Jesus Green

Attractive park and recreation ground created by the Corporation in the late C19 from former water meadows.

Jesus Green is one half of a former water meadow that was bisected in 1890 by the construction of Victoria Avenue, the other half became Midsummer Common. In the wider context it forms part of the important ring of green spaces that run around and define the historic city centre. The Cambridge Corporation was granted rights over the common land in 1884 and 1922, but it was not heavily used as a recreation ground until the 1920s. Today, the green retains its role as an area for formal and informal recreation, which is crossed by well-used pedestrian and cycle routes and benefits from lines of mature trees.

General Overview

The wide, open space and long vistas of Jesus Green provides a sharp contrast with the closely built housing of the New Park Street area just to the west. The spaces retain a semi-rural character due to the lines of trees that break up views and the absence of roads or obtrusive structures within the park. The riverside provides a focus of activity including a well used cycle path and a cluster of structures made up by the pavilion, footbridge, lock and lock keepers’ cottage. Some of these help to illustrate the historic importance of the river as an economic highway for Cambridge in the C18 and C19.

Views across the green space take in the tree lines and skyline buildings in the city centre including the chapel of St John’s College and the spire of All Saint’s Church. The river and buildings beyond are also visually important in views while the footbridge and Victoria Road Bridge are further features of architectural interest.

On the southern edge of the park, the sinuous course of a stream that forms the northern boundary of the grounds of Jesus College, is a reminder of the network of small streams that must have watered these meadows in the past. This stream has the potential to have a high value for ecology.

Jesus Green is an important recreational resource used by residents, visitors and schools. It also hosts various performances and events in addition to being a popular cycle and pedestrian route. The space also has a wider ecological significance as part of the river corridor.

The long, blank elevations of the swimming pool buildings and its tall evergreen hedge appear somewhat incongruous in the park, and may provide an opportunity for enhancement.

Skate park, with swimming pool hidden behind hedge

Pavilion

Views towards the city centre
The pool lies next to children’s play areas and a skate park and together they form a focus of activity within the park.

**Landscape Features**

- The River Cam forms the northern boundary with properties behind on Chesterton Road providing a fairly continuous solid edge with locally-typical architectural features such as the mansard roofline and pantile roof covering to Nos. 2 -12 Chesterton Road.

- Tree lines mark the northwest and east boundaries of the park and form an avenue that bisects it, limiting views across the area.

- Trees within the grounds of Jesus College form the southern boundary.

- Avenues of trees tend to define vistas.

- St John’s College Chapel is a notable focal building on the western horizon, its fine quality details and materials confirming the wealth and prestige of the college.

- All Saint’s Church Spire performs a similar function in views to the south marking the routes into the city from the east.

- There are less celebrated views of the Varsity Hotel in Thompson’s Lane to the west and Henry Giles House in Chesterton Road to the north.

- Riverboats on the River Cam add colour and life to views towards the lock.

**Enhancement Opportunities**

The appearance of the outdoor swimming pool and associated boundary treatment is detrimental to the view east along the northern boundary towards Victoria Bridge.

The spaces around the lock, swimming pool (including the inappropriate tree screen) and tennis courts are important elements affecting the appearance of the character of the area.

Similarly, the adequacy and condition of the paths crossing the park are important to the appearance and functionality of the green space.

The tree avenues will also require attention as the existing trees reach maturity.

The general maintenance of the existing facilities, and the design of the lighting, signage and other park features, would all benefit from improvement.

Note: For further details on this area please refer to Cambridge City Council’s “Jesus Green Conservation Plan” (1998).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature / Structure</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>open air swimming pool</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>4 single storey associated buildings, bounded by timber fencing and leylandii hedge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pavilion</td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>render &amp; red brick single storey, tile roof (positive building)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refreshment kiosk</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>single storey, timber boarded, tile roof</td>
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<tr>
<td>children's play area</td>
<td>C20</td>
<td>various play equipment, timber post fence &amp; railings</td>
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<tr>
<td>London plane trees</td>
<td>c1913</td>
<td>avenue of trees running north west - south east</td>
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<tr>
<td>pathways</td>
<td>mostly 1920s</td>
<td>although several paths are historic routes, there was no overall layout until 1920s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria Avenue horse chestnut trees</td>
<td>1890s</td>
<td>planted when Victoria Avenue was built</td>
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<tr>
<td>skateboard ramps</td>
<td>early C21</td>
<td>painted steel &amp; concrete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus Green Lock House</td>
<td>early C19</td>
<td>Grade II Listed grey Gault brick, hipped slate roof</td>
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