

**Park Development Framework  
Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 Section 14 Draft Area Proposals  
Consultation by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority on Draft Proposals for  
Area 3 Ruckholt Road to Coppermill Lane**

**Submission of Millfields User Group**

**Secretary  
Tim Evans  
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We fully support, and have been involved in drafting, the proposals of the Lea Valley Federation (*Lower Lea Marshes – the Lea Valley Federation’s proposals for the Lee Valley Regional Park*).

In particular we see it as vital to return the Thames Water site, facing Millfields, to park use. The LVF’s proposals for this site seem to us imaginative and coherent.

We support the LVRPA’s specific proposals for Millfields (Appendix A, 3.A.5).

We are interested to see that the maps omit the section of the park lying between the electricity substations and the Lee navigation. Is it the case that this area falls outside the Lea Valley Park? This is one of the best areas of Millfields for biodiversity, especially waterside habitat which is the LVRPA’s declared chief ecological interest in Millfields. It is also where the Millfields User Group has planted, and maintains, what we believe to be Hackney’s largest community orchard, comprising 51 trees, many chosen as local London and Essex varieties or because of their rarity or heritage interest. Currently nearly half this area is enclosed within the National Grid temporary works site until (we are told) 2015. Formerly it was a valuable belt of young informal woodland and when it is returned to the park it will offer a major opportunity for habitat restoration.

Millfields Users Group’s area of interest also includes the towpath from the south east corner of the community orchard area, down to Cow Bridge. We understand the land ownership is confused and any intervention that the LVRPA could make to help the land’s incorporation in Millfields, currently being attempted by LBH, would be welcome. We are especially interested in the value of this path as part of a circular walk taking in Millfields and the Middlesex Filter beds; and in its contribution to biodiversity as a nesting area and bat corridor. We note that LVRPA prioritises its use for angling and draw attention to its current use as a continuous cruising mooring. In the longer term it may be involved in any proposals that arise to move waste by barge at the LBH depot to the west of the path.

We are pleased to see attention given to the need to enhance landscaping around the park edges and to improve gateway points.

We are pleased to see the intention to ‘explore options for playable space’. Lack of play facilities is a major concern of the User Group and we are in consultation with LB Hackney about the best way to deploy available funds.

The Introduction (p2 Key resources para 3) and Sport and Recreation proposal icons refer to football and tennis facilities at Millfields: we'd like to draw attention to the cricket field which is the home ground of the league-topping Clapton Falcons and is also used by teams from Waltham Forest. This very attractive 'village green' ground lacks basic facilities such as a scoreboard and toilets, and we would like to see the ground improved without damage to its 'village green' character. It is somewhat ironic that recently available cricketing funds have been devoted solely to Hackney Marshes, at some ecological cost, disregarding this existing community-led centre of excellence.

Millfields also has an open general purpose tarmac area with basketball courts and other general purpose markings. This is heavily used for all sorts of other physical activities including skating and skateboarding, BikeAbility cycle training (adults via the LBH programme as well as local schools), dance practice, tai chi, etc. The current version of the LBH master plan envisages reducing and marginalising this area.

Regarding biodiversity, the park is a borough SINC and the User Group is working with LB Hackney to adopt a 5-year biodiversity management plan. The implementation will heavily involve the user group as a source and organiser of volunteers, and through volunteering will encourage local people to understand and own the biodiversity features. We welcome LVRPA's interest in this aspect and would be interested in working with the Middlesex Filter Beds staff to integrate habitat across the navigation and to survey the ecology: currently we have a habitat survey but little data on what lives in the habitat. We also have a supposedly full arboricultural survey which omits the riverbank trees recently pollarded by either LVRPA or British Waterways: if LVRPA, we would like to be contacted in future about such works, especially with regard to the use of resulting timber for habitat, play or furniture in the park.

Millfields is particularly affected by the poor water quality of the Lea and Lee Navigation, thanks to the licensed discharges of excess sewage from Deepham sewage works and to unlicensed plumbing and dumping upstream. We would like to see the Authority exerting itself on this issue.

Millfields suffers from being dissected by roads, primarily by the Lea Bridge Road and secondarily by Chatsworth Road. We are pleased to see the proposals for Lea Bridge Road (Map 1: Visitors; schedule 3.R.2) acknowledging and addressing this, but would wish for improved crossing at other points as well as the one indicated at the Chatsworth/Lea Bridge Road junction. LB Hackney is working on a toucan crossing near the bridge and a crossing at the NW corner of the cricket field might be worth considering.

Chatsworth Road has become a rat run over the last two decades. LB Hackney has addressed this with traffic calming and the local community has initiated a revival of the street market which lapsed in the early 1970s. However there is currently no safe crossing from South Millfields to the cricket field, and we would like to see this addressed. We would also like to see whether the large number of private car journeys generated by cricket matches can be addressed through improved public transport or other means.

We have some reservations about the thrust of the LVRPA proposals for Lea Bridge Road (3.R.2) and support the LVF remarks on this.

Regarding heritage, community and visitors, we draw attention to the Old Schoolroom which is in the built enclave within the park. This lies within the Paradise Wharf development and we had hoped that redevelopment of the site by Vision Homes would lead to conservation of the building and its being brought into use as a community or heritage venue. Proposals have included a Lea Valley history and interpretation centre. Obviously we hope the LVRPA would take an interest in this. Local conservation activists have founded the Clapton Arts Trust in order to protect and use this and some other local heritage buildings. So far we understand there has been little progress and in fact the CAT has had to devote effort recently simply to persuading the owners to make the building weatherproof before it deteriorates. LVRPA support for these efforts would be welcome.

We would like to be sure that the LVRPA understands the active role played by Millfields User Group in negotiating the current Master Plan and the Biodiversity Plan for the park, and the need to not only consult but involve this very active group in future. We would like the Authority to commit to keeping in touch with the User Group and to understanding its concerns and initiatives. It is not sufficient to treat the group as a passive pool of volunteers: we regard ourselves, and behave, as activists for the benefit of the park.

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