cycle track is a rare survival of a 1930s velodrome, but since 2018 it is no longer in use for cycling or go karts and is now interrupted by access to rides in the arena; use and interpretation needed

Theme G: Wicksteed Park's place in public park design

Significance: medium (regional)

- Gardens and trees are still treated as memorials with flower tributes etc despite policy
- Original hard detailing such as Wicksteed designed seats returned but rose towers not yet replaced
- Need for more permanent planting in addition to annual bedding (underway 2022)
- Tree losses to disease and risks associated with climate change
- Tree management, replanting plan and protection urgently required
- Design guide for different character areas needed, building on original features eg Wicksteed designed seats, planting palette etc (part implemented but needs co-ordination)

Theme H: Wicksteed Park as a celebration of engineering and invention

Significance: high to very high (national)

- An engineer's park is rare if not unique
- Opportunity to build educational activities around play equipment and engineering design
- Many Wicksteed inventions are not displayed (although some plans in place 2022 eg to display bread and butter machine)
- Opportunity to celebrate engineering in new rides and activities
- Opportunity to develop links with engineering schools and encourage engineers of the future

Theme I Architectural interest:

Significance: medium to high (regional to national)

- Utilitarian, practical and economic structures which had not always been valued but largely addressed in Historic Heart project and @Play projects; loss of boathouse
- Distinctive qualities: precast concrete, cast iron and steel with traditional seaside style timber cladding, balustrades, boathouse and bathing huts etc
- Backlog of repairs to other structures and parts of Pavilion; eclectic design of recent additions
- Good archive now online
- Opportunity for further interpretation of building design and construction

Theme J: The local context: importance to Kettering and region

Significance: medium (regional)

- Opportunity to build on Charles and Hilda Wicksteed's roles in the life of Kettering and their involvement with local organisations (well addressed in recent activities and with local use during pandemic)
- Charles Wicksteed's patronage of local skills such as the Architect JA Gotch

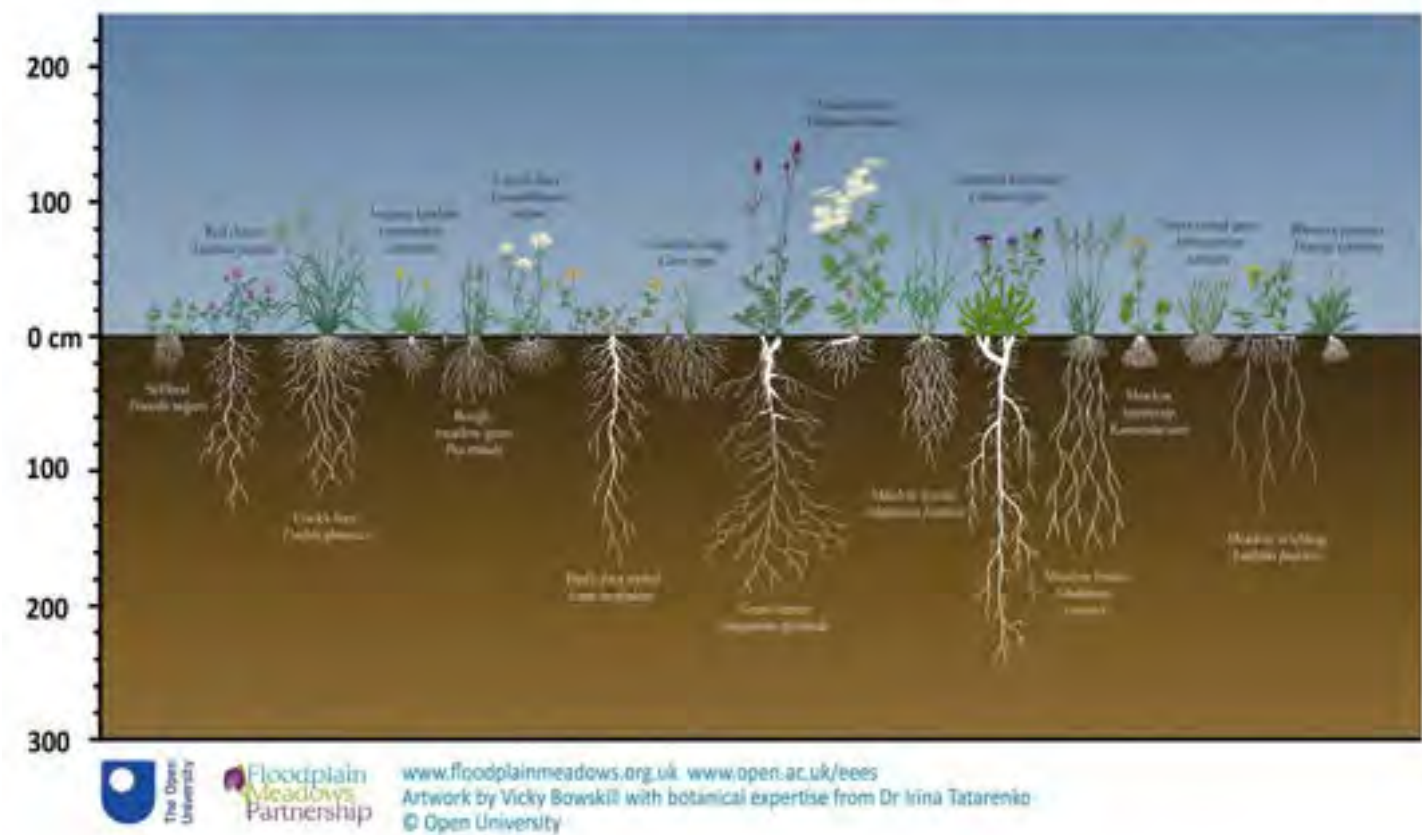
¹⁵⁴ <https://wicksteedpark.org/attractions/lake-boats/> accessed 16 May 2022

Theme K: Natural or scientific interest

Significance: medium (regional)

- In 2011-12 there was little management for ecology
- The ecology of the Ise valley is of high significance and management in the park and its ecology have improved
- No recent ecological surveys
- Wicksteed park provides a valuable wildlife corridor
- Need for balance between ecology and access, eg access to lake islands
- Opportunity for further improvements and related activities when Wicksteed take on management of more meadow areas. Opportunity to enhance biodiversity and carbon capture in watermeadows: see Open University research on role in carbon capture.¹⁵⁵ Review joint management with River Nene/Ise.
- Links to engineering as Theme H above
- Opportunity to develop a strategy to address the climate and ecological emergency and increase carbon capture.

From Shoots to Roots: revealing the above and below ground structure of meadow plants



The role of floodplain meadow plants in carbon sequestration
Vicky Bowskill

155 <https://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/> <https://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/about-meadows/wildlife/shoots-roots>

6.0 POLICIES

The following have had input to this section: Trustees of the Wicksteed Trust, Managing Director and staff of Wicksteed Trust Ltd, Trevor McHugh (project manager and fundraiser) and David Withycombe (Land Management Services, for original CMP). The Trustees commented on and agreed the revised policies in November 2018 and June 2022.

Summary of policies

General and specific conservation policies, aims and objectives, should be adopted by the Wicksteed Trust to safeguard the significant aspects of the site over the long term, to deal with issues to which the site is vulnerable and increase understanding and enjoyment of the park. Policies cover management, historic layout, structures and planting, archaeology, ecology, sustainability, access, and the park's use for heritage, educational and arts activities. They reinforce the themes of significance identified above. Six policies have been fully implemented since 2012: Conservation Plan, archives, the park's ethos, audience development, education and activity programme, pavilion gardens and precinct and core of park; another 32, the majority, are partly implemented /in progress, representing a great change since 2012. However there are still eight policies in the red category. See schedule below which updates progress on all policies and replaces the previous version.

6.1 Introduction

This section sets out updated policy aims which flow from the understanding and analysis of the site, respond to the issues identified in Section 5 (Issues and vulnerability) and which will safeguard the significant aspects of the site, as set out in Section 4. The policies form a central part of the conservation planning process and their adoption will underpin the future care of the park. Relevant issues are summarised below for ease of reference.

6.2 The Wicksteed Trust's Vision and Aims

The Wicksteed Village Trust was established by Charles Wicksteed in 1916 to carry out his work after his death.

Original objectives

Wicksteed Village Trust's charitable objectives from 1916 include:

- The amelioration of the condition of the working classes by the provision of improved dwellings with gardens and other open spaces to be enjoyed therewith and/or by the provision of parks, open spaces, recreation and play grounds (equipped with playthings, shelters and other conveniences), swimming baths and any other amenities conducive to health and enjoyment.
- The prevention of cruelty and pain to animals and the prevention of any practice which the Trustees may consider to be cruel or be calculated to cause pain to animals.
- The prevention of any practice which the Trustees may consider to be inhumane to man or beast.
- The health, benefit, convenience, comfort, moral welfare and improvement of the community generally.

In 2006 Wicksteed Village Trust changed its name to Wicksteed Charitable Trust (Company number 07394789) and amended the objectives to:

'Charitable purposes for the benefit of people resident primarily, but not exclusively, in Kettering and its neighbourhood, in particular the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare to improve the conditions of life of the users of such facilities.' The Trust continues to achieve its objectives by providing free access to open spaces at Wicksteed Park conducive to health.

New Trustees have been recruited in 2022.

Aims of the Lake project were:

- to restore the historic character of the Lake and its surroundings
- to improve public access to the site, while protecting vulnerable areas
- to encourage people to learn about the landscape and ecological heritage of the site

From Oliver Wicksteed's a Vision for the Lakes

Vision

To place Wicksteed Park at the heart of the Kettering community and surrounding area through effective governance, investment and collaboration, ensuring its continued growth and appeal as a place for public recreation and education at minimum cost, whilst enhancing the enjoyment of the natural and historical environment in line, as far as current conditions permit, with the wishes of our founder, Charles Wicksteed.

Mission

To develop the inherited estate and facilities, balancing the costs of free provision with the potential for commercial income and charitable support to secure the financial future of the Trust.

The following Vision and Mission Statements for the park were agreed and adopted by the Trustees and Wicksteed Park Ltd on 5 August 2011 as part of the CMP process and still stand

Vision:

Our vision is to celebrate the unique contribution of Charles Wicksteed and lead the way in adventurous, educational and imaginative play in an outstanding heritage parkland setting thereby making future generations healthier and happier for another 100 years ¹⁵⁶

Mission:

We will care for this much loved park, guided by the needs of its distinctive heritage and will continue the founder's ethos of providing opportunities for wide-ranging healthy, adventurous recreation and fun in a freely accessible rich natural environment which demonstrates Charles Wicksteed's love of nature and animals. We will work with partners in the community to provide new opportunities for learning, volunteering and activities in the park which will contribute to its long-term, sustainable conservation and aid understanding of the site's special qualities.

Within this broad vision, projects have their own aims:

A Vision for the Heart of Wicksteed Park

To renovate the original heart of Wicksteed Park as the centrepiece and social hub of our restoration, environmental, community and educational agenda. To enhance the enjoyment of simple family play in line with the wishes of our founder, Charles Wicksteed, by means of restoring and preserving our unique heritage via sustainable investment.

Project Mission Statement

To restore and enhance the Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park in line with the Conservation Management Plan.¹⁵⁷

Summary of Project Objectives

The successful delivery of this project will further guarantee the sustainability of this historic park. We will reverse the trend of inappropriate development, restore lost features and provide new attractions for our visitors to enjoy. The heritage of this historic park will be available for all to see and we will further engage with volunteers and the wider community.

We will continue to blend the charitable with the commercial to protect this unique and historic place.

In particular we intend:

- To fully recognise the international significance of Wicksteed Park and its contribution to the development of children's play. The Conservation Management Plan written by Sarah Couch in 2012 identifies that Wicksteed Park is of local, national and international significance. This project recognises this significance and will restore precious heritage landscape and buildings and will provide new ways for the community to benefit.
- To restore historic buildings and give them new life.
- To restore historic views.
- To restore historic gardens and landscape.
- To remove inappropriate development.
- To create new spaces for the public.
- To enhance the sustainability of our charitable / commercial model.
- To provide additional volunteering opportunities.
- To celebrate The History of Children's play from the perspective of Wicksteed Park
- To enhance our Archive Project.
- To increase the appeal of Wicksteed Park as a year round attraction.
- To bring back Wicksteed ice cream.
- To enhance our education programme.
- To reinstate the original atmosphere of Wicksteed Park.
- To further engage the community.
- To create a new focal point to the upper park which is currently missing.

@Play Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow project

The vision for the Project is:

Our vision is to renovate the original heart of Wicksteed Park as the centrepiece of our environmental, community and educational agenda; and to enhance the enjoyment of simple family play in line with the wishes of our founder, Charles Wicksteed, by means of restoring and preserving our unique heritage via sustainable investment. We plan a highly innovative project with an emphasis on a continuum of children's play experiences. The Activity Plan is the centrepiece of our project providing an exciting range of activities which celebrate Charles Wicksteed's role in children's play, and as an inventor and engineer. A Heritage Play Area will be created, featuring original or replica Wicksteed play equipment. We will restore the original fountain area and the Rose Garden. The upper floor of the Pavilion (the Captains Lounge) will be renovated as a new Learning Centre. ¹⁵⁸

We aim to:

- be an exemplar of children's play within the national framework
- deliver an exciting immersive heritage experience for all
- ensure the philosophy of the Park is integrated to all aspects of the park's development

These two projects have been extremely successful but with a few outstanding, long term issues remaining.

¹⁵⁶ Wicksteed Park will celebrate its centenary in 2021

¹⁵⁷ Oliver Wicksteed 'A Vision For The Historic Heart of Wicksteed Park' 2014

¹⁵⁸ @Play project HLF application

6.3 Updated Policy schedule 2022

Revised policies were agreed by Trustees and senior management team in June 2022.

Main policies in bold and shaded

Objectives and actions within the policies are listed below the relevant policy

Red- policy to be implemented

Amber- policy part implemented /in progress

Green- policy implemented

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Understanding and protecting the significance of the site					
Policy 1	Adopt revised Conservation Plan: Revised plan to be adopted by all relevant parties to ensure that all those making decisions which might affect the site and its setting do so with reference to the adopted policies, with the aim of conserving the site's significance	<i>It is essential that those involved in the management of the site are aware of how its significance can guide its future management.</i>	Staff and volunteers are now given an introduction to the heritage.	Adopt plan and use as point of reference	
Policy 2	Assessment and Review: Set up a system of assessment against the Conservation Plan and review of the plan. See also Policy 9		Conservation Plan updated 2018 and 2022	Keep adopted Conservation Plan and its policies under review	
Policy 3	Archives: Continue the programme of cataloguing and making accessible the existing archives, adding records of existing condition of landscape and structures and any new work and new material such as oral history records. See also Policy aim 25: Survey, Research and Recording	<i>Issue: there is a great deal of archive material and major progress has been made to catalogue it, make use of the material and make it more readily accessible.</i>	Online archive now live	Maintain and refine archive	
Integration of heritage values into the management of the park					
Policy 4	Park Masterplan: Regular update of the drawn park Masterplan and Options table to reflect the long term vision for the park, informed by the unique values and qualities of the park and the site's significance as an historic landscape with major ecological interest, while facilitating modern needs.	<i>The PMMP, action plan and Masterplan need regular updates and should inform short and long term management</i>	Landscape masterplan 2017 and park masterplan 2018 need updating	Updated masterplan in draft for review	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 5	Management and Maintenance Plan: Regular update and implementation of the ten year park management and maintenance plan (PMMP) taking account of the updated management aims of this CP, describing how the heritage, landscape and ecology of the park will be conserved, managed and maintained and integrated with the commercial operation of the park.	<i>The management of the park is influenced by Wicksteed Park Limited's need to generate income by operating the leisure facility to support The Trust's charitable and community objectives. The park receives no financial support for its public park provision and Trustees have worked extremely hard to maintain its viability, now recognising and enhancing the park's heritage.</i>	At Play MMP to be completed.	Develop MMP for whole park and incorporate into longer term Strategic MMP	
Policy 6	Maintenance Schedule and budget to take account of longer term priorities and strategies as identified in the CP, PMMP and Masterplan, and ensure that resources are in place.	<i>Management and maintenance structures, procedures and budgets are under review</i>	Planned maintenance programme in progress; ongoing issue of resourcing long term infrastructure work; reduced workforce and hard to recruit	Programme actions into longer term Strategic MMP	
Policy 7	Staff development: Identify need for, and provide training in, specialist skills or knowledge, including use of CMP (Conservation Plan) and heritage impact assessment.		Not clear if CP is seen as a working document and if training is needed; lack of gardener or park manager; too many calls on park ranger and opportunity for better ecological management	Add garden and park management skills and support for Park Ranger. Identify training needs into longer term Strategic MMP	
Policy 8	Green Flag: Continue working towards Green Flag status.		Still an aspiration	Add to Strategic MMP	
Policy 9	Heritage impact assessment. Assess any new work against the CP, using a heritage impact assessment form or checklist for smaller change (Appendix 10)		Not in regular use	Simplified HIA checklist added. Suggest WTL to include in business plans and report to Trustees. Agree process and training needs	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 10	Work towards a Management Forum: set up a mechanism to co-ordinate work with partner organisations eg Nene Valley Regional Park volunteers and Friends group		Successful volunteer network takes the place of a Friends Group	Maintain and review co-ordination with partners as projects develop	
Co-ordination of park management with the Trust's objectives as custodians of the heritage					
Policy 11	The Trust will review immediate, medium and long term priorities for the Masterplan/ PMMP which support the core values, significance and conservation priorities of the park and will test actions against these priorities.	<i>Issue: The unpredictable nature of the leisure industry and income from it makes it difficult to make long term plans and many decisions have been a response to immediate need</i>	Trust has been firefighting, affecting long term priorities	Trust input to updated priorities and Masterplan; draft to be reviewed	
Policy 12	Adopt a presumption against sale of heritage assets , but where sales are deemed necessary, any sale should be tested to ensure it will not result in a major adverse effect on significant aspects of the park including views and setting.	<i>Issue: the Trust has sold parts of the Estate in recent years to provide funding for the Trust's charitable objectives and provide long-term investment for the park and new housing affects the setting of the park to some extent</i>	Long term lease of Area M for retirement village in planning	Ensure that detailed plans minimise impact, protect and reinforce areas at risk (eg tree and hedge network), minimise embodied and operational carbon and avoid the need for future sales	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Reinforcing the unique qualities of the park					
Policy 13	Reinforce the unique qualities of the park and widen its distinctive appeal by testing initiatives against the park's principles of promoting health and happiness for all in informal natural surroundings and publicising these principles (Themes C-F) Test all plans against the park's founding ethos and principles. Working within current resources, focus effort and use principles to guide decisions so that each action achieves the long term aim in a phased and co-ordinated implementation plan. Test all plans against the park's founding ethos and principles.	<i>Issue: the park has a unique history and ethos which guides management and there is an opportunity to build further on what is distinctive and unique about the park and elements which distinguish it from both public parks and amusement parks eg its formative years up to the 1930s and the ethos of its founder- free play, common sense of ownership, lack of barriers, restrictions and rules, joy of open spaces, enjoying adventurous play in natural surroundings, joy of engineering, steam, invention for play, fun for all ages, promotion of health through outdoor activity, care of animals and healthy food.</i>	Recent work has reinforced these qualities, but there is still work needed to undo short term decisions and ensure ethos and principles reinforced	Adopt longer term planning to avoid abortive work through Strategic MMP; park ethos and principles added to HIA checklist	
Policy 13	Promote the founder's ethos and the park's unique qualities in publicity and events.		Activities and engagement do this successfully	Continue good work	
Policy 14	Celebrate early and emerging engineering solutions (Theme H) Examples to consider: Use of traditional methods to provide a link with a past, where practical. Develop innovative engineering solutions in buildings, rides, education and events.		Engineering features in education (Around the world with Charles Wicksteed) and heritage play , but could more be done around the park?	Continue and expand this focus in activities and interpretation	
Policy 14	Showcase new sustainable technologies inspired by the past as well as innovation, making use of natural resources to provide energy where feasible for example via water power etc.		See also Policy 23 below; opportunity to make technology and innovation more of the visitor experience	Continue to interpret and showcase new sustainable technologies inspired by the past through long term Strategic MMP and reflect in sustainability policy	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 14	Display Charles Wicksteed's inventions.		Plans to display bread and butter machine and other machines in 2022	Display and interpret machines	
Historic trees					
Policy 15	Develop and implement a tree management strategy (Themes B & K) Prepare a tree management strategy to include a regular programme of inspections, disease monitoring and maintenance operations and replanting following design precedent and to agreed planting palette, with special attention to the specific management needs of significant, mature or ancient trees and trees which form structural planting. Provide training as required.	<i>Issues: Loss of significant mature trees, decreasing and limited stock of early trees; recent planting but not to an overall plan; disease; impact of vehicle access and heavy public use, lack of active management apart from addressing safety issues; high use of memorial trees in the past restricts management choices</i>	This has long been a gap	Now a high priority. Needs site tree wide strategy to protect and reinforce tree structure. Add to Strategic MMP	
Policy 15	Take account of heritage and ecological significance of trees in all management decisions.		Tree safety inspections carried out annually; no wider survey or planning	Include in tree management plan	
Policy 15	Take account of view management in all tree management decisions (Policy 16).		Retirement village at end of sycamore avenue; trees and views need active management	Assess impact of retirement village on green infrastructure and views; enhance planting	
Policy 15	Maintain avenues in historic species (if viable) and at original spacing and groupings.		Little recent replanting, several gaps, issues with compaction and vehicle damage	Protect and replant; include in access proposal to retirement village site	
Policy 15	Take steps to reduce the spread of disease and develop planting strategies to limit future impact.		Disease threat is increasing with climate change	Include in tree management plan	
Policy 15	Follow new Memorial Policy, ensuring any new tree planting follows an agreed plan and tree list which reinforces historic planting as a priority, trees not marked with plaques and complies with the views strategy.		Informal additions near Paradise Spinney; floral tributes still left	Needs site wide strategy to reinforce tree structure and species	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 15	Bring woodland areas into management		Park Ranger aspires to manage woodland	Include in tree management and resource plan as part of Strategic MMP	
Landscape structure and fabric in general					
Policy 16	Develop and implement a views management strategy to restore and maintain lost views by selective clearance, planting to frame views and to screen intrusive views (Theme B)	<i>Issue: key views are being cleared but need regular management; some intrusive features and development affect views and setting</i>	Ongoing work needed including attention to impact of retirement village	Add regular review to Strategic MMP and workplan	
Policy 16	Refer to views identified in this CP. Ongoing management including lakeside trees/shrubs/reeds/marginal planting to maintain views within the park, to exploit visual connections to Barton Seagrave, Barton Hall and Castle Field and parkland planting to screen unsightly intrusive features		Some work completed	Monitor views; add to maintenance workplan	
Policy 16	Site new features away from key views and remove intrusive features as opportunities arise		Some work completed	Lakeside diner and hoarding to be removed	
Policy 17	Implement an access, circulation, parking and vehicle movement strategy Continue to restrict general vehicle access and parking from most sensitive areas south and east of the Pavilion and from key views, particularly at entrance and connections with the wider landscape; review maintenance access routes; minimise conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. Manage parking to minimise impact on the fabric of the park, particularly trees and grass.	<i>Issue: There is a long history of vehicle parking, particularly in Area C (A6 field Barton Road) and wide access has been seen as essential to the commercial operation. Widespread parking is a distinctive but disruptive feature of the park. There have been positive recent changes in parking control and a strategy is under implementation.</i>	Improvements made but controls not fully implemented (March 2022)	Complete implementation of parking controls to prioritise parking away from heritage core and pedestrians as masterplan. Increase protection of trees and grass	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 17	Conduct a full access audit and continue improvements to facilities for the disabled for parking and safe access throughout the park (as access statement).	<i>Parking in some areas is valued for access to park picnic areas but impacts on the pedestrian and visual experience.</i>	Improvements made and Access Statement updated	Continue to monitor accessibility and safe access in all new work	
Policy 17	Continue to develop parking in areas E (top field) and D (ponyfield) as principal parking areas and remove general parking from the rest of parkland areas D and C (Arena field and A6 field, while allowing controlled access in connection with special events which require vehicle access). Remove/ redesign parking from Area A (Pavilion area; except eg disabled parking and drop off).	<i>In the meantime, parking is not restricted to the main parking area (E top field) and some parking still affects key views, the setting of the Pavilion and vehicle access over grass causes compaction and damage to trees and grass.</i>	Parking from area south of Pavilion removed and replaced with drop off area	Protect and reinforce trees and grass; prioritise parking away from heritage core and pedestrians as masterplan	
Policy 17	Introduce more incentives for visits on foot, bicycle and public transport (promotions with train companies, work with bus companies to improve access etc) and continue improvement of pedestrian (and cycle) access routes to make them more welcoming, leading visitors to the park's main assets as part of a green travel plan.	<i>There is heavy reliance on car access and there are high numbers on busy days.</i>	How to get here wicksteedpark.org/ the-park/ contact/ has satnav and map but no other means of travel. However Active Travel Policy and Travel Plan exist and award received and work needs to continue; new maintenance vehicles will be electric and there are 2 EV chargers on site. Information not yet on new website or advertised. People booking (free) community events have to fill in environmental impact form which encourages car share, avoiding waste etc.	Implement Active Travel Policy and Wicksteed Park Travel Plan December 2021 actions. Update travel information on new website, advertise and incentivise alternative forms of travel.	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 17	Develop and promote a range of trails and circular walks within the park and connecting to the wider park network.		wicksteedpark.org/ the-park/ park-walks/ Existing maps and trails (eg heritage trail) need to go on the new website and be publicised on site	Add maps and trails to website. Could Link to northampton shire walks.co.uk Promotion at other attractions eg walks, heritage trail (with café stop) from Barton Hall.	
Policy 17	Maintain ethos, for example, guard against restricting pedestrian access and over-formalising the path network: 'please walk on the grass'.		Free access maintained		
Policy 18	Develop a park Design Guide to strengthen character areas (seats, bins, signs, fencing, paths, trees and other planting) suitable for each character area, distinguishing between the core Areas A-H and outer countryside areas I-M for phased implementation as work is carried out.	<i>Issue: accumulation of designs of fencing, railings, barriers, signage, bins etc, (partly addressed in Historic Heart project and Brand Guidelines)</i>	Design is being addressed in recent work near the Pavilion, colour palette in place and more rustic benches around the lake. There is still eg a mix of bin styles across the park but there have been some improvements in recent work.	Formalise Design Guide along with masterplan to guide future work	
Policy 19	Continue reorganisation of maintenance depots to reduce impact on sites which could add to visitor experience and aid operational requirements and integrate former maintenance areas into the park . Reduce impact of depot on surrounding areas with screening.	<i>Issue: Maintenance and storage areas are being moved from prime locations to new compound in Area M, but some remain eg inside arena; old areas need redesign; composting facilities incomplete??</i>	Engineering still in arena; new compound large but unsightly; reorganisation planned	Complete move to new area. Screen compound, centralise and reorganise	
Policy 20	Continue to introduce more variation into the character and design of ornamental planting , following historic precedent with more shrub and herbaceous planting, and in order to reduce the high costs of maintenance associated with bedding.	<i>Issue: emphasis on annual bedding</i>	Volunteer gardeners moving away from emphasis on annual bedding. Dependence on volunteers not sustainable	Add garden and park management skills and strategic support for volunteers to Strategic MMP	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 21	Prepare and implement a Sustainable Management Strategy for all park management operations.	<i>Issue: although there has been progress with recycling, opportunities for sustainable use of resources and reusing materials are limited; continuing use of peat and herbicides 2022 There is also an opportunity to conserve and enhance Wicksteed's important network of habitats, to embed sustainable management and for the park play its role in combatting the climate and nature emergency.</i>	No pesticides and herbicides used and volunteers do their own composting. People booking (free) community events fill in environmental impact form which encourages car share, avoiding waste etc. Park still needs a co-ordinated sustainability policy. Some recycling of materials and structures; full ESOS report awaited	Agree, implement and publicise Sustainability Policy and standards for the park to respond to greater awareness of the climate and nature emergency	
Policy 21	Adopt ecologically appropriate, sustainable and environmentally sensitive management practices in accordance with best practice, strategies and plans, including sourcing of materials with low embodied carbon, minimal use of herbicides and pesticides, no use of peat or peat based products, composting of green waste on site, and reuse/recycling of materials where possible.		Volunteers do their own composting in the maintenance yard- green waste from park still stored between main lake and fishing lake and not processed but there are plans to improve composting facilities. Community team/ volunteers and maintenance team may have different approach - needs co-ordination	Agree and implement sustainable management standards; secure resources for conservation and enhancement of Nature Improvement Area and Green Infrastructure corridors. Include in Strategic MMP and Sustainability Policy	
Policy 21	Increase visible recycling, use of recyclable and reusable containers and materials and publicise.		Recycling is not apparent to the public; currently (2022) mixed waste is sorted by a materials recovery/ recycling facility, (MRF) although there are plans to separate materials on site. Better packaging in catering franchise	Operate obvious recycling and waste minimisation	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 21	Address the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability through: the use of efficient integrated and simple systems for energy, water and waste use and collection, construction, design and operation; planning for and mitigating flooding; the incorporation of educational and recreation facilities that demonstrate best practice.		Education work good; attention to issue less apparent in general operation	Adopt environmentally sustainable practices across the park and create awareness among staff and visitors as Sustainability Policy	
Policy 22	Water management strategy: prepare and implement a site wide strategy for management of water features, drainage and flooding	<i>Sustainable water supply, sustainable drainage etc, flooding of lake area;</i>	Ongoing issues with waterlogging and muddy paths- some work in hand May 2022	Add to maintenance programme/ Strategic MMP	
Policy 22	Provide sustainable water supply: take opportunities to use groundwater as a priority and increase rainwater collection; provide new sustainable water supply for horticulture		At least 16 butts: more collection to be added. Volunteers use several water butts for watering including the polytunnel. Safety concerns when locating water butts in publicly accessible areas.	Add increased provision to long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 23	Climate change: Review the opportunities to adopt more 'green technology' in relation to energy generation and management.	<i>Sustainable energy generation</i>	This has long been a gap- final ESOS energy report awaited; opportunity to improve environmental profile and save money; lack of detailed energy monitoring is an issue	Adopt energy and carbon reduction measures in Strategic MMP	
Policy 23	Ensure that use of resources (particularly water, energy use and production) and choice of plant material (planting schemes, grass, tree selection) are consistent with predictions for climate change and its mitigation		Final ESOS report awaited; all operations have impacts on climate change	Take account of climate change impacts eg in tree management plan, planting plans and choice of materials. Add to Strategic MMP	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 24	Nature Conservation: conserve and monitor wildlife interest; adopt management techniques that will conserve and enhance the range and diversity of habitats, while respecting the design intentions of the historic landscape features (Theme K). Establish a network of wildlife corridors and 'conservation headlands' through less frequent mowing of grassland especially away from core areas.	<i>Issues: Continue to development maintenance practice to enhance the ecological value of the park; range of species and types of planting will be affected by climate change; large areas of close mown grass add to maintenance burden and reduce biodiversity and visual interest</i>	This is an ever higher priority and awareness has increased. Major opportunity with planned work to Lse watermeadow and the Trust taking responsibility for extended watermeadow areas and end of HLS agreement in 2023. Implementation of meadow areas within the park had been paused; staff resource is limited although there is some help from volunteers	Opportunity to enhance biodiversity and carbon capture in watermeadows: see OU research on role in carbon capture www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/ Add watermeadows to Strategic MMP. Secure staff and equipment to take on wider role, eg provide flail collector for meadow management and to facilitate activities and awareness raising	
Policy 24	Update surveys and monitor ecology		Concern that there are few recent ecological surveys eg lake area; some undertaken in relation to retirement village	Add surveys to Strategic MMP, take opportunities for new surveys , eg work with partners eg Wildlife Trusts	
Policy 24	Progress the Trust's water meadow conservation project along the Lse valley as part of the River Nene Regional Park		Northern meadow and new Lse watermeadow to the south coming into Trust management; resource limited but new funding opportunities anticipated	Add water meadows to Strategic MMP; work with Lse valley partners and secure resources eg extended HLS or other ELMS funded schemes	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Conservation of historic fabric (structures) in general					
Policy 25	Survey Research and Recording: Continue the programme of condition surveys, recording, and documentary research using Wicksteed Park's archive of drawings for significant historic structures. Maintain site records and keep up to date with the regular addition of records of works, investigations and surveys affecting built and landscape features and use the archive to monitor that repairs and replacement works reflect context and original design concepts. See also Archive Policy 3.		Records are kept by community, volunteers and maintenance teams but only patchy records of changes during pandemic eg removal of arena bridge. There is still a need to document changes in rides	Keep records of changes to include inventory of rides and play equipment	
Policy 26	Continue programme of repairs, maintenance and general conservation work to historically important structures: the safeguarding of the special architectural, archaeological, and historical interest of the structures of historical importance will underpin all works of repair and maintenance, and all such works will be carried out in compliance with best conservation practice and designed and undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced professional advisors and contractors.	<i>Structural fabric of structures of historical importance has suffered from adaptation, additions and loss of elements</i>	Recent progress but several structures including pavilion roof need urgent repair ; Hexagon café and Chapel toilets closed; some redundant structures	Update condition surveys and develop programme of maintenance and Strategic MMP for long term repair and maintenance of structures	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 27	Alterations and adaptations: Any proposal to repair or alter the historic structures within the park should be assessed for its effect on historic fabric and the overall park integrity. If the removal of original or significant fabric is deemed to be unavoidable, it should be established that there is not a more appropriate and less intrusive alternative. All such works should be recorded and readily reversible.		Successful recent work	Keep principles under review; keep record as Policy 25	
Policy 28	Appropriate approvals will be sought and obtained wherever necessary, and all work shall comply with statutory requirements including Planning Practice Guidance on Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment and Historic England Advice Notes		Successful recent work	Keep under review	
Policy 29	Evaluation of new elements: The physical and visual impact of new elements will be fully evaluated and works designed to ensure that the significance of the park, its views and setting and its historic structures are not compromised through Heritage Impact Assessment. New features should aim to reflect Wicksteed's distinctive practical engineering-inspired and economic structures which adopted traditional seaside style character and detailing as originally designed for the Pavilion and Lakeside areas, while displaying modesty and utility.	<i>new elements and facilities have been inserted which impact on significant areas of the historic designed landscape; progress being made with Historic Heart and @Play projects</i>	Successful recent work	Use HIA and checklist to review new elements as Policy 9	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Issues relating largely to community or social value					
Policy 30	Widen audiences and raise awareness of the park's special heritage Develop Friends Group from new Newsletter membership Expand engagement on the local, regional, national and international interest of the site. Facilitate the needs of the local community and the wider public at all levels Strengthen links with other parks, groups and organisations. Develop a greater understanding of and educational engagement with the site's pre-1900 heritage	<i>Summary of issues: scope for further appreciation of the park's special heritage, facilities for all users and charitable ethos,</i>	This aspect has been well covered by the Community and Heritage team who have links Gardens Trust and Parks Forum. Managers have contacts with other attractions. Successful volunteer network has taken the place of a Friends Group but Stakeholder Group is under consideration.	Maintain and develop connections with other groups and consider a Stakeholder Group or similar to widen engagement. Continue to reallocate responsibilities during staff changes to build on past progress.	
Policy 31	Continue to develop opportunities and support for volunteers and community involvement, including those with special needs	<i>Expand Volunteer Network, develop Friends group and widen audience</i>	Volunteers a great strength but need ongoing support and strategic direction as funding and roles change	Include support for volunteers in long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 32	Continue development and delivery of the education and community programme for all ages and abilities, based on the distinctive heritage and ecology of the park.		This aspect has been well covered by the Activity Plan	Maintain and develop activity programmes during staff changes	
Policy 33	Archaeology (preservation in situ) the archaeological heritage (above and below ground) should be safeguarded; and conserved, enhanced and managed appropriately in line with corresponding historic landscape conservation policies, in accordance with NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance, including an archaeological watching brief for new works involving excavation.	<i>The archaeological heritage is an integral part of the historic fabric and landscape. Trustees bring archaeological skills and recent landscape analysis and archaeological investigation suggest wide archaeological potential which is not fully understood and is vulnerable to change.</i>	Archaeological potential throughout site	Take opportunities to gather information, protect and interpret archaeology	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 33	Review field archaeology and potential impact of any excavation and earth moving.		Information from retirement village surveys: finds and potential	Keep records of surveys. Implement archaeological monitoring	
Policy 33	Take opportunities to widen understanding and interpretation of the site's early history through archaeological survey	<i>Opportunity to interpret and hold activities related to the site's early history</i>	Motte and bailey mentioned under Wicksteed Park walks https://wicksteedpark.org/the-park/park-walks/	Include archaeology in interpretation and activities	
Historic landscape policies by character area					
Area A Pavilion, 'precinct', bandstand terrace (Fountain Lawn) and Rose Garden					
Policy 34	Pavilion, garden and precinct: reinforce the distinctive character and quality of the historic core of the park as a setting for the Pavilion and prioritise conservation of most significant elements (Theme G)		Major work carried out in @ Play and Historic Heart projects	Include maintenance in work schedules and Strategic MMP	
Policy 34	Re establish link between the Pavilion and Fountain Lawn to facilitate greater use by restricting vehicle access; improve surfaces	<i>Separation of Pavilion from its setting and key areas unused or without public access;</i>	Achieved		
Policy 34	Re introduce Wicksteed designed benches	<i>Original hard detailing such as Wicksteed designed seats lost</i>	Achieved		
Policy 34	Return statues to Fountain Lawn and repair fountain and basin	<i>Reduction in use of Fountain Lawn and loss of planted and hard landscape detail</i>	Achieved		
Policy 34	Reinforce Wicksteed's distinctive practical engineering- inspired design and the Pavilion's stripped down traditional seaside pier detailing		Pavilion work to garden floor achieves this		
Policy 34	Continue to improve setting of the Pavilion by removing clutter, parking and inappropriate extensions	<i>Accretion of extensions and other fixtures has masked original character of Pavilion and 'precinct' area (partly addressed)</i>	Largely achieved Issue with paving settlement in precinct	Repair precinct surfaces	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 34	Consider options for Coronation Hall		Theatre recreated	Consider longer term options	
Policy 35	Rose Garden: Rejuvenate the special character of the Rose Garden as a quiet retreat	<i>Change of character of Rose Garden and loss of original planting detail</i>	Removed from @Play; work by volunteers	Plan to complete works in house	
Policy 35	Complete removal of the large conifers	<i>Loss of views over garden to lake due to unchecked growth of conifers (partly addressed)</i>	Views reopened	Monitor through long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 35	Replant with shrubs and herbaceous material	<i>Need for more permanent planting in addition to annual bedding</i>	Planting in progress by volunteers	Source strategic gardening support in Strategic MMP	
Policy 35	Reintroduce rose towers		Removed from @ Play	Plan replacements	
Policy 35	Conserve Charles Wicksteed and Jerry statues; consider relocation of Hilda gate statues		This work omitted from @Play project	Add to long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 35	Conserve Charles Wicksteed period retaining wall		Work completed @Play project		
Policy 35	Restrict memorialisation in garden	<i>Gardens and trees have become memorials;</i>	Policy in place	Keep implementation under review	
Area B: Core of ornamental park					
Policy 36	Area B Core park: Manage as traditional parkland with views to lake, to accommodate informal recreation within a strong landscape structure free of general vehicle access (Themes B, E, F)	<i>Loss of views to lake</i>	Views improved or to be improved		
Policy 36	Manage ancient trees and plan replacements as needed. Planting plan to include forest size trees planted singly or in clumps, from a limited palette to maintain visual cohesion	<i>Lack of tree planting and management plan</i>	Annual safety inspections only	Develop and implement tree management plan as Policy 15	
Policy 36	Limit intrusive features within key views eg Lakeside Diner and nearby play equipment	<i>Intrusive features within key views</i>	Replacement for diner planned		
Policy 36	Vary grass management at margins to create wildflower areas		Programme interrupted	Recommence wildflower management as Policy 24	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 36	Upgrade surfaces and street furniture according to Design Guide		Good progress in recent work	Develop existing information into Design Guide as Policy 18	
Areas C and D ornamental park					
Policy 37	Ornamental park: Manage as traditional parkland with views over park and to lake to accommodate informal recreation and events (Themes B, E, F)	<i>Lack of visual cohesion; 'Rush' fencing bisects Area C and area adjacent Barton Road largely unused, apart from informal parking Little visual connection across Barton Road to Barton Hall and its wider parkland</i>	'Rush' zipwire to be removed	Consider options for use of area adjacent to Barton Road, north of zipwire	
Policy 37	Planting plan to include forest size trees planted singly or in clumps, from a limited palette to maintain visual cohesion and to break up view of park buildings from Barton Seagrave	<i>Lack of tree planting and management plan Fragile views to lake</i>	Annual safety inspections only	Tree and views management as Policy 15	
Policy 37	Restrict parking and reduce visual clutter	<i>Intrusive features within key views Impact of continued parking, hardstanding and visual clutter (area C)</i>	Parking better controlled; coach parking and waste area needs attention; access to retirement village needs detailed planning around other users, impact on greenspace, trees and views	Implement parking controls to prioritise parking away from heritage core and pedestrians as Policy 17; consider and mitigate impacts of access to retirement village	
Policy 37	Vary grass management at margins			Recommence wildflower management as Policy 24	
Policy 37	Upgrade surfaces and street furniture according to Design Guide			Add to long term maintenance plan. Develop existing information into Design Guide as Policy 18	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Area E Recreation park (top field)					
Policy 38	Facilitate structured parking provision , while protecting trees and condition of grass and increase tree cover to enhance park appearance and shade (Themes B, G)	<i>Provides the main access via the fairground Little visual connection with the rest of the park Some surfacing but most parking is informal on grass</i>	WTL considering relocating road in top field further west to reduce conflict with pedestrians	Assess environmental impacts and alternative strategies. Implement parking controls to protect grass, trees and pedestrians as Policy 17	
Policy 38		<i>Few important mature trees; Impact of vehicle access and compaction on trees and grassland</i>	Recent losses	Include in tree replanting and management as Policy 15	
Area F Playground and Fairground					
Policy 39	Maintain as playground and fairground within current area (Theme F)	<i>Enclosed areas with hardstanding, recent tree losses and little connection with wider landscape; private maintenance area around original cottages being opened up as recommended in 2012 CMP; former tea pavilion site is an enclosed maintenance area, now unused; loss of original play equipment but being reintroduced; confusing route from car park to Pavilion (NB this area is the subject of redesign as part of Historic Heart Project in 2018 and planned @Play project)</i>	Play is the essence of Wicksteed park. Planning to upgrade free playground. Wicky's Farm opened in former maintenance area Easter 2022.	Keep under review with playground subgroup. Take opportunities to improve accessibility and to build into interpretation and engagement programme.	
Policy 39	Replace lost trees, increase shade and harmonise hard landscaping palette			Include in tree replanting and management as Policy 15	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 39	Reintroduce Wicksteed play equipment and seating		Heritage play area complete Easter 2022.	Add to maintenance programme	
Policy 39	Use as focus for educational and design activities		Achieved	Maintain focus on play in activities, including role of engineering	
Policy 39	Improve views to and route to Pavilion		Achieved		
Area G Avenue and entrance areas					
Policy 40	Rekindle the sense of drama and arrival, making use of the landscape, one of the park's major assets, and rationalise circulation (Themes B, G) Consider making better use of complete avenue as an approach	<i>The lodge and avenue are no longer used as the park entrance but the eastern part is used as an entrance and exit; Entrance from Barton Road controlled by modern barrier has lost original dramatic approach pedestrian routes need improvement;</i>	Pedestrian route along avenue interrupted by security barrier. Circulation to car parks has improved since 2012	Keep under review; consider options for security barrier to maintain pedestrian (and cycle?) route	
Policy 40	Monitor, maintain and replant avenue on correct spacing and alignment; develop long term replanting strategy	<i>There have been more losses of avenue trees due to safety concerns and several trees are in decline</i>	Further tree losses, especially at west end.	Add to tree replanting and management strategy as Policy 15	
Policy 40	Repair entrance gates, piers and drinking fountain and open up pedestrian access	<i>the Lodge is now in Trust ownership; sphere form pier coping missing</i>	Gates etc still need repair. Hedged garden empty.	Add repair of entrance area to long term maintenance plan	
Area H Lake activity area					
Policy 41	Lake activity area: continue to rekindle active, 'seaside' atmosphere of the 1930s and 40s heyday at the north end of lake (Themes D, E, F, G, J) (Splashzone) Continue to declutter, open up and reinstate greener landscape setting with pleasant seating and picnicking areas Manage and reduce vegetation on boating pool islands to open up access and views	<i>Changes since 2012 include new sand and water play, cafe in place of aviary, loss of boathouse, repairs to drying room toilets, reduction in redundant features. New sand and water play and cafe attract children away from paddling area created as part of Lakes project. Islands in boating pool overgrown and access limited. Some concerns about water quality in lse upstream leading to growth of blanket weed. Mix of barriers and buildings; setting of listed waterchute could be improved.</i>	Boat house lost 2016; area now cleared; repaired sand and water play to open Easter 2022; removal of monorail has opened up setting; pony ride planned east side paddle boat pool	Maintain seaside atmosphere; develop long term plan to replace boathouse	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 41	Build on water- based seaside character and traditional attractions. Facilitate recreational access to the lake and enhance the landscape setting for the attractions		Ferry gone, still have paddleboats and rowboats; public demand	Maintain and increase opportunities for use of the lake as Policy 43	
Policy 41	Review design and function of area west of lake: amphitheatre, lakeside paddling, sandpit in former paddling pool, site of Lakeside Diner and relationship with new attractions on east shore. Continue efforts to reduce impact of geese and to monitor water quality	<i>Maintenance issues around use of paddling area, swimming beach, amphitheatre and former paddling pool (current sandpit) need resolution, including goose fouling, blanket weed, also servicing and form of amphitheatre, to facilitate use.</i>	Options being reviewed	Agree and implement strategy to repair and maintain and sustainable use	
Policy 41	Review design, access and function of Arena, while respecting sporting heritage	<i>Cycle track is a rare survival of a 1930s velodrome, but no longer in use for cycling and it inhibits free flow between the arena, park and Hexagon. Arena only accessed via bridge over track and options under review</i>	Access to Arena improved but now cuts through cycle track.	Resolve use and interpretation of remnant cycle track	
Policy 41	New features should reflect Wicksteed's distinctive practical engineering- inspired and economic structures with their traditional seaside style character and detailing		Added to HIA checklist as Policy 9	Implement checklist as Policy 9	
Area I Main lake					
Policy 42	Manage and monitor the restored lake in order to maintain water quality, enhance biodiversity interest, increase opportunities for access and recreation and re-establish the lake as the centre piece of the park landscape. (Themes D, E, F, G, J)	<i>Issues with siltation, water quality and bank vegetation dealt with under Lakes project but needs ongoing management. Improvements to wildlife but not surveyed. some continuing concerns about water quality in lse upstream leading to growth of blanket weed in Summer 2018. Train has no lakeside stop; involves new regulations</i>		Add to long term Strategic MMP	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 42	Ongoing management of reeds and other vegetation to maintain access and views. Manage and reduce vegetation on lake islands to open up views and consider options for access	<i>New structures, reeds and marginal vegetation need regular management to protect access and views; planting protection impedes maintenance operations.</i>	Park Ranger has cut reeds to reopen views; future role for Fishing Club	Add to long term Strategic MMP; clarify role of Fishing Club	
Policy 42	Ecological surveys and monitoring		No recent surveys	Secure updated surveys working with partners. Add to long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 42	Review practicality of retaining the swimming beach. Review management of swimming beach and swimming from pontoons	<i>No access to overgrown islands; flooding; swimming now takes place, but from pontoon rather than beach;</i>	Swimming beach not used or promoted. Antisocial behaviour reported	Clarify policy on wild swimming	
Policy 42	Exploit opportunities for recreational use of the lake		Ferry gone, still have rowboats; Sea Cadets use lake	Keep under review	
Policy 42	Pursue options for railway and boat stops at south end of lake		Extra train stops impractical on access grounds- no stops planned at present	Keep under review	
Policy 42	Monitor water quality		water quality improved	Continue annual testing	
Policy 42	Manage and open up area around River Ise		Ranger aspires to manage woodland along Ise	Co-ordinate with Ise valley projects. Add to long term maintenance and resource plan	
Area J Fishing lake/Wicksteed lagoon/meadow areas					
Policy 43	Manage to enhance biodiversity and improve access (within constraints of continuing use as fishing lake)	<i>Swims managed by fishing club; earlier survey showed that area closest to the river is limited by high nutrient levels, low water levels, lack of management and shade, resulting in a species-poor vegetation;</i>	Still with fishing club; report to WTL	Keep under review	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Policy 43	Manage recycling in defined areas; find long term solution to use of reeds	<i>dumping of arisings including cut reeds in woodland between lakes.</i>		Add to long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 43	Update ecological survey		No recent surveys	Add surveys to long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 43	Bring woodland and meadow areas into management. Tree planting to decrease impact of new housing. Develop links with meadow areas. Review access options in relation to other meadow areas	<i>Meadow area to the south recently acquired; this and Dales Farm Meadow need management; links with Dales Farm Meadow need development</i>	Meadows north and south to be managed by WTL	Secure resources and add to long term Strategic MMP. Improve access. Include in tree replanting and management strategy as Policy 15	
Area K Arboretum					
Policy 44	Manage the arboretum as a valued and well used part of the park through active tree management, management of the grassland as meadow with mown paths, improved interpretation and access. Develop links with meadow areas. Review the Ise boundary. Resolve drainage issues to pedestrian route	<i>lack of active management and underused; now less isolated from park with access improvements; impact of Redrow housing adjacent; unsightly fencing</i>		Add to long term Strategic MMP	
Policy 44	Consider options for incorporating adventurous play			Future activity planning	
Policy 44	Label tree specimens. Planting to decrease impact of new housing on eastern boundary			Include in tree replanting and management strategy as Policy 15	
Area L Lodge area					
Policy 45	Landscaping to provide suitable 'rural' setting for one of the most significant areas of the park including management of area south of Lodge site. (Theme B)	<i>Issues: development completed (15 lodges); southern section unused; separate use but forms setting to important park area</i>	Second phase underway. Maintained by WTL (3 days/week). Visible behind listed waterchute.	Review impact on setting of water chute. Include some screening in tree replanting and management strategy as Policy 15	

Policy	Previous Policy text	Issues as 2018	Update 2022	Objectives	RAG
Area M Outer recreation park					
Policy 46	Reinforce open parkland character with groups of parkland planting to accommodate recreation uses (Themes B, G)	<i>Large new maintenance area; planting undertaken in Lakes project; housing to east and industrial development to south impact on views; southern part of park relatively little used for dog walking, groups west of campsite</i>	Draft policy rewritten to take account of retirement village Ensure that any development respects the landscape structure of hedgerows with groups of parkland planting to minimise the impact on the fabric, views and ecology network of the park	Develop and implement policy to minimise impact on planting, views and ecology	
Policy 46	Planting to screen intrusive development		More urgent given new plans	Include in tree replanting and management strategy as Policy 15 add to masterplan	
Policy 46	Reduce areas of close mown grass. Consider options for more recreational use		Will only be possible in camping area	Include in meadow management	
Policy 46	Reduce visual impact of new maintenance area. Extend use of golf house for maintenance staff		Hedging to be provided by retirement village	Continue to reorganise maintenance area	
Policy 46	Consider impact of campsite development Protect/reopen views to lake. Continue to manage new planting	<i>Plans for introducing hard surfaced caravan pitches;</i>	Improvements to campsite facilities with motorhome hook ups planned	Consider impact on park; add to tree replanting and management strategy as Policy 15	

7.0 MANAGEMENT AIMS

The 2012 CMP included general management aims and an action plan.

The HLF Conservation Plan format ends with Policies and does not include this section. However it is considered useful to update the following management aims from the 2012 CMP and they are being developed into an Action Plan in the updated PMMP.

This section builds on the description of the historic and current landscape character, the significance, ecology and other issues summarised in section 6 above. It sets out broad management aims to enhance, protect and sustain the significance of the area.

The overall aim is to ensure that all management is informed by an understanding of the site's significance so that effort and available resources are directed towards the long term implementation of an agreed Masterplan, whether it be as part of the public park and community function or the trading company.

7.1 Overall management aims by character area

7.1.1 Area A Pavilion, 'precinct, terrace (Fountain Lawn) and Rose Garden

Overall Management aim

Highest level of management and ornamental horticulture

To reinforce the distinctive character and quality of the historic core of the park; to see the area as a setting for the Pavilion; reopen views and connections to the wider park; prioritise repairs and bring into full use the original elements (Pavilion, concrete cottages and early kiosks and their setting) and to reduce clutter.

Reinforce the traditional character of the 'precinct' by reducing and redesigning street furniture and signage; conserve and repair original structures including traditional kiosks and cottages (underway in 2018). Maintain open park outlook at south end of 'street' by restricting parking here (to be completed).

Consider closing/reducing use of road in front of Pavilion and/or resurfacing to reconnect Pavilion with the Fountain Lawn (bandstand terrace); reinstate fountain as centrepiece of a more attractive events area on terrace with formal bedding with reinstated statues (in @Play proposals).

Rejuvenate the Rose Garden by removing the large conifers, replanting with herbaceous material and reintroducing rose towers (to be completed in @Play proposals) and implement Memorial Policy to reduce memorialisation of the area.

7.1.2 Area B: Core of Ornamental Park

Overall Management aim

High level of management of trees, grass, surfaces

To reinforce a traditional parkland character which accommodates activities within a strong landscape structure with long landscape views and without regular vehicle access. Develop and follow a programme of tree planting and management and views management; maintain short mown grass appropriate to heavy use in this area. Planting plan to include forest size trees planted singly or in clumps, from a limited palette to maintain visual cohesion including reinforcement of historic trees (oak, sycamore, lime, possibly beech, sweet chestnut, walnut, cedar where conditions allow; poplar and willow in damper areas). Implement Memorial Policy to reduce memorialisation of trees in the area. Do not replace small ornamental trees.



Plan 17: the registered park

7.1.3 Areas C and D Ornamental park

Overall Management aim

High level of management, tree and grass management

Manage as parkland with groups of forest trees planted singly or in clumps, following tree management strategy, from a limited palette to maintain visual cohesion (eg oak, common lime, sycamore), located to screen parking (if it continues) and break up view of park buildings from Barton Seagrave. Develop parking strategy to reduce or eliminate parking from these sensitive areas, particularly the area at the east end of the avenue. Extend areas of meadow grass in less heavily used areas. Define events areas. Replant gaps in sycamore avenue along Pony Field (18) following original spacing. Reopen and maintain views to lake. Implement Memorial Policy to reduce memorialisation of trees in the area. Do not replace small ornamental trees.

7.1.4 Area E Recreation park

Overall Management aim

Medium level of management

This area has been developed since the early days of the park, initially for formal recreation. It has been developed as the main parking area in recent years as it has the least impact on views and setting. It would benefit from more extensive marking of parking spaces away from trees. Additional tree planting following tree management strategy would improve the appearance and shade cars; longer grass at margins; protect existing trees from cars; grass aeration and further surfacing/ grass reinforcement. Consider developing rectangular area adjacent to crazy golf as eg school orchard to involve local schools.

7.1.5 Area F Playground and Fairground

Overall Management aim

High level of management (limited soft landscape)

Maintain as playground and fairground within current area, with traditional Wicksteed and modern equipment. Replace lost trees and increase shade and permanent planting; harmonise hard landscaping palette. Improve and open up pedestrian routes via central Octagon area (being opened up and original cottages repaired). Increase tree planting at edges of area.

7.1.6 Area G Avenue and entrance areas

Overall Management aim

High level of management (limited soft landscape)

Rekindle the sense of landscape drama and arrival, making use of one of the park's major assets, and continue to rationalise circulation. Work to create rural impression at arrival rather than urban, as it was originally. Implement a management strategy to maintain avenue trees as long as possible; plant replacements on correct spacing and alignment. Clear view at east end of avenue; harmonise signage and street furniture. Maintain and repair original piers, gates and Lodge and facilitate pedestrian (and possibly cycle) use of Lodge entrance. Propose listing or local listing for Lodge and entrance gates. Complete plans to improve circulation, simplify parking and provide a safe, attractive pedestrian routes to the Pavilion area, making use of the avenue.

7.1.7 Area H Lake activity area

Overall Management aim

High level of management, rural rather than urban planting

Rekindle atmosphere of the 1930s heyday at north end of lake; declutter, open up and make more of traditional attractions: boating, train, water chute and the landscape which connects them. Prioritise features c1935- boathouse (to be rebuilt), extended boating pool with train running round, water chute and river setting. Increase attractive, green places to sit and take refreshments. Maintain and facilitate paddling and water play on site of former bathing area and use of amphitheatre; manage geese and marginal vegetation.

Reconnect arena with the landscape by reducing some surrounding vegetation. Remove or relocate intrusive elements (eg diner and adjacent play equipment) and redundant features. Review use of Arena following removal of maintenance area.

7.1.8 Area I Main lake

Overall Management aim

Medium maintenance level for wildlife and amenity use, rural planting and detailing

Facilitate use of lake for water activities while protecting ecology and maintaining views. Manage reeds and marginal vegetation to maintain access and views. Monitor ecology, water quality and manage goose population. Manage area around River Isle. Review management of lake swimming. Manage island trees for views and consider reintroducing access to an island. Reduce short mown grass, reduce nutrient levels and manage areas as wildflower meadow by removing cuttings to reduce fertility. Use resources sustainably. Maintain control structures and pontoon boardwalk. Introduce stops for train and boat at south end of lake. Compost or use arisings as biomass; use lake water for watering as permitted; consider use as energy source. Rural character seats, surfaces and hard landscaping.

7.1.9 Area J Fishing lake/Wicksteed lagoon/meadow areas

Overall Management aim

Lower maintenance level

Manage to enhance biodiversity and amenity use (within constraints of continuing use as fishing lake). Manage woodland and meadow areas and improve access. Additional tree planting to decrease impact of new housing. Rural character seats, surfaces and hard landscaping.

7.1.10 Area K Arboretum

Overall Management aim

Medium maintenance level

Manage and maintain varied tree collection for informal recreational use. Selective thinning of poorer specimens to give others space to develop; manage as woodland habitat with woodland flora, meadow areas and mown paths; increase use and consider incorporating adventurous play, wild camping etc. Manage and plant to decrease impact of new housing. Rural character seats, surfaces and hard landscaping.

7.1.11 Area L Lodge area

Overall Management aim

Medium maintenance level, rural character

Landscaping to provide suitable 'rural' setting for one of the most significant areas of the park. Some screening with tree planting; manage woodland areas and maintain open river banks.

7.1.12 Area M Outer recreation park

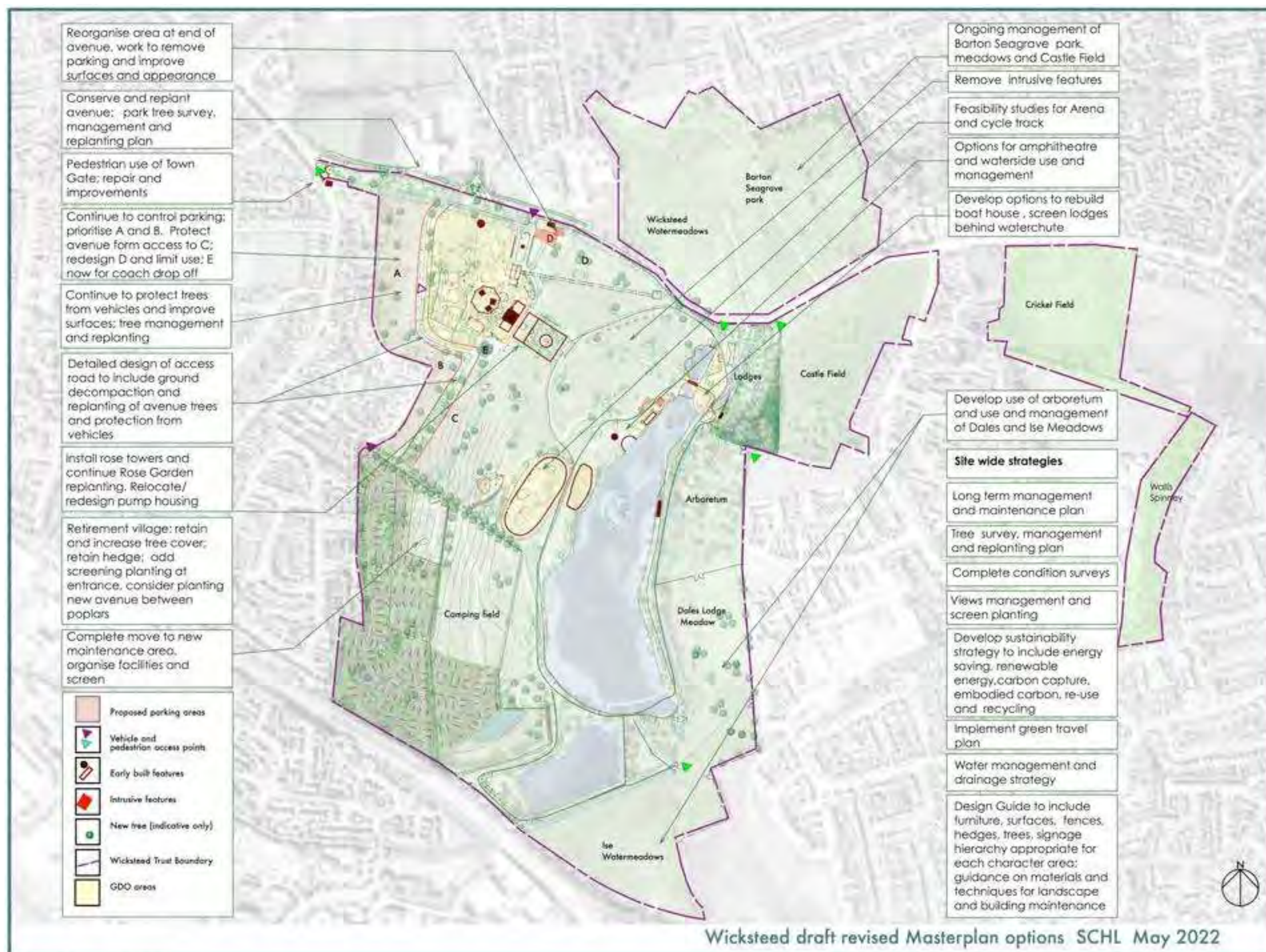
Overall Management aim

Lower maintenance level

Reinforce open parkland character with groups of parkland planting following tree management strategy for informal recreational use. Protect/reopen views to lake. Manage new planting of camping area for ecological and amenity benefit, allowing sheltered camping sites and screening intrusive view to industrial development to south; plant to reduce impact of housing development on or off site. Reduce areas of close mown grass and manage ancient hedgerows to increase biodiversity. Consider use of lower areas which are liable to flooding for willow biomass. As part of longer term tree management, plan to replace poplars along lane past Golf House with traditional park trees. Protect archaeology. Rural character seats, surfaces and hard landscaping

If and when the retirement village is constructed it is assumed management responsibility will move to the village, but Wicksteed Trust will need to keep issues affecting the overall character and fabric of the park under review, as Policy 46.

The Management Action Plan will be set out in the PMMP.



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9.0 ENGLISH HERITAGE REGISTER AND LISTING DESCRIPTIONS

Wicksteed Park

List entry Number: 1001524

County	District	District Type	Parish
Northamptonshire	Kettering		District Authority
Northamptonshire	Kettering		District Authority

Grade: II

Date first registered: 26-Apr-2001

UID: 4793

official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Garden

An early C20 public amusement or leisure park laid out for Charles Wicksteed and opened in 1921, with formal elements set in an informal amusement park dominated by a large lake. It was the first such park in the United Kingdom, in which Wicksteed installed substantial amounts of play equipment supplied from his own factory.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1876 Charles Wicksteed (1847-1931) founded an engineering company in Kettering, Charles Wicksteed and Company, which prospered such that Wicksteed became a wealthy businessman. In 1913 he bought a parcel of agricultural land south-east of Kettering and formed the Wicksteed Village Trust. His intention was to provide a model village for the working classes at below-average rents, offering generous gardens and a large open public space for recreation. A 1914 plan exists of the proposed Barton Seagrave Garden Suburb Estate, prepared by the local architects Gotch and Saunders, showing a substantial lake flanked by housing and a park and playing fields. Following the First World War public housing became the responsibility of local authorities, so Wicksteed chose instead to concentrate on the creation of the park for public use. The park was to provide a free playground and sports facilities for family enjoyment, funded by other facilities within the park, such as refreshments and outdoor features, for which a small charge was made.

In 1917 the first playground equipment was installed, designed and built by Wicksteed's engineering company. A 12ha lake, fed by the Ise Brook, was constructed by 1921, the year that the park was officially opened. In 1922 work began on a Pavilion and Theatre building towards the centre of the park, these being completed in 1923, followed by the adjacent Rose Garden, laid out in 1924. A water chute, bandstand, and fountain were built in 1926. In 1928 Wicksteed bought Barton Seagrave Hall for £6000.

Some housing was built around the western edge of the park by the Trust, including in 1921 prefabricated concrete bungalows in Paradise Lane, the earliest buildings of this construction type. Further prefabricated concrete bungalows were built in 1930, on the eastern boundary close to the lake. A model railway track was built around the edge of the lake in 1931. Following Wicksteed's death that year the park continued in the hands of the Trustees, and further features were added, particularly play equipment and facilities for recreational activities.

After the Second World War the park was used as an example by Professor Holford during the planning of the New Towns, to show that a town could create parks and playgrounds which, after the initial outlay, could be run at no cost to the rate payers (The Wicksteed Story).

The park continues in public use, owned by Wicksteed Village Trust (2001).

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wicksteed Park lies at the south-east edge of Kettering, on the west edge of Barton Seagrave village. The c 45ha site is bounded to the north by the A6003 Barton Road, to the west by C20 housing, including the 1920s Paradise Lane, and to the south by land laid out as a miniature golf course and agricultural land. The southern part of the east boundary is marked by the River Ise, beyond which lies open agricultural land. The northern part of the east boundary

is marked by a track, beyond which lies Castle Field, containing the earthwork remains of moats, fishponds, and the shrunken medieval village (scheduled ancient monument). The land is elevated in the western section of the site, with a gentle slope running south-east from the Pavilion and Rose Garden down towards the lake in the Ise valley below.

The setting is partly urban, with the remains of Barton Seagrave Hall's landscape park and gardens adjacent to the north-east. The landscape of the Hall was laid out in the late C18 and early C19 with advice from Humphry Repton (1752-1818). A Red Book dated April 1794 details his suggestions for the site (British Library). The land which Wicksteed Park occupies was until 1913 part of the Barton Seagrave Hall estate.

Views extend beyond the park north-east towards Barton Seagrave Hall and its park and gardens. Further views extend east and south-east across the site and beyond to distant agricultural land and woodland. All these views are particularly prominent from the Pavilion and Rose Garden.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal approach is from the town to the north-west, via Barton Road. A gateway gives access at the centre of the north boundary, from which a drive extends south to the south-east front of the Pavilion, overlooking the Rose Garden to the south-east. From here the drive continues south-west to a car park at the south-west side of the Pavilion.

A further entrance to the park lies at the junction of the A509 Pytchley Road with Barton Road, 500m north-west of the Pavilion. The entrance, set back off the road, is marked by a two-storey lodge to the south. Stone gate piers with ball finials, supporting wooden gates, flank the entrance, these in turn flanked by further, smaller piers in similar style on which are hung pedestrian gates. The gateway gives access to a c 350m long drive flanked by a broad beech avenue which leads south-east across the park parallel with the north boundary to join the main drive 150m north of the Pavilion. A large octagonal shelter with a pyramidal tiled roof supported by brick piers stands to the south of the avenue, c 150m north-west of the Pavilion. This approach was formerly the main entrance to the park from Kettering.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Pavilion stands towards the centre of the park, overlooking the Rose Garden and beyond this the shallow slope leading down to the lake to the east. The Pavilion stands on the site of a building erected in the 1920s which was subsequently enlarged. The central block is of two storeys, with, on the north-west side, a clock tower rising above it. The Pavilion provides large reception rooms and a theatre for various types of gatherings. To the north-west of the Pavilion stand various other structures, including service buildings and a compound containing large items of leisure equipment.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Wicksteed Park was laid out as a landscaped public park in which amusements were provided for visitors. It is dominated by two major features: the formal Rose Garden to the south-east of the Pavilion, and the large informal lake adjacent to the east boundary, these being set within informal parkland containing recreation and amusement facilities.

The Rose Garden is divided into two terraces, the upper one lying alongside the south-east front of the Pavilion, from which it is separated by the drive. The upper terrace is laid to lawn enclosed by a perimeter path, with a central stone-edged flower bed (formerly a pond and fountain, 1926). At the centre of the south-east edge a stone-balustraded promontory, formerly the site of a bandstand, overlooks the lower terrace and lake beyond. Paths lead south-east along the outer sides of the upper terrace, giving access to the lower terrace on which is laid out the Rose Garden. The area is laid out with geometric panels of lawn divided by gravel paths, at the centre of which is a circular sunken feature with a central stone monument. The borders within this feature were formerly laid out with rose beds which now (2001) contain seasonal bedding. At the corners of the lower terrace lie shrub beds planted with tall evergreens. The lawns are edged with dome-shaped clipped evergreens. At the centre of the south-east edge stands a stone memorial to Charles Wicksteed's dog, Jerry, which disappeared in 1928. The terrace is bounded by clipped yew hedges, beyond which views extend over the park to the countryside beyond.

The path on the north-east side of the Rose Garden continues south-east to the north end of the lake, being carried over the lake by a hump-backed bridge. From here it continues eastwards, giving access to features on the east side of the lake and the line of prefabricated, semi-detached Lakeside Bungalows. To the north and east the Bungalows are enclosed by woodland. An early C20, two-storey brick water chute

building stands close by, between the lake and the Bungalows. The northern tip of the lake contains two islands and is used for boating. The remainder of the lake, also used for boating, contains several islands and is largely enclosed by the model railway (1931), and bounded to the east by a narrow strip of trees. The River Ise enters the site from Barton Seagrave park at the north-east corner of the Wicksteed Park, feeding the lake, alongside the east edge of which it runs before leaving at the south-east corner of the park.

The remains of several formal ponds lie on the west bank of the lake, including two circular former lily ponds (OS 1938) and a semicircular paddling pool, now (2001) a sand pit. Close by to the south-west stands a large open shelter, in similar style to that south of the north-west drive. South of the shelter lies the c 0.5ha oval model yacht pond (early C20), now (2001) drained. To the west of this lies the oval former cycle track or velodrome (1930), now enclosing large items of leisure equipment.

The rest of the park is laid to lawn and planted with scattered clumps of trees and singles. Formerly tennis courts were laid out in the north-west corner (OS 1938). A miniature golf course lies to the south-west of the park (outside the area here registered).

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Description written: April 2001 Register Inspector: SR Edited: August 2001

Water Chute at Wicksteed Park

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

List entry Number: 1437706

Wicksteed Park, Barton Road, Kettering, Northants, NN15 6UU

County: Northamptonshire

District: Kettering

Parish: Barton Seagrave

Grade: II

Date first listed: 29-Nov-2016

Summary of Building

A water chute of 1926, designed and manufactured by Charles Wicksteed.

Reasons for Designation

The Water Chute, a water ride of 1926 by Charles Wicksteed, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Date and rarity: it is the oldest water chute in Britain, and one of the oldest surviving water-based rides in the world;

- * Architectural and design interest: the ride survives almost as it was built, and the rider experience is the same as when the ride first opened;

- * Historic interest: designed and made by the manufacturer and philanthropist Charles Wicksteed, who was of national and international influence on attitudes to children's recreation, and the provision of purpose-designed play equipment;

- * Group value: an important element of the overall design of Wicksteed Park, created in 1921 by Charles Wicksteed for the health and well being of the public (registered at Grade II, NHLE number 1001524).

History

Wicksteed Park was created by Charles Wicksteed, designer, inventor and owner of an engineering company which originally manufactured steam ploughing engines, bicycles and automatic gear boxes, but came to specialise in children's play equipment. Charles Wicksteed's factory was very successful, and in 1913 he bought a large area of land to the south-east of Kettering, in order to create a village for his

workers, in a similar tradition to Bournville or Port Sunlight. After the First World War, however, the local authority was given the responsibility for housing, so Charles decided instead to concentrate on providing an open space for the health and enjoyment of the public. The park opened in 1921.

In 1926 Charles Wicksteed designed and installed the Water Chute, which became a major attraction in the park. Wicksteed went on to design and make play equipment for children, and to be a passionate exponent of the value of recreation for children's health and well being.

The first water chute in England was erected in London's Earl's Court in 1893; others were built at Southport Pleasure Beach in 1903, and Blackpool Pleasure Beach in 1907. There were examples in other amusement parks. None of these examples survive, and the Water Chute at Wicksteed park is the earliest surviving example in Britain, and one of the earliest surviving water-based rides in the world.

The Water Chute remains almost as built, except that in c.1931 the original flat roof was replaced with a sweeping hipped roof to match the "house style" of contemporary structures in the park.

Details

A water chute of 1926, designed and manufactured by Charles Wicksteed

.MATERIALS: yellow brick tower with tiled roof, iron tracks, railings and staircases.

PLAN: a simple two-storey building, rectangular in plan, adjacent to the river, oriented roughly south-west to north-east, with the chute extending into the river to the north-east.

EXTERIOR: a brick, two-storey tower, resembling a signal box. It has a hipped roof with sweeping overhanging eaves and tiled roof covering, in an Arts and Crafts style. There is a stepped string course to the brickwork at upper level, punctuated by shallow brick pilasters, expressing three bays on the front of the building, two of which are open at the upper level, and the third (north) bay has a six-pane metal-framed window. The upper storey is accessed and exited by an external iron staircase to the front and rear elevations (one for up and one for down), the staircases are believed to be Wicksteed's design for stairs to children's slides.

An iron chute protrudes to the south, extending over and eventually into the river, consisting of two channels for the wheels of the "boat" to run in, on iron supports, and with simple tubular iron safety railings. The ground floor is accessed by two, timber-plank doors on the north end of the building.

INTERIOR: although access to the ground floor was not possible at the time of the site visit, it is understood the timber-plank doors on the ground floor provide access to a single-cell storage area.

The upper storey is largely open, with a 'platform' either side of the central rail pit to allow passengers to enter and exit the 'boat.' The north end of the upper storey contains the electric wheel on which a rope winches the "boat" and passengers up after their plunge into the river. There is a metal cage around the rope winching area. The roof structure is hidden beneath a timber, panelled ceiling.

The passenger enters by climbing the "in" staircase to the east, and entering the semi-open upper floor, from whence they are seated in a "boat" and experience a thrilling slide down the chute, onto the surface of the river below, to be splashed liberally upon hitting the water. The "boat" is then winched up again on a rope so that the passengers can exit from the other side, and down the west staircase. The flat-bottomed "boat" resembles the original design, but is a modern replica of the original. The Water Chute is in its original configuration, save for the early change by Wicksteed to its roof design.

Selected Sources

Books and journals

Bailey, Bruce, Pevsner, Nikolaus, Cherry, Bridget, The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire, (2013), 365-366

Wicksteed, C, A Plea For Children's Recreation After School Hours and After School Age, (1928, republished 2016)

Websites

Wicksteed Park Website, accessed 13/07/2016 from <http://wicksteedpark.org/the-wicksteed-charitable-trust/>

Other

The Development of Seaside Amusement Parks and Rides, 2015 Allan Brodie

Wicksteed Park Conservation Management Plan, prepared for The Wicksteed Trust by Sarah Couch

Historic Landscapes with Land Management Services

National Grid Reference: SP8834776944



Impacts from the proposed retirement village will need careful assessment of impacts on views, trees, access, archaeology and biodiversity will need careful assessment and mitigation

10.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 Why assess impact on heritage?

- To make sure that the 'significance' of the park is not damaged by change and that any unavoidable damage is mitigated.
- The aim is to conserve and enhance significant built and landscape features and the park's essential character, while balancing heritage and other values within existing or potential resources.
- Conservation means the process of managing change, not stopping change, but any change should be managed within the context defined by the Conservation Plan
- The Conservation Plan is a tool to help that process. It should be a live document.

What is the significance?

- The significance is what is special, unique and distinctive as defined in the Conservation Plan and forms the essential designed landscape character.
- Significance means the value we give to the park's landscape, its historic buildings, trees, views, archaeology, ecology and use- both physical condition and our ability to understand and appreciate that value.
- The defining features of the park (4.3) include an ethos of free access to healthy, adventurous and imaginative play and recreation, innovative but practical and utilitarian engineering, care for people and animals and a fun, 'seaside' atmosphere, all in an unusual combination of traditional family pleasure park within a privately owned country park, laid out on a much older landscape.
- The relative significance of features is set out in 4.4 of the CP. Generally the highest significance relates to the first phase of the park to 1939 (by Charles Wicksteed or following his influence) and should have the highest protection. Significant values include ecology, archaeology, community understanding and enjoyment as well as heritage, both built and landscape.
- The essential character of each area is summarised in the character area policies 34 - 47.

Two approaches to assessing impacts are set out below: a simplified method for smaller changes and a full, rigorous method for major interventions.

10.2 Simple method for smaller changes

Answer this checklist before deciding to make a change and report to Trustees.

- What is the change proposed?
- What are the features affected by this change?
- Are the features of very high/high/medium or low significance? (4.4)
- Will the change add to or detract from the feature?
- Will the change enhance or damage the essential character of the area? (policies 34 - 47).
- Is the change consistent with the founder's ethos and principles? (4.3)
- If the change damages significant features or the essential character, can the plans be altered?

WTL Senior management will include this in business plans, be responsible for assessment and report regularly to Trustees as Policy 9.

Heritage Impact Assessment table template

[illegible]

10.3 Full method

Use this for major interventions and certainly for those which require planning permission.

Description of Column headings in schedule opposite:

Column 1: Area

Numbers of character areas as shown in drawings

Column 2: Character Area name

Column 3: Proposal

A brief description of proposed works and summary of relevant historic information.

Column 4: Significant elements

Significant elements affected, as identified in section 4 of the CMP

Column 5: Significance

The levels of significance are taken from section 4.4 of the CMP and set out in the Gazetteer.

- Very high (international) significance
- National (high) significance
- Regional (medium) significance
- Local (low) significance
- Neutral significance
- Negative or poorly sited features

Column 6: Potential impact

Significant improvement: major repairs and enhancement to the appearance setting and perception of the most significant elements of fabric, and overall character, including major improvement to management and maintenance and to interpretation, resulting in a fundamental improvement in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its historical context and setting;

Perceptible improvement: repairs and enhancement to condition, appearance and perception of significant elements of fabric and improved management and interpretation, resulting in an appreciable change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its historical context and setting;

No perceptible change: continuation of current conditions; changes which do not impact on condition, appearance and perception of significant features and aspects, resulting in a negligible change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its historical context and setting;

Minor change: Impacts which create dis-benefits and benefits; repairs and enhancement to the appearance setting and perception of some significant elements but also some damage to fabric and landscape character resulting in a small change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource;

Moderate change: Impacts which result in the destruction of some significant landscape features or aspects of the park including structures, landform and structural planting, resulting in an appreciable change in our ability to understand and appreciate the ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐; ☐ ☐

Major change: Impacts which result in the permanent loss of the most significant landscape features or aspects of the park including structures, landform, structural planting and loss of landscape character, resulting in a fundamental change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its historical context and setting.

Column 7: Type of impact

This assesses the positive and harmful impacts taking into account the extent and type of impact and the significance of the elements affected, as follows:

Substantial Positive: Significant improvement in the condition of a Grade I or II* registered park, conservation area or in the condition and setting of I/II* listed structures; improved management to secure the long term future of an important registered park.

Moderate Positive: Perceptible improvement in the condition of a Grade I or II* registered park, Conservation Area or in the condition and setting of I/II* listed structures; improved management to secure the long term future of a nationally important registered park. Significant improvement to Grade II sites and features.

Minor Positive: Perceptible improvement in the condition of a Grade II registered park, Conservation Area or in the condition and setting of grade II or locally listed structures; improved management to secure the long term future of a locally/regionally important site.

Neutral: No perceptible change in condition or setting of designated landscapes and setting of designated structures.

Minor change: Impacts which create dis-benefits and benefits; ...resulting in a small change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource (this could apply to some aspects of temporary features or events*);

Moderate change: Impacts which result in a major change or the destruction of some significant landscape features ...resulting in an appreciable change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource (could be the result of temporary events*); and

Major change: Impacts which result in the permanent loss of the most significant landscape features ...resulting in a fundamental change in our ability to understand and appreciate the resource and its historical context and setting (could be the result of temporary events*).

* NB Cumulative impact of repeated interventions or events should also be considered.

Column 8: Policy

Refers to relevant conservation policies from Section 6 of the CMP.

Column 9: Mitigation

Proposed mitigation of impacts, where required. Eg archaeological watching brief, recording, interpretation, relocation/replacement. Commentary including summary of relevant historic information, public benefits such as improvements to views and setting, enhanced use etc

Column 10: Information needed

Further information required, such as surveys or research, to ensure adverse impact are avoided.

11.0 GAZETTEER

with 2022 updates

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
The early landscape								
1	Field pattern and hedgerows	Medieval ridge and furrow and headlands. Early C19 post enclosure field pattern. Archaeological evidence probably stretching back to the Bronze Age.	Medieval post 1804	Much of archaeology, early and later field pattern survive	high	High archaeological potential; vulnerable and not fully understood	Further research recording and interpretation; protect archaeology	Barton Seagrave Conservation Statement; TVAS 'Land at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire An Archaeological Evaluation' March 2021
2	Trees pre 1911	Oldest trees are field boundary oaks	post 1804	Oldest trees c200 years old	high	Loss of mature trees; dwindling mature trees on site. Impact of vehicles. New survey urgently needed	Tree management and replanting plan. Protect trees. Manage veteran trees, propagate replacements;	Tree survey, site survey, tree safety inspections
3	Ise valley			Park makes use of valley landscape; essential element	high	Impact of development; water management issues	Views management; work with partner organisations	Views plan 12
4	Setting and views of Barton Seagrave village and Castle Field	Castle field moated medieval enclosures and fishponds		Rural setting with parkland becoming more developed	very high	Impact of development and tree growth on views	Views management; work with partner organisations	Barton Seagrave Conservation Statement
5	Setting and views of Barton Seagrave Hall	C18 parkland, possibly adapted with advice from Humphry Repton		View praised in early descriptions of the park	very high	Impact of development. Repton involvement does not appear to inform management. Split ownership.	Views management; work with partner organisations on appropriate parkland management	Repton Red Book 1793-7
A Pavilion and gardens								
6	Clock tower	One of the first structures of the park	1921	Square tower with clocks on four faces on square weatherboarded second story base; a symbol of the park	very high	Exposed and vulnerable to deterioration; impact decreased by later buildings-condition improved 2018	Regular programme of planned maintenance	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
7	Main pavilion	Built from 1922, originally a square building built around the clocktower; North Room 1927, South Room 1935. Large restaurant on ground floor and first a terrace and verandah, then a refined 'garden floor' or 'captain's lounge' restaurant with waitress service on first floor with panoramic views; another restaurant in south room	1923	Original sections of pavilion with timber weatherboarding give seaside character. Timber boarding and columns give nautical character. Café (bistro) no longer in main part of pavilion (now a function space). Direct relationship with the Fountain Lawn and garden re established and setting greatly improved. First floor was unused in 2012; now repaired with lift access (2022).	very high	Ongoing maintenance issues eg main roof. Exposed and vulnerable to deterioration. Impact decreased by later buildings which affect views to and from the original pavilion (partly addressed).	Regular programme of planned maintenance; continue to maintain and improve setting and connection to other features.	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
8	Original kiosks and bungalows (part now in area F)	Workers' bungalows by 1927; toy shop 1933 (replaced 1938), toilets 1931; bungalows including the previous First Aid building, were built as employees' bungalows and were lived in, one of them right up until c.2000 by the Park's cashier and family. Ticket office and souvenir shop 1931	1920s	The original workers bungalows are precast concrete panel with pebble-dash finish. Until 2017 one was the visitor centre and another the first aid base, repaired and area redesigned in 2018. The kiosks are generally timber clad and painted with timber columns; there have been many alterations and additions	medium and very high	Major repair and improvements undertaken in 2018; fountain outside visitor centre relocated to entrance. Central area used by gardeners opened up as attractive octagon garden	Repair and maintain surfaces; support volunteers to maintain gardens. Continue rationalisation of all signage, bins, and 'clutter' to reinforce the distinctive original character of the area	Early guides, postcards; Machine Tool Review July-August 1920
9	Fountain basin relocated from near Lodge to main entrance longabout	Fountain was set in sunburst bedding near Kettering lodge; later moved from Kettering gates to visitor centre	1918	Recently repaired as pool/fountain at entrance	very high		Maintain fountain and setting; consider repair of original garden at Lodge	Wicksteed archive
10	Terrace 'Fountain Lawn' and bandstand	The terrace was originally a rectangular lawn but was embellished with the impressive fountain, statues and then bandstand in 1926; it became known as the Fountain Lawn in early guide books and was a busy area, much admired and much illustrated. The restaurant opened on to it and it was overlooked by the first floor terrace and restaurant. Over the years, statues and smaller fountains had disappeared. The bandstand has been demolished	1926	A grass terrace with central seasonal bedding. Users of function room can exit onto terrace but generally the pavilion is closed and the area is little used. Platform of former bandstand remains as viewing platform. Views over rose garden being cleared	very high	Repaired and fountain reinstated as part of @Play project	Increase use with connection to Pavilion; maintain views	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
11	Fountain basin	When the pavilion was extended to the east in 1976, the fountain basin was adapted and filled in to be used as a flower bed with seasonal bedding	1926	Fountain basin had been truncated making an irregular shape and used for seasonal bedding. Now reinstated as a fountain basin (2022)	very high	Visual intrusion of pump house	Redesign pump housing to reduce visual impact. Ongoing maintenance	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
12	Rose garden, Charles Wicksteed and Jerry memorials	One of the earliest features, designed as a quiet retreat, the hedged rose garden featured rustic towers for climbing roses, herbaceous borders in the outer beds, bedding in the centre and views over the park. Memorial added after Wicksteed's death. Wicksteed prefabricated retaining wall to terrace	1924-5	Still enclosed by yew trees with box hedge between. The distinctive rose towers have been removed. Ornamental bedding and some more recent exotic planting. Conifers removed to reduce shading and reopen views and volunteers have taken on planting. Retaining wall has been repaired in @Play project	very high	Had become a memorial garden with tributes but policy now in place. Houses Hilda Wicksteed gate statues which need relocating. Work omitted from @Play project	Replant herbaceous areas, replace rose towers. Restrict memorialisation and keep as quiet area. Relocate Hilda Wicksteed gate statues	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
B Core park								
13	Core park	Originally open fields, its overall character became one of ornamental parkland with scattered trees, the park falling to the lake below. Poplar avenue which led to bridge felled in 2000, replaced with more informal planting	1919	This is an important area linking the pavilion and garden with the lake and waterside activities. Few original trees remain and recent planting in many species with small ornamental memorial trees	very high	Choice of trees, inappropriate memorial trees, loss of views to lake	View and tree management and implement memorial tree policy linked to tree management plan; manage majority as mown grass for informal recreation with wildflower areas	Wicksteed archive; aerial photos
14	Railway and station	Opened in 1931, it was planned by Charles Wicksteed and was intended to be a major attraction; it has carried 30 million passengers	1931	Although not completed until after his death, this project was planned by and was close to the founder's heart and reflects his love of engineering, evident in the volunteers who run the railway with such pride today. It is the longest circuit of this gauge. The engines and station are maintained to a high level. The engines 'Lady of the Lake' and 'King Arthur' are original	very high	Supported by Railway Club, the railway carries 200,000 passengers a year making it the most popular narrow gauge railway in the country	Celebrate the history of steam engineering and connection with Wicksteed in interpretation and activities. Extend engineering opportunities to make use of pool of dedicated enthusiasts	Nelson, 75 Years of the Wicksteed Park Railway

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
C Ornamental park-north (A6 Field)								
15	Ornamen tal parkland north	Open field that features in the Repton view from Barton Seagrave Hall; picnic area 1929; used for parking from early days of the park	1790s 1919	Parkland sloping down to east to valley and Barton Seagrave. No tree planting in early C20. Recent groups of memorial trees - ornamentals eg prunus. Area of meadow introduced west of railway but needs maintenance . 'Rush' zipwire and fencing divide area but are to be removed (2022)	high	Parking throughout area has had major impact on views and on grass, but now reduced; coach parking and access to fuel and waste storage is unsightly at east end of avenue and entrance area. Choice and location of trees, impact on views from Barton Seagrave Hall.	Manage as parkland with groups of forest trees (eg oak, lime) to break up view of park buildings from Barton Seagrave. Continue to restrict and manage parking. Extend areas of meadow grass. Work to clear hardstanding and parking from east end of avenue	Aerial c1950, OS maps; Wicksteed archive; aerial photos
16	WCs/ urinals/ store	Early facilities in the park, later cycle store	1920s	Now used as stores; same precast concrete construction as bungalows.	medium	Service area and fuel pumps adjoin; condition deteriorating	Maintain and use building as it is an early feature and example of Wicksteed's prefabrication	1927 OS; guide c1935
D Ornamental park - south								
17	Ornamen tal parkland	Originally two open fields sloping down to lse; some evidence of medieval ridge and furrow; has been intensively used for events, in 1977 skate board area built here (now removed)	1920	One of main events areas and parking restricted to upper area by posts. Hard surfaced car park south of pavilion. Recent groups of memorial trees eg purple prunus. Bounded to west by avenue of sycamore. Parking south of Pavilion and street now removed to make way for turning and drop off area, improving setting of Pavilion.	high	Parking and vehicle access, choice and location of trees, loss of mature trees, impact of events use (circus in 2010 caused much damage) impact on views to and from the lake. Risk of damage to archaeology and trees. Implication of access to retirement village	Manage as parkland with groups of forest trees (eg oak, lime) placed to screen parking and frame views to lake. Reduce and control parking. Protect and replace mature trees, including sycamore avenue and plant 'squareabout'. Extend areas of meadow grass. Limit area and impact of events. Protect archaeology	Wicksteed archive; aerial photos; tree surveys
18	Chapel toilets	Name derives from appearance	1960	Incorporates with weathervane showing Wicksteed, a steam plough and Jerry, Charles' favourite dog.	medium	Out of use 2022 pending repairs	Add to maintenance programme	Wicksteed archive
19	Pony field	Used for pony rides; pony hut 1953	1950s	Long rectangular space bounded by avenue. Once housed relocated theatre, recently demolished; now used for parking and part surfaced	low- medium	Parking needs careful management	Manage use as secondary parking area as it is well screened and offers access to a wider area	

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
E Recreation park								
20	Recreation park and Sycamore circle	Flat area, formerly two fields with an area of woodland to the west (Long Spinney) cleared by Charles Wicksteed. Early in the park's history it was laid out as tennis courts (6 tennis courts and putting green shown in 1967)	1919	T51 and T58 are fine former hedgerow oaks. Recently used for parking on ride days, now primary car park with some surfaced and marked areas; enclosed by hedge on west side with housing beyond	medium very high	Protection and replanting of trees; recent losses; compaction; erosion of grass	Continue to lay out and manage as main car park (least impact on views and setting) as part of parking and access strategy. Additional tree planting; longer grass at margins; protect trees from cars; grass aeration and reinforcement	c1950 aerial; 1967 OS
21	Site of tea pavilion	The original pavilion, a timber structure which looked out over the western section of the park. It burnt down c2004.	1918	An enclosed area recently containing a compactor and equipment store. Now (2022) redeveloped as Wicky's farm; working and storage areas relocated	medium	Loss of pavilion	Protect trees and replant	c1950 aerial; 1967 OS
22	Putting green	Originally a square enclosure in parkland	by 1950	Now extended as crazy golf to take in area to north with exotic planting and sculptures	medium- low	Irregular boundaries, extends into park	Consider use of this area	c1950 aerial; 1967 OS
F Playground								
23	Play ground	Began with improvised play equipment which was so successful that this led to the development of the Wicksteed playground equipment company.	1917	Maintained as a free play area open all year round; original Wicksteed equipment reintroduced in @Play project with new surfaces; some traditional rides eg carousel; pirate ship (1982) recently removed; other improvements under consideration in 2022	very high	Mixture of hard surfaces, but more resurfaced being opened up and (2022)	Maintain as free play area as Wicksteed's original intention; rationalise park furniture, protect and replant trees to integrate into park; increase tree planting	Early guide books and Wicksteed play equipment literature, Wicksteed archive
24	Round shelter-play ground	First permanent structure in playground; originally had timber walls	1924	Largely rebuilt with brick piers; repaired in @Play project	very high	Original design altered but characteristic roof and finial retained	Maintain and develop use related to history of play	1924 drawing
G Avenue and entrances								
25	Lodge gates and drinking fountain	Lodge and gates at original entrance to park from Kettering. c1935 used by park manager; drinking fountain in boundary, probably to welcome thirsty arrivals	1918	Pebble dash house behind high hedge; impressive stone piers with stone sphere finials (one dislodged) and substantial decorative timber gates, bare wood, some damage	very high	Lodge now back in Trust ownership; poor condition of gates (finial missing) and circular garden. Unfortunate location of new house projects into avenue.	Maintain and repair piers and gate, garden and drinking fountain; increase use as pedestrian entrance and improve visibility; propose listing or local listing	Photographs 1920s, Wicksteed archive

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
26	Avenue	Formed an impressive approach to the landscape park	1918	A broad beech avenue and impressive entrance, frames the view over the lse valley. Gaps and some recent replacement; barrier across avenue divides it in two	very high	No longer used as entrance but part used as vehicle access to and from main parking area. Security barrier across avenue disrupts pedestrian use. Ongoing loss of trees due to safety concerns. View to east marred by parking and barriers	Implement management strategy to maintain trees as long as possible; plant replacements on correct spacing and alignment; review access to increase use; clear parking and barriers from east of avenue	
27	Main gates, entrance from Barton Road	Main entrance designed with statues 1937. Hilda M. Wicksteed Memorial Gates added 1951. Pedestrian gates removed to increase width for vehicles	1937-51	Brick piers and ornamental steel gates at current main entrance; many barriers and clutter recently removed with new parking management system (2022)	high	Statues removed and currently in Rose Garden	Continue decluttering entrance area. Find new location for statues	Guide c 1943 John Brandon Jones drawing 1937
H Lake activity area								
28	Boat houses	The three pitched roof boathouse was shown on 1927 OS and features in many early photographs. Motorboat House 1935. Boat house yard accommodated zoo from 1950s	c 1920	Boathouse damaged by fire in 2016 and demolished. Aviary removed and area redesigned	very high	Area cleared. Boathouse redesign on hold (2022). Dock area needs repair.	Consider boathouse options. Maintain original seaside character and use. Continue to open up potentially attractive area between lake and river	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
29	Water chute	Wicksteed design; his water chutes at Scarborough and Hull (listed) survive. Listed in 2016	1926	Original design survives rebuilt 1939 with brick tower	very high	Very popular original Wicksteed attraction; setting could be improved; lodges adjacent and new lodges visible behind waterchute.	Improve riverside setting; and reduce impact of lodges continue to conserve	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
30	Model yacht pond	An early feature for free use and refurbished in 2004	1920s	In use by model boat club; willow hedge removed	very high	Goose fouling; parking near pond (??)	Review parking and visual connection to landscape as part of park masterplan; control geese	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
31	Cycle track	Began as cycle track enclosing sports arena; in second half C20 developed for rides	1930	Now developed as 'arena' with a range of rides. Previously go karts used track, removed along with bridge access (2022).	very high	Original oval cycle track cannot be used or appreciated because of new level access across track and large enclosed maintenance area inside track (due to be relocated 2022)	Complete relocation of maintenance area; new use and interpretation of cycle track; selective clearance of younger trees, and shrubs to place arena in landscape.	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos; information from Ian Addiss

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
32	Paddling pool/sandpit	Informal paddling areas replaced by rectangular paddling pool; concreted, refurbished 1948	1920s/1948	Paddling pool converted to a large free access sandpit in earlier enclosure	very high	Less popular following new sand and water play on east shore. 'Rollover diner' very intrusive, but due to be removed (2022)	Repair brickwork and planting. Develop water play here or nearby. Remove diner and other features in main view; rationalise site furniture	c1935 guide book; Wicksteed archive; 1967 OS
33	Bathing pool	Semicircular bathing pool near round shelter, originally part of lake; concreted, refurbished 1948; fountain shown 1967; closed in 1970	1920s/1948	Recreated as paddling area in Lake project; views reopened	very high	Management issues, particularly goose fouling, restrict use	Reassess paddling and water play her and develop strategy	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
34	Round shelter-lakeside	Similar design to playground shelter	1936	Conserved as part of Lake project; new grass amphitheatre nearby; shelter used as base for nature based activities (2022)	very high	Management of geese, poor drainage and lack of services restrict use of amphitheatre	Review management, infrastructure and use of amphitheatre; consider ecological solutions to waterlogging	Wicksteed archive
35	Bridge	Hump backed bridge part of redesign of paddle boat pool	1936	Was flanked by level bridge and walkway; walkway recently removed	high	Level bridge needed for access but affects views from north	Consider removal of level bridge to north so that shape and reflection of bridge can be appreciated	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
36	Paddle boat pool	Children's boating pool in north end of lake extended and redesigned 1936; very popular and much photographed	1936	Islands very overgrown; swan nesting 2011; no longer has connection to landscape setting; until recently overshadowed by more recent rides but now opened up (2022)	very high	Landscape setting affected by associated hard surfacing, fencing etc. New ride planned adjacent to pool 2022	Maintain as ornamental activity area and reinforce 1930s family seaside character. Open up as much as possible, and de-clutter to increase pleasant places to sit and watch. Selective clearance and planting of islands (out of nesting season)	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
37	Pool filter house		1950	Simple brick building now in use as toilets; contains original pumping equipment	low	Subject to flooding; recent refurbishment but out of use in 2022	Add to maintenance programme. Interpret early pump gear?	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
38	Lakeside Drying rooms	In spirit of Wicksteed (planned drying areas for children after play for own house in Kettering)	1954	Utilitarian building, provided in spirit of Wicksteed. Now used as toilets	medium	Recently refurbished as attractive feature	Consider interpretation and improvements to setting	Wicksteed archive

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
I Main lake								
39	Main lake	Created by steam excavator 1919-21 for boating and water recreation; initially rowing boats, paddling and swimming; launch operated (no longer). Concrete banks installed 1991	1919-	Large water body which was suffering from siltation, algae, lack of marginal vegetation; views were obscured by large willows and alder etc. Used by rowboats and sea cadets	very high	Major work as part of Lake project. Vegetation and views need ongoing management. Path drainage an issue. Islands overgrown (and inaccessible), but clearance of netting has led to some erosion. No recent wildlife surveys.	Lake paddling and swimming and geese need review and management; review and manage path surfaces and drainage; manage vegetation and views; continue to introduce meadow areas, wet grassland etc. Water management strategy	Wicksteed archive and Kettering library photos
40	Boatshed	originally built as a club house for skiff club; in current position by 1967	1937	Attractive weatherboarded building	medium-high	Poor condition. Needs new use	Repair and consider new uses	Gotch, Saunders and Surridge drawing 1937
41	Tunnel	Railway tunnel near lake	1933	Curved tunnel; uses Wicksteed precast concrete panels	medium	Poor condition	Repair and maintain	
42	Aviary	Wicksteed cared greatly for animal welfare; zoo pet's corner added near boathouse 1956	1933	Had been extended and become unattractive; recently removed	low-medium	Now café, sand and water play due to reopen summer 2022	Continue opening up, reducing and rationalising fences and improving river setting	
43	Coronation Hall	Coronation Hall built to be a cinema then converted to Central Stores and Wickys cave	1952	Lightweight uninsulated building, corrugated asbestos on steel frame with brick entrance; adapted many times; recently housed Laser Xtreme; now small theatre with recycled seats and workshops (2022)	medium	Poor quality building behind facade; asbestos; needs repair or reconstruction	Future to be determined as part of development of whole park masterplan; maintain facade	
J Fishing Lake								
44	Fishing lake	Created when lake desilted	1960s	Naturalistic; county wildlife site	low-medium	Dumping in woodland; control of car access	Manage to enhance biodiversity (within constraints of continuing use as fishing lake)	

Num ber	Feature	History	Date	Description	Signifi cance	Issues	Recommend ations	Sources
K Arboretum								
45	Arboretum		1971	Good range of semi mature trees includes pines, lime, lilac, whitebeam, hornbeam, beeches, cedar, maples, planes, Judas tree, laburnum, hickory, swamp cypress	low-medium	Lack of active management; recent losses; recent greater use as access route; new housing adjacent and unsightly fences	Develop tree management plan. Selective thinning of poorer specimens to give others space to develop; manage as woodland habitat with woodland flora; label trees; develop recreational use	
L Lodge area								
46	Lodge area	Site of lakeside precast concrete bungalows built 1930; replaced by holiday Lodges from 2009	1930	Development of lodges now in second (southern) phase	low	Separate use but forms setting to important park area; recent lodges are in setting of waterchute	Planting to reinforce landscape setting and backdrop of waterchute	
M Outer recreation park								
47	Recreation park	Originally 3 open fields with traces of archaeology; the western section developed as mini golf course in 1932, enlarged 1957	1920s	Now accommodates barbeque area, new maintenance area and informal campsite with facilities building; campsite replanted as part of Lake project. Original hedgerows survive. Good view to lake. Plans to develop large area as a retirement village. Archeological potential stretching back to Bronze Age.	low-medium	Informal camping is popular and site may be developed with more infrastructure for caravans. Site east of lake developed for housing: some impact on views; industrial development to south. Potential impact of retirement village on access, archaeology, planting, ecology and views needs careful management.	Protect and interpret archaeology and habitats. Protect trees, planting, and views and carry out reinforcement planting.	Reports associated with retirement village.
48	Golf House	Associated with former golf course; recently used by artists	1963	Now part of maintenance area	low	Maintenance area unsightly	Screen and reorganise maintenance area, incorporating sustainable management practices.	
49	Paradise lane/ Spinney Lane bungalows	Building site sold by Wicksteed Trust	1921	Precast concrete bungalows similar to those on site	medium	In private ownership; need upgrading and some subject to demolition / building works- but Trust must approve	Continue to raise awareness of significance of precast bungalows	

12.0 GAZETTEER IMAGES



For location of views see plan 12, page 48 for feature, see plan opposite

- 1

Field pattern and hedgerows
- 2

Trees pre 1911
- 3

Ise valley
- 4

Setting and views of Barton Seagrave village and Castle Field [View 8](#)
- 5

Setting and views of Barton Seagrave Hall, village and Castle Field
- Area A Pavilion and gardens

6

Clocktower
- 7

Main pavilion and precinct
- 8

Original kiosks and bungalows (part now in area F)
- 9

Fountain basin moved here from near Lodge
- 10

Terrace 'Fountain Lawn' and bandstand [Views 1,2](#)
- 11

Fountain basin
- 12

Rose garden [View 3](#)
- Area B Core park

13

Core park
- 14

Railway and station
- Area C Ornamental park-north

15

Ornamental parkland north
- 16

WCs/urinals/store
- Area D Ornamental park-south

17

Ornamental parkland [View 7](#)
- 18

Chapel toilets
- 19

Pony field
- Area E Recreation park -north

20

Recreation park, Sycamore circle
- 21

Site of tea pavilion
- 22

Putting green
- Area F Playground

23

Playground
- 24

Round shelter-playground
- Area G Avenue and entrances

25

Lodge gates and drinking fountain
- 26

Avenue
- 27

Main gates, entrance and kiosks
- Area H Lake activity area

28

Boathouse
- 29

Water chute
- 30

Model yacht pond
- 31

Cycle track
- 32

Paddling pool/sandpit [View 6b](#)
- 33

Bathing pool
- 34

Round shelter-lakeside
- 35

Bridge
- 36

Paddle boat pool [View 5](#)
- 37

Pool filter house
- 38

Lakeside Drying rooms
- Area I Main lake

39

Main lake [View 6a](#)
- 40

Boatshed
- 41

Tunnel
- 42

Aviary
- 43

Coronation Hall
- Area J Fishing Lake

44

Fishing lake
- Area K Arboretum

45

Arboretum
- Area L Lodge area

46

Lodge area
- Area M Outer recreation park-south

47

Recreation park
- 48

Golf House and maintenance area
- 49

Paradise lane/Spinney Lane bungalows



Ancient hedgerow of ecological interest and boundary oak along old field boundary inside entrance from Paradise Lane



Old hedgerow along old field boundary west of sycamore avenue (boundary between Pony Field and Park, Area D)



Left: oak 87 in Area B is up to 200 years old and marks a former field boundary (2011)
Right: Tree number 185 near Oak Tree takeway could be 200 years old; surfacing improved since 2011 (2018)



Left: Oak 97 near boating pond is up to 200 years old (2011) Right: Oak 58 on mound in top field (Area E) is the remnant of a former field boundary and is likely to date to the mid C19; parking below (2018)



Left: Beech 113 is a mature tree shown in 1885 (2011) in the corner of Paradise Spinney and right in 2022



View to Wicksteed Park from Castle Field; pavilion, fairground and parking can be seen, 2012



View to Wicksteed Park from cricket field 2018; pavilion, new clip and climb building (to be converted 2022) behind refurbished pavilion

- 3 Ise valley
- 4 Setting and view of Barton Seagrave /Castle Field
- 5 Setting and view of Barton Seagrave Hall

View 8



View sketched from microfiche copy of Repton's Red Book for Barton Seagrave of 1793-4. This view looks west from Barton Seagrave Hall over the Ise valley toward Kettering. The dotted lines indicate the former avenue in the 'before' view. The site of Wicksteed is to the left



View from Barton Seagrave Hall over Ise valley towards Wicksteed Park and Pavilion 2011/12
Pavilion is at X



Views from Barton Seagrave Hall garden over Ise valley towards Wicksteed Park and Pavilion 2018; little change in 2022

- Ise valley 3
- Setting and view of Barton Seagrave /Castle Field 4
- Setting and view of Barton Seagrave Hall reverse of view 8 5



View of Barton Seagrave in 1791 from south-east by Basire, seat of Joseph Wilcocks esq



View from Wicksteed Park Pavilion to Barton Seagrave Hall 2022 (Reverse of View 8)



View from Wicksteed Park Pavilion to Barton Seagrave Hall 2018 (Reverse of View 8)



View from campsite across lake and Ise valley to Barton Seagrave housing development 2011



A similar view in 2018



A similar view in early 2022; the planting has established well



The recently acquired Ise Watermeadow south of the park will be managed by the Trust (2022)



View from south of Pavilion to industrial development; poplars are unsympathetic to parkland landscape, but provide useful screening in a short time, 2011



View from campsite south with new planting beginning to soften impact of industrial development 2018, although setting of facilities building could be improved



A similar view in 2022



Earthworks in Castle Field, 2018



Drone photograph looking over earthworks in Castle Field towards the lake, courtesy of Martin Sutton

6 Clocktower & main pavilion

View 11

Main pavilion 7



Wicksteed brochure 1957-58, Wicksteed Park archive



Views from east and north from Guide of 1929, Wicksteed archive; note that the entrance (north) side of the pavilion was a picnic area



A similar view in 2011



Rear of pavilion and shops 1956-7, Wicksteed archive



A similar view in 2018, showing improvements underway



A similar view in 2022, after completion of works to the Pavilion entrance and Captain's Lounge



Postcard of south front of pavilion, after addition of 'top hat' reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Similar view in 2011 showing additions with St Georges/Celebration suite on the left



Similar view in 2018 showing removal of canopy outside cafe



Similar view in 2022 showing removal of traffic between Pavilion and Fountain Lawn



Left: East front of pavilion, 2011. Right: East front of pavilion showing partly open veranda on first floor no top hat and balustrade at roof level c1930, Wicksteed archive



Left: similar view showing ground floor extension, 2018 Right: East front of pavilion 1956-7 showing first floor veranda enclosed and awnings; NB small fountains removed, Wicksteed archive



Similar view in 2022 showing reinstated Fountain Lawn and fountain with Captain's Lounge (garden floor); note the statue is now looking at the Pavilion



West front of Pavilion in 2011(left) and 2018 (right) during renovations



West front of Pavilion in 2022 following renovations, showing entrance to new reception



North end of precinct 2011



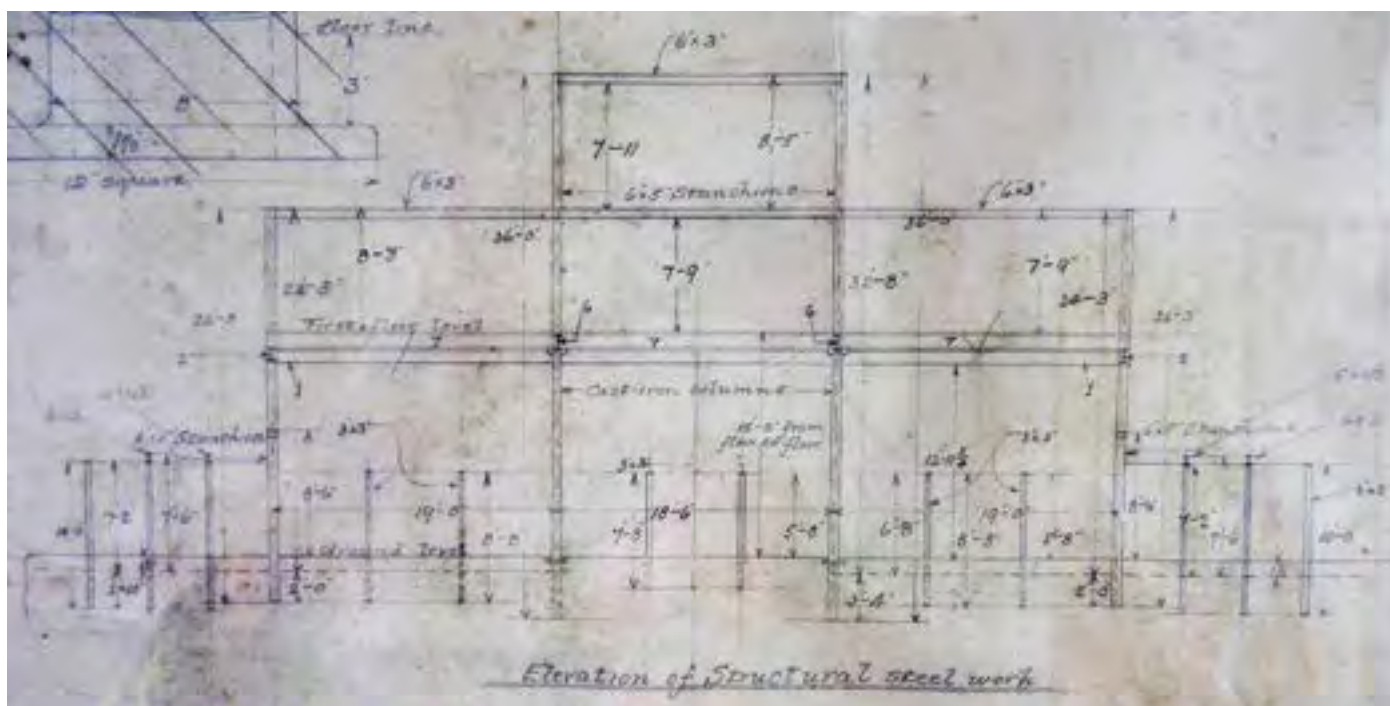
North end of precinct with new landscaping, 2018



Similar view in 2022 with curved hedge established



Photograph of toy shop west of Pavilion in precinct- c1950 (Wicksteed Archive)



Section through Pavilion showing structural steelwork (Wicksteed Archive)



Ground floor dining room in the Pavilion



Upper dining room (Garden floor or Captain's Lounge), Wicksteed archive



Original balustrades and other details uncovered on top floor of Pavilion, 2018



Captain's Lounge (Garden floor) during work in 2018 with veranda enclosed



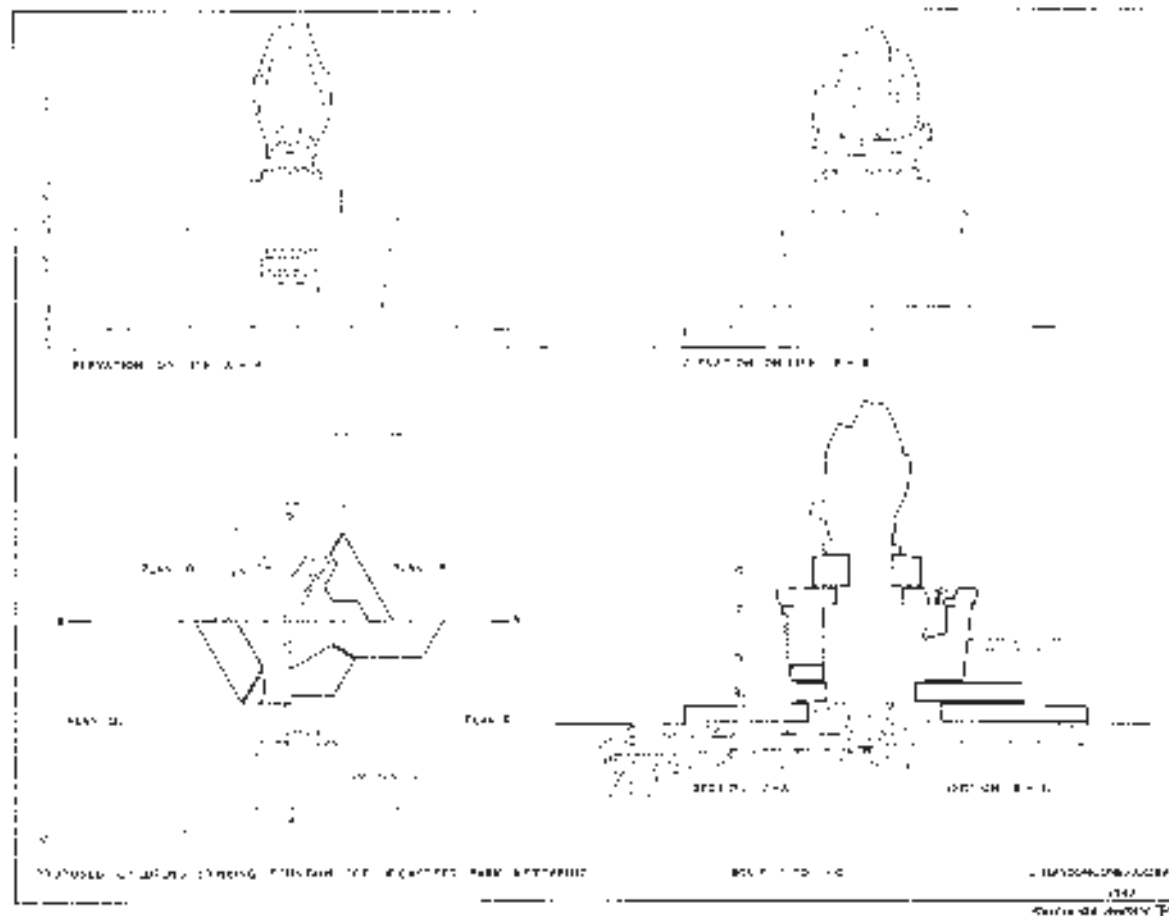
Captain's Lounge veranda reopened and repaired, 2022



Captain's Lounge repaired, 2022



Captain's Lounge veranda reopened and repaired, 2022



1947 J Brandon-Jones drawing for Mayflower drinking fountain had been relocated (Wicksteed Archive)



Mayflower drinking fountain relocated in new planted setting in 2022



Detail from aerial view 1926, showing bungalows in octagonal hedged enclosure, original theatre and circular clumps of trees (one survives), reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Aerial photograph of 1926 showing bungalows, theatre etc, Wicksteed Archive



Cafe seating outside bungalow (later visitor centre), Wicksteed archive



The two most complete precast concrete bungalows, 2011



Gardeners' work area inside octagonal former bungalow rear garden area, 2011



Bungalows 3 and 4 were substantially altered, 2011



Three bungalows/cottages under repair, showing original concrete panel construction, 2018



Repaired cottages in the Octagon in 2019



The opening of the education building in 2019. Planting is maintained by volunteers in 2022



The completed 'Historic Heart' from the Octagon garden in 2022



View towards bandstand mid C20, Wicksteed archive



A similar view 2011



A similar view in 2018



A similar view in 2022 after completion of work to the Fountain Lawn



Statue relocated in the conserved Fountain Lawn in 2022



View looking south, Souvenir guide c 1927, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



View looking northeast, postcard; note bandstand is in use, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Detail from mid C20 view, Wicksteed archive, showing seats

Heavy Park Seats.

Cast Iron Standards.

PRICE LIST (Cast Iron Pattern)

With or Without Arms.

	Height	Depth	Width	Weight
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25

Wrought Iron Pattern.

PRICE LIST (Wrought Iron)

With or Without Arms.

	Height	Depth	Width	Weight
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25
4ft 6 in standard	42	18	9	25

Ornate

(H.A. 71038)



Long pattern, as shown in illustration of the bench. The bench is made of wrought iron and is suitable for use in parks and gardens. The pattern is shown in the illustration and is suitable for use in parks and gardens.



Wicksteed seats from catalogue, Wicksteed archive and right: heavy cast iron seats reinstated in the Fountain Lawn in 2022

10 Fountain lawn and bandstand

View 2

View 2

Fountain lawn and bandstand 11



Pool, fountain and bandstand in the 1920s, Wicksteed archive; diagonal views of landscape either side of bandstand
A similar view in 2011, view over former bandstand only, diagonal views lost



A similar view in 2018, with conifers cleared to reopen views



A similar view in 2022 over reinstated Fountain Lawn



Left: statue of Echo and base for Wendy were displayed on Fountain Lawn in 2018; other statues from Fountain Lawn were outside Ideas Cafe in 2018 and are back in the Fountain Lawn in 2022

11 Fountain Lawn- fountain

Fountain 11



Fountain basin in centre of pool and eight small pedestal fountains, Kettering Leader 21 September 1928, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Fountain pool reinstated, hedge on edge of terrace replaced by railings 2022



Truncated fountain basin used as planting bed, all fountains lost, 2018



Replica fountain basin 2022



View south over rose garden, Souvenir Guide c1927, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Postcard of similar view south over rose garden, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Postcard of view over rose garden towards Barton Seagrave, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



A similar view from Fountain Lawn in 2011 showing overgrown conifers, since removed



A view from garden level in 2011 (above) and (below) in 2018



A similar view in 2018



View reopened by removal of hedge along edge of Fountain Lawn as part of @Play project, 2022. View was partly obscured in 2018



Postcard of view from rose garden towards bandstand and pavilion, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Postcard of view over rose garden towards Barton Seagrave, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



A similar view in 2018



Memorials to Charles Wicksteed and his dog Jerry in the rose garden, 2011



Bank with rockwork in rose garden, 2018



Statues from Hilda Wicksteed gates flanking statue of Jerry in the rose garden, 2018



Inscription in rose garden, 2022 "The happiness of children was ever his delight"



Rocks and exotic planting in rose garden, 2018



Fountain Lawn retaining wall from rose garden, 2018



Looking towards rebuilt Fountain Lawn retaining wall in 2022



Rebuilt retaining wall from rose garden, 2022



Narrow view over rose garden to lake; lake is obscured by vegetation, 2011



A similar view in 2018, with conifers cleared to reopen views; lake visible but cafe building (and temporary hoarding) intrusive



A similar view in 2022: cafe building and temporary hoarding near lake are due to be removed



Left: detail of 1926 aerial photograph, showing circular clump and new poplars along path to bridge, since lost;



Right: new memorial tree planting in 'Field of Hope'

Aerial photo reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Path to lake, formerly lined with poplars, looking towards station, 2018



Bright play equipment in the view from lakeside to rose garden and pavilion, 2018, little change 2022



The railway c 1936, Wicksteed archive



Open carriages on the railway 1980s, Wicksteed archive



The station in 2011 (left) and ticket office in 2018 (right)



The railway c1936, Wicksteed archive



Working on the railway, probably relaying tracks in late 1980s, Wicksteed archive



The train crosses the park on the approach to the station 2011



Newly created wildflower bank 2011



Approach to station below rose garden, 2018 2011



Path down to railway crossing and ticket office, 2018



The railway bridge, 2018



The railway east of the lake, 2018



Aerial view showing field used for parking, Wicksteed archive



The path to the new ticket office, parking and picnicking, 2011



A similar view, 2018



View from pavilion showing field used for parking c1950s, Wicksteed archive



Memorial trees and Rush Tower with glimpse of Barton Park, 2018



The park during 2018 drought: Rush tower in distance; some parking



Adjoining fuel pumps, barriers and hardstanding are unsightly in key view from end of avenue, 2011



A similar view in 2018



A similar view in 2022; area used for waste collection and coach parking; still unsightly



View east from entrance area with hardstanding, fuel pumps and former WC building



A similar view in 2022



Memorial tree, 2018



Sheep pen below Rush wires, 2018



Memorial tree, 2022: people still leave tributes despite the introduction of a Memorial Policy



Original prefabricated concrete building, originally WCs, 2018



Further deterioration by 2022



Souvenir guide c1927, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



A similar view, 2011; oak is in poor condition, rose garden and terrace obscured by conifers and parking; pavilion extended



A similar view, 2018; diseased oak has been felled



A similar view, 2022; parking removed reopening views; tree planting to be completed



Looking north east across parkland, 2018



Looking south towards line of poplars in 2022; poplar trees are incongruous and obtrusive in the landscape but help to screen intrusive buildings; screening could be better achieved with different species



Looking towards Pavilion, with parking and sycamore avenue on the left, 2018



Sycamore avenue: some gaps in trees and parking both sides, 2018



A similar view in March 2022; there have been further losses, particularly on the left side



'Chapel' toilets in park D and Wicksteed weathervane. Out of use in 2022



Poplars along track to arena and lake, 2018 and right: in 2022: trees on the right are decaying



Field from north, 2011 (area of surfaced parking underway in 2018)



Field from north, 2018



Field from Sycamore Avenue to the east looking towards eastern boundary, 2022



Field from south, 2011



A similar view looking north to newly surfaced parking area and sycamore circle in 2022



Barton Seagrave suburb estate sale particulars 1914, view from top of site looking east over Ise valley, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Part of aerial photo, c1950s, Wicksteed archive

Original tea pavilion
(Wicksteed archive)



Left: site used as maintenance area with rubbish compactor in 2011.

Right: site in 2018



Similar view in 2022, under development as Wicky's farm



View from north, showing erosion, 2011



View from north, with newly surfaced parking area 2018



Main access road looking south 2018



New parking areas and parking on grass below sweet chestnuts, 2018



Mature oak with parking below, 2018



View looking north over newly surfaced parking area, 2018



Top: posts added to protect grass and trees, 2022
Left: matures sycamore tree among sawdust beside astroslide, 2022



Part of aerial photo 1926, showing circular clump of trees near former theatre, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Circular clump of sycamore trees G54 with parking below, 2011



Play area below the sycamores, 2018



Mini landrover circuit below the sycamores, 2022



Pitch and putt and crazy golf areas, 2011
inset, detail from c1950s aerial photo, Wicksteed archive



Crazy golf areas with exotic planting and below, the area to the west, 2018



The first slide designed and erected in Wicksteed Park in 1922, with shelter behind, Wicksteed archive



GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND
AT THE WICKSTEED VILLAGE TRUST PARK

★ A visit is well worth while, we welcome you

Brochure c 1930, Wicksteed archive



Early exercise equipment, Wicksteed archive



Park guide c 1950 showing central sandpit, Wicksteed archive



Painting of the playground in 1974 by Nina Carroll showing Wicksteed equipment and central sandpit, Wicksteed archive



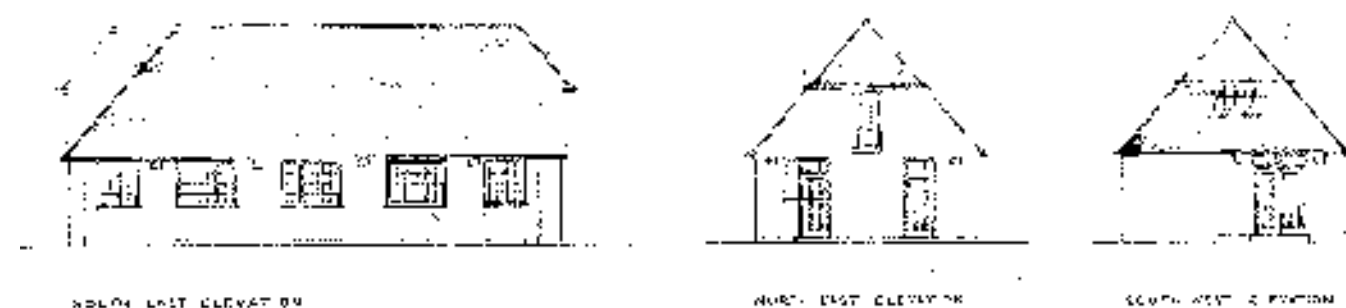
Recreated early Wicksteed plank slides, 2018



Wicksteed equipment newly installed in the Heritage Play area in 2022



Astroglide in new timber structure, 2018



Drawing of 1955-6 for the Ice Cream Factory, which stands near the Coronation Hall (Gazetteer 43)



Pirate ship backdrop (Wicksteed Archive)



Pirate ship 2011; there are plans in 2022 to reintroduce a similar ride



Entrance from the west in 2012 and in 2018



Entrance from the west in 2022, with Meerkat Manor on the left and reroofing of Wicky's play factory underway



Dome in 2012 and in 2018 as an aviary, little change 2022



Sway rider decorated with park scenes, 2022; Rush tower behind due to be removed



Resurfaced playground in 2018



New tree top walk 2018



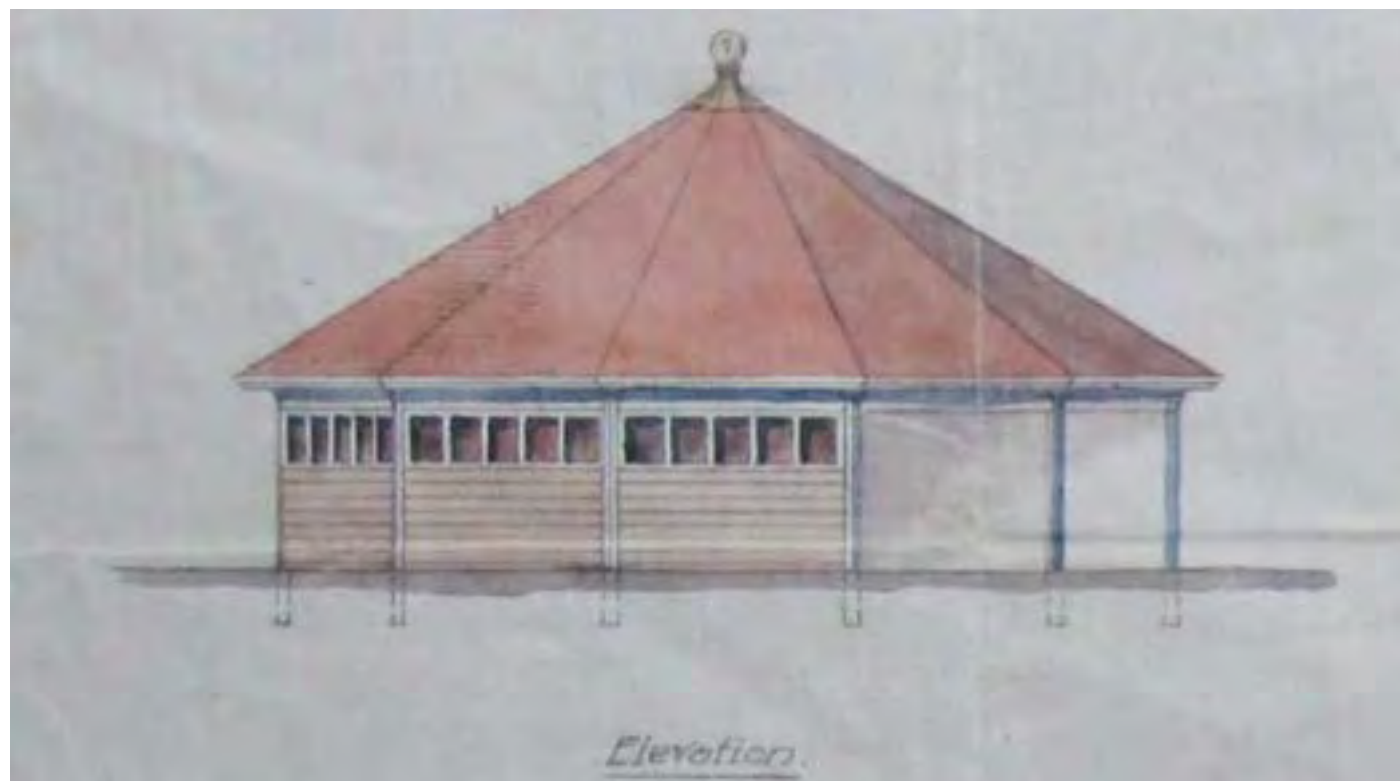
Clip n Climb building built 2018 due to be repurposed in 2022. Right: newly built Meerkat Manor in 2022



Wicky's Farm under construction in March 2022



Catalogue 1926 showing round shelter, Wicksteed archive



Gotch and Saunders, detail of shelter drawing, 1924, Wicksteed archive



Shelter in playground shown in part of aerial photo, note circular layout of equipment around sandpit, c1950s, Wicksteed archive



Roof structure, 2011 and right round shelter in 2018



Repaired round shelter in 2022



1920s photo, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Barton Seagrave Garden Suburb Estate, Northants 1914
reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Similar views in 2011 and 2022



The avenue in 1920s, Wicksteed archive



The avenue in 1956-7, Wicksteed archive



Avenue looking east, 2011



Avenue looking east, 2018

Avenue looking west, 2022,
showing beech tree losses

Avenue looking east, showing barriers, security vehicle and parking 2011



A similar view in 2018, showing new barriers; removal of security post/vehicles and loss of beech tree



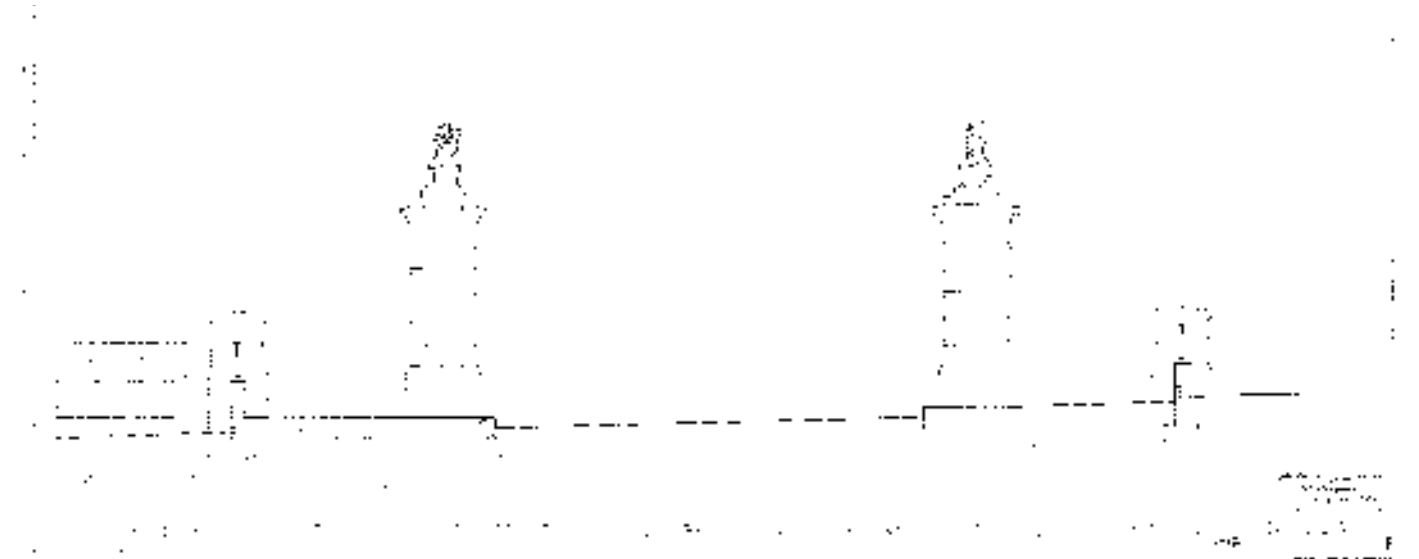
Pruned avenue beech at entrance to car park, 2018



Main gates from brochure, 1943, Wicksteed Archive



View from main entrance, 2011

A similar view, 2018.
Below: further removal of
barriers and clutter, 2022,
parking signs added

Design for new gates, John Brandon Jones 1937, Wicksteed archive

Left: statues in Rose Garden,
2018 Right: statues being
installed on gate piers,
Wicksteed archiveBelow right: view inside
entrance gates towards
Pavilion, showing new
hedge, Rush tower, some
hardstanding on the left,
2018



Security base inside main entrance, 2011, since removed



Gates from inside park, 2018



Gates with work underway, 2018. Clutter removed, new hedge planted on the left.



View from gates, 2011. Below: Memorial plaque on gates, 2018



View of entrance in 2022. Traffic past Pavilion controlled, new signage and smart parking system, view to Pavilion



Boathouse, Wicksteed Archive



Lake and boathouse postcard c1920, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Lake and boathouse, 1940s postcard reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Boathouse, 2011



Yard behind boathouse, 2011



Rear of boathouse, 2011



Children's zoo behind boathouse, 1956-7 Wicksteed Archive

Looking over the boathouse and storage area (former zoo) from water chute, November 2012
The Red Lakeside Diner is prominent.

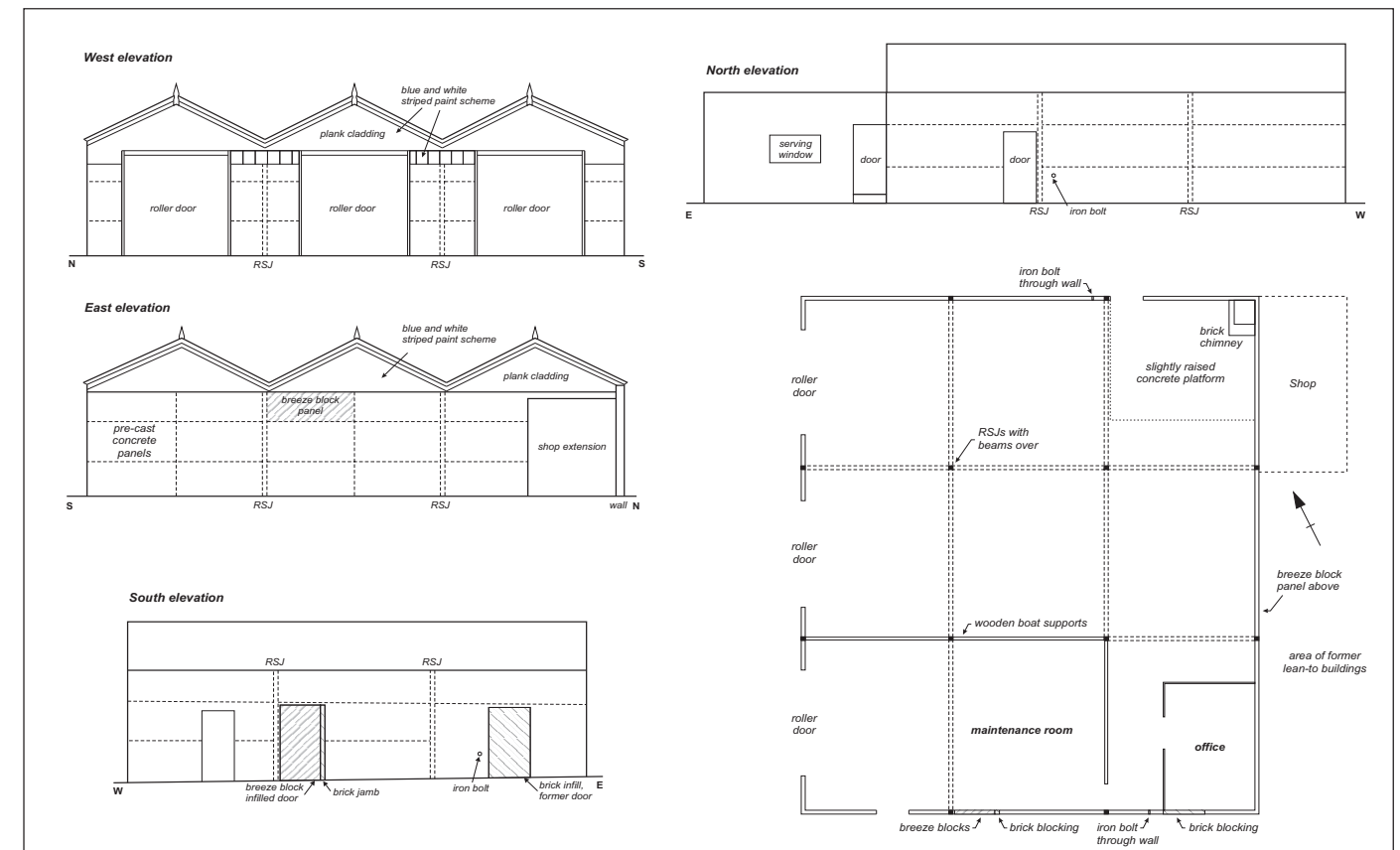
Boathouse fire, 15 November 2016



After the fire, from MOLA Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, 2017



Boathouse site, 2018



MOLA Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, 2017



A similar view in 2022. Boathouse site cleared and in use by sea cadets; temporary fencing on the left



Wet dock and boat storage on boat house site, 2022



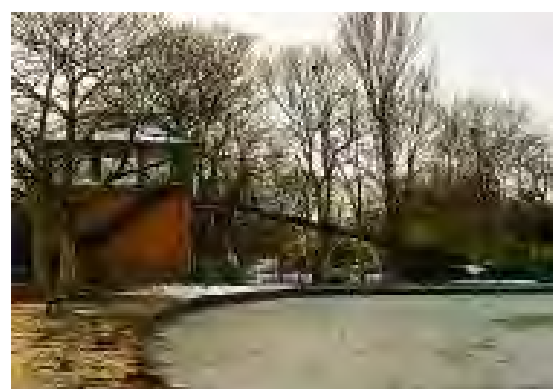
Water chute, c 1940, Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2011; right: from Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2018: right: East Park Hull waterchute, listed grade II



Water chute, 2011



Water chute, July 2018



Above: Scarborough water chute



Cycle track and arena Wicksteed archive; below: From brochure, 1943, Wicksteed archive



View outside arena, 2011



View along track, 2018



View along track in 2022, following removal of bridge and closure of track



View along track with maintenance area on the right, 2018



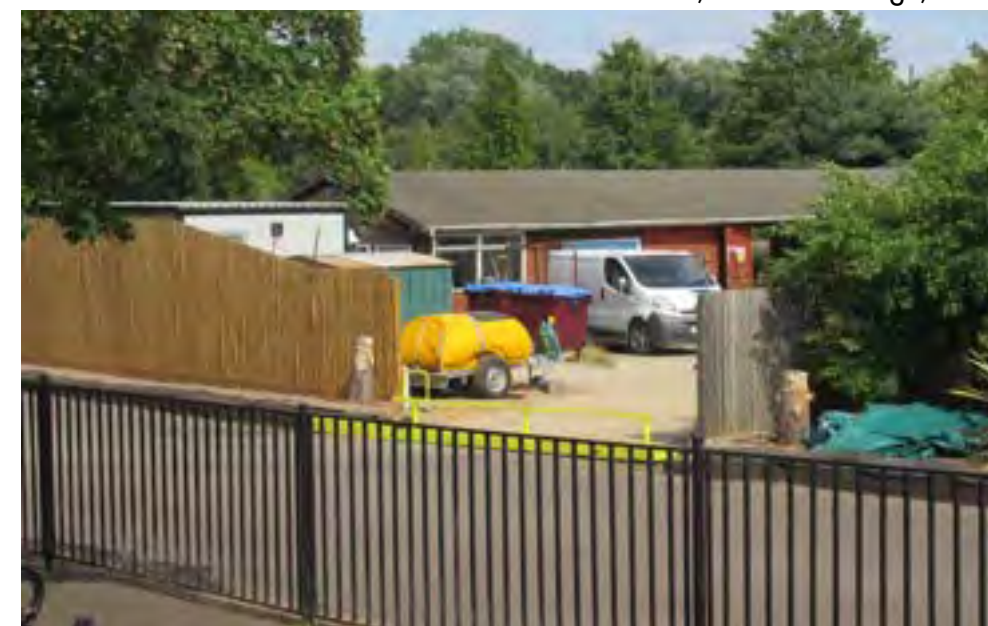
A similar view in 2022 after track was closed



Attractions advertised outside arena in 2022



View of arena, track and bridge, 2018



Engineering maintenance area inside arena, 2018



Engineering maintenance area 2022, due to be moved to main maintenance area



View of arena across lake 2011



Arena seen across lake 2018



Arena seen across lake 2018



Boating pond 1956-7, Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2011



A similar view, 2018



Souvenir guide c 1927, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



LILY POND, PADDLING PLACE AND BOATHOUSE

Guide, 1929, Wicksteed archive



'Paddling pool' in lake, Guide 1929, Wicksteed archive



Aerial view showing paddling, bathing, lily and model boating pools, Wicksteed archive ref PHO-1070 dated 1930



Paddling pool, 1950s, with line of poplars beyond. Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2011



A similar view, 2018, following loss of boathouses; work in progress



Paddling pool in use as sandpit, 2011



Brick balustrade and planter, 2011



View from paddling pool to bathing pool, showing bathing huts
postcard, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Bathing pool c 1950, Wicksteed archive



View across lake to bathing pool and view from derelict bathing pool, 2011



A similar view after Lakes project, 2018



A similar view in 2022



Bathing pool area, paddling pool opening March 2015 and in 2018 below



Similar views in 2022: goose fouling is a continuing problem and vegetation is encroaching



View across lake to bathing pool and view from derelict bathing pool, 2011



Paddling pool in 2018



Amphitheatre in 2018



Shelter and pumphouse, 1956-7 Wicksteed archive



Shelter in 2011



Shelter repaired, 2018



1940s view, Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2011, showing walkway alongside bridge



A similar view, 2018, walkway alongside bridge removed



A similar view in 2022; overhead pedal cars and hoarding removed



View of boating lake and train post 1936 -1940s? from brochure, Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2011 (above) and (below) in 2018



Boating lake before extension, from brochure, Wicksteed



Postcard, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



View of boating lake from north, 1940s from brochure, Wicksteed archive



A similar view, 2011 (above) and (below) in 2022, following removal of overhead monorail pedal cars



Postcard, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



A similar view, 2011 (above) and (below) in 2022, following removal of overhead monorail pedal cars



Souvenir guide c1927, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information



Postcard, c1940, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Filter house and round shelter (detail), 1956-7, Wicksteed Archive



Flooding Easter 1998; park closed to visitors (Photo Liz Brandon-Jones)



Filter house in use as WCs, 2011



Filter house repaired, 2018



Drying rooms 1956-7, Wicksteed Archive

View 6a 1956-7,
Wicksteed archiveA similar view, 2011 (above)
and (below) in 2018A similar view in 2018 after loss
of boatshed

The drying rooms used as WCs, 2011 (above) and (below) repaired in 2018



A similar view, 2022



1920s postcard (pre 1926) reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service



Postcard of steamer, reproduced with permission of Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service
Right: steamer on Wicksteed brochure



1940s Wicksteed archive



Opening regatta, 1921, Wicksteed archive





Opposite and above: Water level lowered for dredging, January 2011



The lake in 2018; north east shore



The lake in 2018: : from south bank; bottom: train on south east bank



Viewing platform by the lake, 2022



The lake in 2018: top; swimming beach on south west shore; middle: pontoon boardwalk at south end of lake; bottom: 'reflection area' at south end of lake



View 12 from east side of lake, looking towards Pavilion, 2018



View 12 from east side of lake, looking towards Pavilion, early 2022

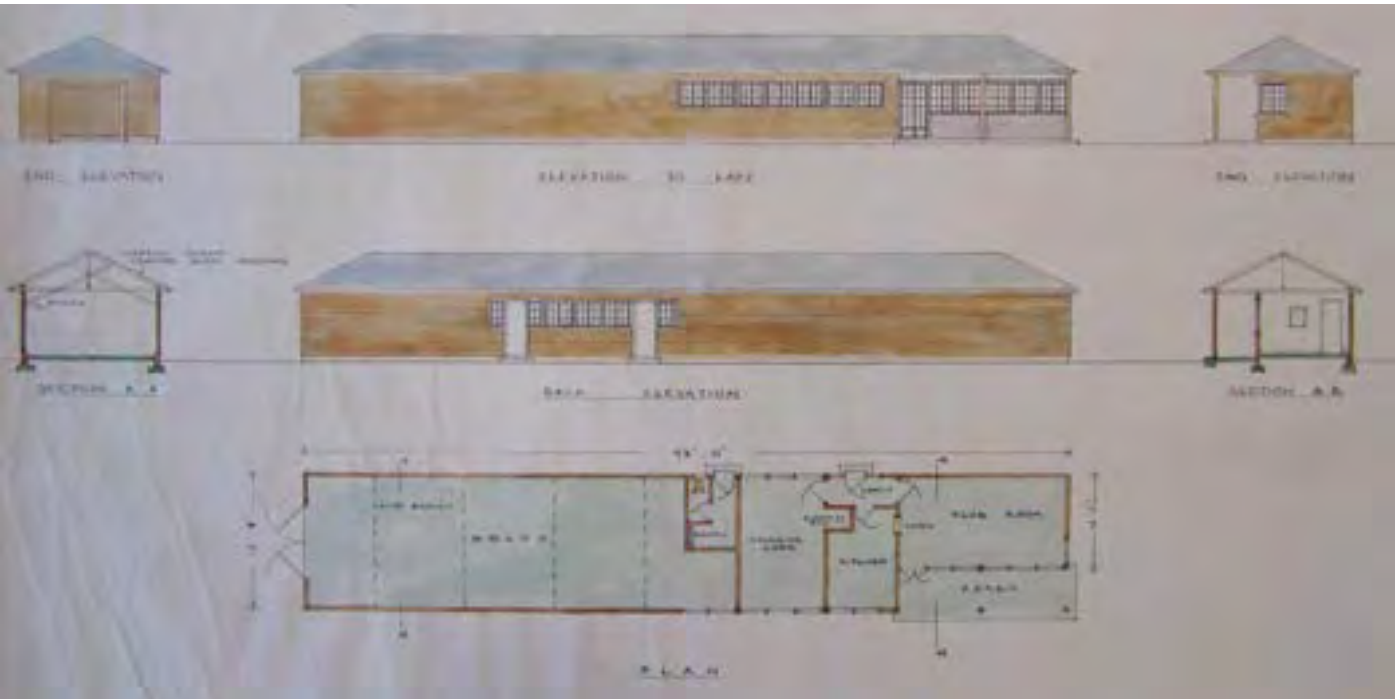
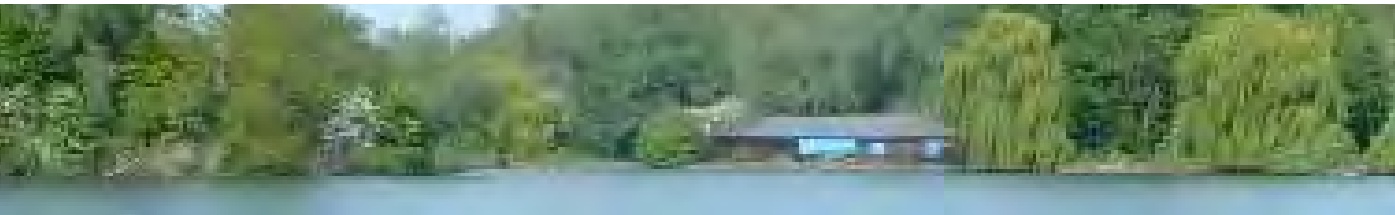


View 13 from south end of lake, near new Reflection area, 2018



Running round the lake, March 2022

40 Boatshed
41 Tunnel



Above: original plan for rowing club, Gotch Saunders and Surridge, 1937 (NRO MAP 5528) . Reproduced by permission of Northamptonshire Record Office on behalf of Gotch, Saunders and Surridge Architecture.



left above: boatshed
left below: tunnel
November 2018

Aviary 42



Extended aviary, 2011



Aviary, removed and new cafe 2018
and below, new aviary in dome in playground area, 2018





The Trustees designed this Hall as an amenity for booked and other parties, for use on wet days. Complete programmes are shown and the Hall is fitted with comfortable plush, tip up seats.



Coronation Hall, 2011 and above: from brochures, Wicksteed archive



Coronation Hall in March 2022



Wicky's theatre inside Coronation Hall in March 2022



Informal recycling/compost area, between lakes: left in 2011; right in 2018



Above left: Site of former Paradise spinney, south west of lake, 2011; ponies and play structures nearby, 2018



Fishing lake, February 2022



Ise watermeadow below fishing lake, February 2022



Arboretum, 2011 and right: 2018



Arboretum, 2018, with housing beyond



Path and entrance to the park from arboretum increasingly used. Right; approach to arboretum area, 2018



Arboretum, 2022 with felled tree and housing beyond



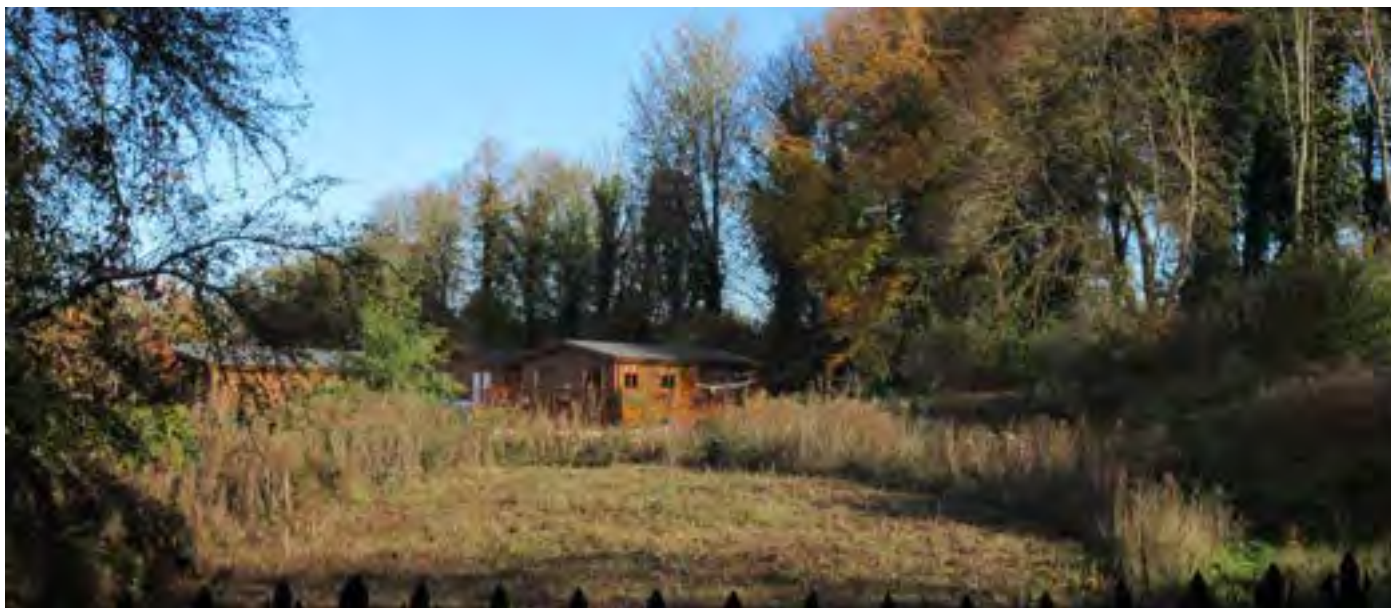
Hornbeams in Arboretum, February 2022



Lodges from entrance, 2011



Lodges seen across the river from water chute area (left) in 2011 and (right) in 2018



South end of Lodge area looking north, 2018



South end of Lodge area behind water chute, 2022



Left: campsite and right: newly planted hedge, 2011



Camping area with view south to industrial estate 2011



Camping area with view south east to lake and housing, 2018



Camping area looking south, 2018



View into field west of new maintenance area, 2018



View into field, March 2022, showing decaying trees and maintenance area on the left



Similar view of camping area looking south, March 2022



Left: Golf house in 2011 and right: in 2018



Above: Golf house in new maintenance area in 2018

Below: a similar view in 2022 showing accumulation of dumped materials



Former golf house in 2022; decaying trees serve an important screening function



Above: view into maintenance area in 2022

Below: maintenance area with polytunnels in 2022



