

FOI Ref

12364

Response sent

3 Mar 23

(CCC) Dog complaints in Cambridge open spaces

I note that proposals to extend the city's current Dog Control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) were heard at Cambridge City Council's Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee meeting on Thursday 19 January.

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=476&MId=4124&Ver=4>

The present order is due to expire on 18th October 2023. The council wishes to extend this order into additional areas based on complaints received as follows:

- b. Introduction of dogs on leads restrictions in following areas where complaints have been received regarding aggressive dogs, lack of dog control or dogs straying without owner control: Coldham's Common marked sports pitches.
- c. Introduction of seasonal dogs on leads restrictions (for the bird nesting season 1st March to 31st July) in following areas where complaints have been received regarding lack of dog control or dogs straying without owner control, and associated risk to of nesting birds being disturbed: Local Nature Reserves - Barnwell West, Barnwell East, Bramblefields, Limekiln Pit, Logan's Meadow (part), Paradise and West Pit as well as sites with nesting birds at Hobsons Park, and Mill Road Cemetery.
- d. Introduction to restrict number of dogs (maximum of four) to be walked by a person at any one time in following areas where complaints have been received regarding aggressive dogs, lack of dog control or dogs straying without owner control: Coldham's Common marked sports pitches, and Hobsons Park.

Request A: Details of complaints received

Please can you provide copies of the complaints received that are mentioned in support the proposals received categorised as per the item paragraphs:

- b. complaints received regarding aggressive dogs, lack of dog control or dogs straying without owner control on Coldham's Common marked sports pitches.
- c. complaints received by site regarding lack of dog control or dogs straying without owner control during the bird nesting season 1st March to 31st July, and disturbing nesting birds: Local Nature Reserves - Barnwell West, Barnwell East, Bramblefields, Limekiln Pit, Logan's Meadow (part), Paradise and West Pit, Hobsons Park, and Mill Road Cemetery.
- d. complaints received by site regarding aggressive dogs, lack of dog control or dogs straying without owner control as caused by more than four dogs being walked by a person at any one time in following areas: Coldham's Common marked sports pitches, and Hobsons Park.

Should this be too complex, please can you supply a list of all complaints received about dogs detailing the date, the time and the details of the complaint.

FOI Ref

12364

Response sent

3 Mar 23

Request B: Details of breeding bird surveys

Please can you also provide any bird breeding surveys you have carried out for the following sites, including species lists and estimates of breeding pairs: Local Nature Reserves - Barnwell West, Barnwell East, Bramblefields, Limekiln Pit, Logan's Meadow (part), Paradise and West Pit, Hobsons Park, and Mill Road Cemetery.

Should this be too complex please can you confirm a list of bird surveys conducted with dates and methods.

If no surveys have been carried out at a site please can you confirm this fact.

Response:

Thank you for your request for information above, which we have dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The information you have requested is held however the copies of the complaints you have requested is refused under the exemption to disclosure under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The copies of the complaints are being withheld as they constitute personal information as defined in Section 1(1) Data Protection Act. In considering the exemption for personal data under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act, we need to consider whether disclosure of personal information would contravene any of the data protection principles.

The first data protection principle states "Personal Data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and in particular shall not be processed unless at least one of the conditions in schedule 2 is met". The information held by the Council is held for the purposes of responding to complaints about services and areas under council control. The data subject would not have an expectation that this information would be publically disclosed, and therefore any disclosure would be unfair and in breach of the first data protection principle.

The identity of these individuals is therefore exempt from disclosure under s 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. This is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest.

Having considered the public interest, the council's decision is therefore to withhold the contents of the complaints.

However we are able to provide a summary of the information you have requested which is set out below.

Please note the term complaint does not just mean a written formal statement logged on the council's complaint system - it can include verbal statements and

FOI Ref

12364

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3 Mar 23

comments made to officers, requests for service and communications received that are not recorded as complaints through the council's complaint system. This is reflected in the minutes from the committee:

"A Public Spaces Protection Order would be in place for up to 3 years. It could be reviewed or renewed any time. Officers tended to review how a Public Spaces Protection Order was working in order to recommend amendments for the next one. Public Spaces Protection Orders were considered for all City Council owned open spaces. If one was considered necessary Officers would observe an area, then write reports using public comments as evidence to ensure recommendations reflected how people wanted the area to be used." [Agenda Template \(cambridge.gov.uk\)](#).

Please note that only written complaints has been detailed in the request below, and it is not possible to provide details of verbal comments made to council officers over the three-year period as part of this request.

Data for the 2023 review of the PSPO includes information collated during the period of January 2020 to January 2023.

Coldhams Common sports pitches

- 16 April 2020 18:30 hours – report by resident regarding people not adhering to social distancing guidelines and walking dogs' uncontrolled off lead.
- 11 June 2020 15:31 hours – report that a resident was attacked by a dog on the common whilst cycling through the common. Report that the resident felt worried the dog was going to injure them, that it was out of control and the owner was not able to control it.
- 17th September 2020 - East Area Committee – Environmental Report - Common Sports Pitches – A high volume of dogs walked in this area. Regular patrols conducted and despite this and poo bags being handed out to dog walkers there is often fouling present. One report of a dog intimidating a cyclist received and investigated. (https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s51290/Environmental%20Report_March%20to%20August%202020.pdf)
- 18th March 2021 - East Area Committee – Environmental Report Coldhams Common – Dog on dog attack. No suspect has been identified. <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s55231/Environment%20Report%20Sept%202020-Jan%2021.pdf>
- 18 September 2021 14:17 hours – report of an off-lead dog running at a group of residents on the common and colliding with a resident. Resident requested that the dog be on a lead and the owner was uncooperative. Dog reported to have then damaged cones belonging to park run. Resident reported the dog as being out of control.

[20Environmental%20Data%20Report%20December%202020%20to%20May%202021.pdf](#))

- 9 August 2021 13:22 hours and 10 August 2021 15:22 hours – report from resident that the dog fouling issue at Hobson’s Park continued, and residents were having to clear it up. Resident reporting that regular dog walkers had been put off from using the space because of the dog fouling.
- 29th November 2021 - South area committee Environmental Report - Hobson Avenue/Park – (July) Dog fouling problem at the Community Garden reported. New fouling signage installed.
(https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s57327/Environmental%20Report_June%202020%20to%20November%202021.pdf)
- 1 February 2022 10:07 hours – report from a resident reporting a problem with off the lead dogs swimming across the lake to the island and chasing wildlife
- 2 February 2022 8:07 hours – report from a resident that dog owners had let their dogs disturb around 300 birds by running onto the islands.
- 13 February 2022 14:03 hours – report from a resident of dogs being a nuisance and allowed to run free. Request for signage that dogs should be on leads due to bird nesting season.

Mill Road Cemetery

- 9th February 2020 13:48 hours – resident noticed that ground nesting birds, and uncontrolled dogs chasing birds from the bushes into the open spaces. Resident suggested the council should take consider restricting dog walking on leads between March and May, and to remind people that the council had declared a biodiversity emergency and that MRC was on the register of Cambridge City wildlife sites.
- 23rd January 2021 15:02 hours – resident reported large increase in numbers of dogs walking in Mill Road Cemetery in the previous 10 months and requested officers to look at a dog on leads restriction.
- 10th March 2021 12:37 hours – resident enquiry around dogs on leads signs in the cemetery and enforcement of the polite notice. Request that the dogs on leads was included with next PSPO requirement.
- 9 February 2022 11:12 hours and 4 March 2022 9:31 hours – request from resident to put signage up regarding dogs on leads during the nesting/breeding season.

Barnwell West LNR

- 15th May 2020 (time unknown) - Fixed penalty issued for failure to clear up dog fouling

West Pit – no written data available

Limekiln Pit - no written data available

Barnwell East LNR - no written data available

Part B:

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There are no breeding bird surveys for these sites.

The council's biodiversity officer has provided a response to this part of the request:

Incidental records to Cambridge Bird Club include a Nightingale (red listed) holding territory on Coldham's Common in 2022. These nest on or close to the ground and given the species tenuous status in East Anglia it would be remiss for the local authority to not explore opportunities to assist in establishing a breeding colony. Species such as Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Blackcap are regularly observed by officers on Coldham's and Barnwell LNRs, which are known to nest low down at the base of scrub, so potentially are impacted by dogs off leads. The nesting season also covers the key period when many other recorded species such as the endangered Water Vole and Hedgehog also have their young which are vulnerable to dog predation or injury by dogs.

We aim to provide a high quality service to you and hope that you are satisfied with this response. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Further queries on this matter should be directed to foi@cambridge.gov.uk