
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 13 APRIL 2011**PORTFOLIO: ENVIRONMENT****REPORT FROM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES****SUBJECT: CHERRY ORCHARD COUNTRY PARK****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To approve the Cherry Orchard Country Park Management Plan 2011 – 2016.

2 FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE No: 22/10**3 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Portfolio Holder for the Environment has recently convened a meeting of the Cherry Orchard Member Advisory Group (comprising Cllrs M J Steptoe, J P Cottis, Mrs H L A Glynn, D Merrick and Mrs P Aves) to consider the long-term aspirations for the Country Park. The Member Group gave consideration to a draft Management Plan prepared by an Environmental Consultant and have reflected upon the capital works previously approved for the next two years.
- 3.2 The Management Plan incorporates a revised capital programme and sets an agenda for the next five years.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The Management Plan for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park is appended. The first part of the plan (Sections 1– 5) sets out the context for ownership and management. The material is factual and unlikely to change when the plan is reviewed. The second part of the plan (Section 6) sets out the management prescriptions for the site. This section will change with each review of the plan. Finally, specific actions are set out in an action plan (Appendix 1).
- 4.2 In March 2000, Rochford District Council approved the creation of a Country Park in the Roach Valley. During the acquisition phase a number of specific amenities were identified as useful elements in the Country Park. These included an increase in woodland, wetland and water cover; and car parking either in the site or immediately adjacent to its boundary. Some specific schemes were suggested that included the creation of a lake, the planting of specimen trees and the development of an orchard or arboretum. Buildings are required to service the needs of the visitors and site staff. These aspirations have been anticipated in forward budget plans. The Management Plan proposes a vision for the Country Park:

The Country Park will provide for visitors of all ages, abilities and interests, the Cherry Orchard Countryside Experience. Everyone will be able to see and be involved in what the living countryside is all about. This will be a living, sustainable and accessible landscape where wildlife, recreation and agriculture can all flourish.

4.3 To work towards this vision, the following aims have been created:-

- To provide a welcoming, safe and accessible site for all.
- To provide clean and well maintained facilities that enhances the visitors' experience.
- To manage the Country Park in a sustainable manner for informal recreation.
- To provide opportunities for community involvement in the Country Park.
- To deliver education and event programmes to raise awareness about the Country Park and environmental issues.
- To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the Country Park.
- To promote the health benefits of using the Country Park as well as the surrounding countryside.
- To provide information about the Country Park for the visitor.
- To implement effective management strategies.

4.4 Since the year 2000 a number of actions have been taken. There has been significant tree planting and the reversion of arable land into conservation/ amenity grassland. A lake has been excavated and a number of specimen trees and a memorial avenue planted. The opportunity has also been taken to survey the land and review its contribution to the region.

4.5 The landscape character of the valley is an important part of the region's heritage. Whilst detailed proposals are set out in the text but some general positions are established here:-

- The contractual obligations of the Woodland Grant Schemes and Countrywide Stewardship Agreement will be met. However, all tree planting scheme layouts will build on the medieval land patterns, not detract from them.
- Facilities for the public will only be introduced if they are a safety requirement or the need is established through local consultation. Information and interpretation for the site will be developed in a strategic and co-ordinated manner. Way marking (both on and off the site) and entrance signing will be carefully planned to enhance the environment as well as inform the public. A proliferation of signing will be avoided.
- The site will be managed in accordance with the principles of sustainability in accordance with BS8555. External accreditation will be considered in order to guide managerial actions.

- Car parking will be provided to enhance access from both the east and west of the site. But the intent is to encourage access via the rights of way network or public transport.
- The opportunities to develop partnerships associated with the site will be explored and supported. This will include links with the local community, its clubs, societies and schools. The Council will endeavour to support other agencies and Councils in achieving their targets, provided that a benefit to the Country Park accrues.
- Volunteering opportunities on the site will be developed and supported to ensure that local stakeholders feel able to contribute and own the site.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 To not adopt the Management Plan and achieve incremental and unstructured growth.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Management Plan, once adopted, will provide significant environmental benefits.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Management Plan requires no additional funding. There are existing revenue and capital budgets available to deliver the proposed works.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The proposed vision encourages an inclusive approach to ensure that the Country Park can be enjoyed by all.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Head of Environmental Services

Background Papers:

None.

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Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park Management Plan 2011-2016



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Executive Summary

This is a management plan for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. The first part of the plan (**Sections 1– 5**) sets out the context for ownership and management. The material is factual and unlikely to change when the plan is reviewed. The second part of the plan (**Section 6**) sets out the management prescriptions for the site. This section will change with each review of the plan. Finally, specific actions are set out in an action plan (**Appendix 1**).

In March 2000, Rochford District Council approved the creation of a Country Park in the Roach Valley. During the acquisition phase a number of specific amenities were identified as useful elements in the Country Park. These included an increase in woodland, wetland and water cover; and car parking either in the site or immediately adjacent to its boundary. Some specific schemes were suggested that included the creation of a lake, the planting of specimen trees and the development of an orchard or arboretum. Buildings are required to service the needs of the visitors and site staff. These aspirations have been anticipated in forward budget plans. The vision for the Country Park is as follows:

The Country Park will provide for visitors of all ages, abilities and interests in the Cherry Orchard Countryside Experience. Everyone will be able to see and be involved in what the living countryside is all about. This will be a living, sustainable and accessible landscape where wildlife, recreation and agriculture can all flourish.

To work towards this vision, the following aims have been created:

- To provide a welcoming, safe and accessible site for all.
- To provide clean and well maintained facilities that enhances the visitors' experience.
- To manage the Country Park in a sustainable manner for informal recreation.
- To provide opportunities for community involvement in the Country Park.
- To deliver education and event programmes to raise awareness about the Country Park and environmental issues.
- To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the Country Park.
- To promote the health benefits of using the Country Park as well as the surrounding countryside.
- To provide information about the Country Park for the visitor.
- To implement effective management strategies.

The Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park is situated in the rolling countryside of the Roach Valley in the south west of Rochford District. The site is a wonderful, tranquil open valley framed, in the main, with ancient woodlands and hedgerows, apart from at its eastern end where the suburban backdrop dominates. The 83.77 hectare (207 acre) park is newly created

and continues to mature, providing recreational facilities for residents and visitors to the area. The woodland, lake, open grassland and network of connecting paths and bridleways also provide habitat for a huge range of animals and plants. Immediately to the west of the site is the 16.6 hectare (41 acre) Grove Woods but only a part is in the ownership of Rochford District Council (approximately 4 hectares (9.9 acres)). It would be beneficial for the Council to either purchase or lease other parts of Grove Wood to ensure appropriate management of the woods in the long term and to provide secure routes through the woods from the proposed car park in Grove Road Recreation Ground.

Since the year 2000 a number of actions have been taken. There has been significant tree planting and the reversion of arable land into conservation/amenity grassland. A lake has been excavated and a number of specimen trees and a memorial avenue planted. The opportunity has also been taken to survey the land and review its contribution to the region.

The landscape character of the valley is an important part of the region's heritage. All actions should strengthen this character and not detract from it. The need to improve access to and within the site is clearly proven. The aspiration to increase wetland areas needs to be approached with caution. It is not yet certain what facilities the public would want on the site.

Opportunities – The site is owned by the Council without any constraint. The site is close to a large local population who will clearly benefit from access to open land. The surrounding area is well served by the rights of way network. There could be opportunities arising from the redevelopment of the London Southend Airport, the Stonebridge Park vision and the site lies within the Thames Gateway 'Greengrid' area.

Constraints – The medieval layout of the land is still visible and should not be lost. The importance of the landscape is recognised in policy documents. The valley is prone to flooding and there is a presumption against development in such areas. The river has significant ecological potential and this will limit the use of its water and bank-side features. Vehicular access to the site is very difficult being constrained either by existing development or by heavy traffic. The Council has entered into formal agreements with Defra, Natural England and the Forestry Commission. Those agreements have obligations attached.

Proposals – Detailed proposals are set out in the text but some general positions are established here:

- The contractual obligations of the Woodland Grant Schemes and Countryside Stewardship Agreement will be met. However, all tree planting scheme layouts will build on the medieval land patterns, not detract from them.
- Facilities for the public will only be introduced if they are a safety requirement or the need is established through local consultation. Information and interpretation for the site will be developed in a strategic and coordinated manner. Way marking (both on and off the site) and entrance signing will be carefully planned to enhance the environment as well as inform the public. A proliferation of signing will be avoided.
- The site will be managed in accordance with the principles of sustainability in accordance with BS8555. External accreditation will be considered in order to guide management actions.

Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park Management Plan 2011-2016

- Car-parking will be provided to enhance access from both the east and west of the site. But the intent is to encourage access via the rights of way network or public transport.
- The opportunities to develop partnerships associated with the site will be explored and supported. This will include links with the local community, its clubs, societies and schools. The Council will endeavour to support other agencies and councils in achieving their targets provided that a benefit to the Country Park accrues.
- Volunteering opportunities on the site will be developed and supported to ensure that local stakeholders feel able to contribute and 'own' the site.

Finances – On the 25 January 2011, the Council agreed that £460,000 is to be provided as part of the capital budget in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Country Park.

Indicative capital expenditure programme

2010-11

Car park and temporary roadway off Cherry Orchard Way	£40,000
Aboretum of fruit trees year 1	£10,000

2011-12

Service building and or other staff and public facilities	£140,000
Permissive route for horses and pedestrian through New England Wood to Flemings Farm	£45,000
Grove Woods additional car parking	£60,000
Aboretum of fruit trees year 2	£10,000
Provision of notice boards, signs and waymarks	

2012-13

Construction of wetland	£35,000
Arboretum of fruit trees year 3	£10,000

A revenue budget of £8,500 pa has been established to cover routine maintenance.

Introduction

- 1.1 This is a management plan for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. In March 2000, Rochford District Council approved the creation of a Country Park in the Roach Valley. The identified objectives were to create a countryside experience that would:
- Provide access to the whole of the site for all sections of the community but especially for those groups with access ability issues.
 - Retain the open space and natural contour of the land.
 - Remove the intensive agriculture from the valley.
 - Increase the ecological importance and biodiversity of the site in a managed way.

Structure of this Management Plan

- 1.2 The first part of this plan sets out the context for ownership and management. The site is described and the constraints and obligations noted. The material is factual and unlikely to change when the management plan is reviewed in the future, though there is still a need to collect some data, particularly in relation to biodiversity. The features that make the site special are stated, as are the factors that might affect the condition of these features.
- 1.3 The second part of the plan sets out the management prescriptions for the site. Long term aspirations are considered but the section is designed to have only a five year life. This section will change with each review of the management plan. Specific actions are set out in an action plan (shown as Appendix 1).

Open Space Strategy

- 1.4 In 2009 the Council published an Open Space Strategy that forms a part of the evidence for the emerging Local Development Framework. That strategy recognises that country parks are important for the community in providing defined areas where people can enjoy the countryside. Such natural and semi-natural green-spaces are also important in supporting environmental sustainability, creating and preserving valuable natural habitats for wildlife, increasing biodiversity and wildlife conservation and providing a local educational resource.

Vision for Open Spaces

- 1.5 The Council's vision for open spaces is to:

Create safe, accessible high quality environments for residents and visitors, providing a diverse mix of retail, leisure, community and other uses, as appropriate, to meet local needs.

Objectives for Open Spaces

- 1.6 To work towards this vision, the objectives may include the following:
- A range of evening leisure uses to enhance the vibrancy of centres providing increased activity and natural surveillance throughout the day;
 - Enhancement of community facilities and other local facilities such as healthcare;
 - Provision of a range of additional youth facilities where appropriate;
 - Promote a retail offer which caters for a variety of local needs;
 - Improved links to existing and new public open space;
 - Enhancements to visual amenity and legibility of spaces as appropriate; and
 - Improved connectivity between important local spaces.

Vision for Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park

- 1.7 It is proposed to update the objectives in paragraph 1.1 to a new vision.

“The Country Park will provide for visitors of all ages, abilities and interests the Cherry Orchard Countryside Experience. Everyone will be able to see and be involved in what the living countryside is all about. This will be a living, sustainable and accessible landscape where wildlife, recreation and agriculture can all flourish”.

Budgetary Information

- 1.8 A capital provision of £460,000 has been confirmed for inclusion in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in respect of projects within the Cherry Orchard Country Park between 2010/11 and 2012/13. This is subject to projects being approved.
- 1.9 Discussions are on-going with Essex County Council to secure match funding (up to £45,000) for a permissive route through Grove Wood, New England Wood and the Country Park; no funding has been agreed at this time.
- 1.10 A revenue budget of £8,500 pa has been established to cover routine maintenance.

Grant Aid

- 1.11 Thames Gateway South East has provided £52,000 for signage within the park. There is the opportunity to seek funding towards a permissive route by redirecting public footpath currently passing through Flemings Farm and extinguishing existing rights.
- 1.12 Essex Community Foundation agreed to provide £16,000 to provide a woodland block adjacent to the B1031 2009/10.

- 1.13 In 2001/02, the Forestry Commission agreed a Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) for the site that started in 2001 and ends in 2016. In 2009/10, the Commission agreed a further WGS for the site that started in 2009 and ends in 2024. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the conditions set out in the agreement, the Country Park receives a payment of £112,677 spread over the life of the 2001 agreement and £89,000 spread over the life of the 2009 agreement.
- 1.14 Defra has agreed a Countryside Stewardship Scheme for the site that started in 2004 and ends in 2014. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the conditions set out in the agreement, the Country Park receives an annual payment in the order of £7,000 (2004 prices).

Staff Resources

- 1.15 The Country Park is still in development and does not yet have site based staff.

Site Management

- The site's development is directed by the Street Scene and Open Spaces Manager (5% of time);
- Management coordination is by the Parks and Open Spaces Officer (10% of time);
- Site action is led by the Assistant Public Open Spaces Officer (20% of time);
- Essential maintenance is carried out by a member of staff working out of Hockley Woods; and
- A Woodlands Team is available as directed.

Central Staff Resources

- The Council employs a range of staff to provide specialist skills across the District. They support and enable field staff to carry out their duties on site.
- The Council's ground maintenance contractor¹ empties the litter and dog bins on site.

Volunteers:

- A Country Park Friends Group has been established, currently comprised of 70 volunteers.

Seetec

- Working in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions through Jobcentre Plus, there are Seetec workers who carry out some development and maintenance tasks such as woodland planting and fencing.

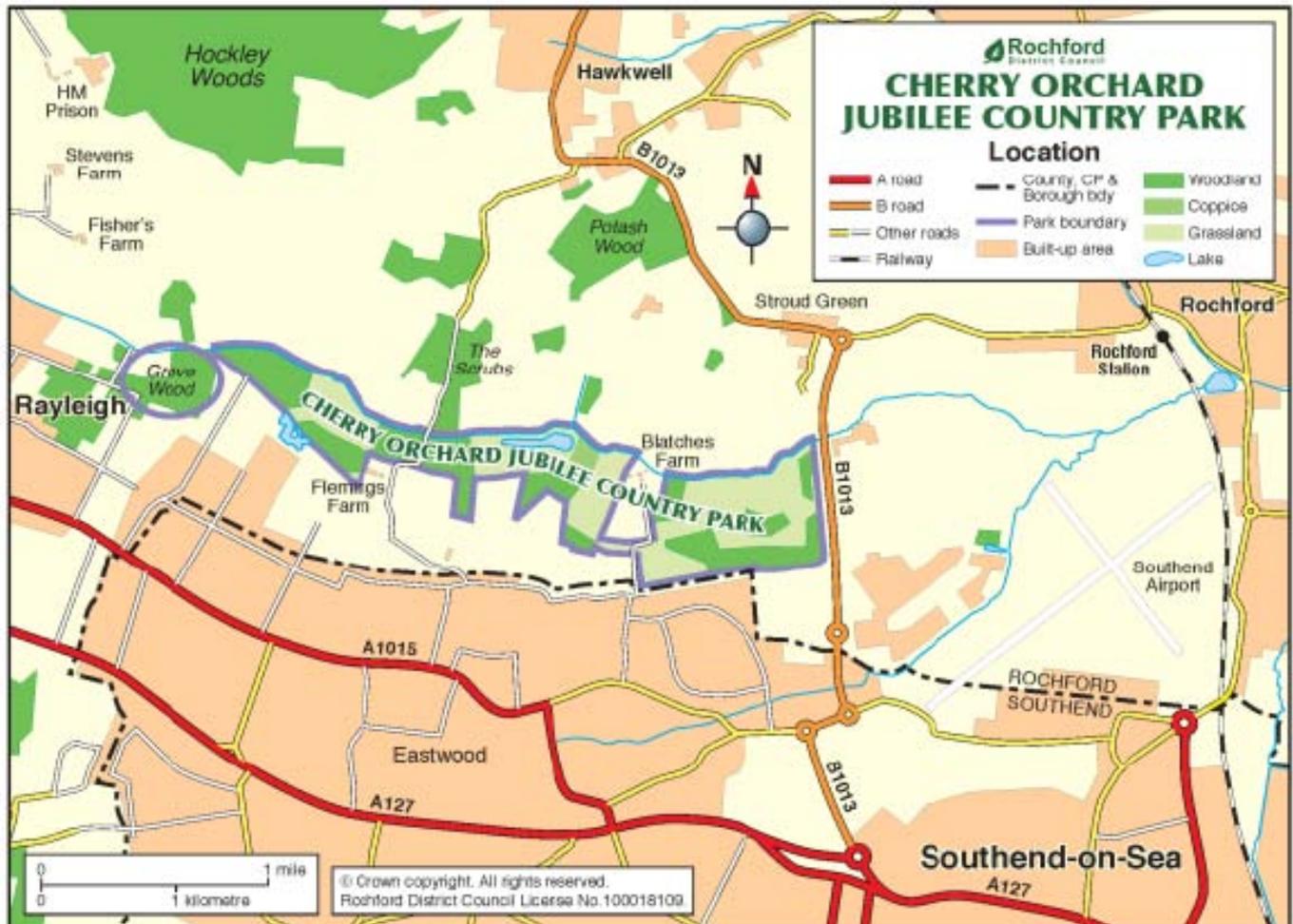
¹ Connaught at the time of writing.

- 1.16 The Woodland Assistant is part funded from capital until 2012, subsequently to which it will be funded from the core budget.

Health and Safety

- 1.17 The Council aims to ensure that the highest health and safety standards are maintained throughout the district, protecting employees, the self-employed and the public through a combination of education and enforcement.

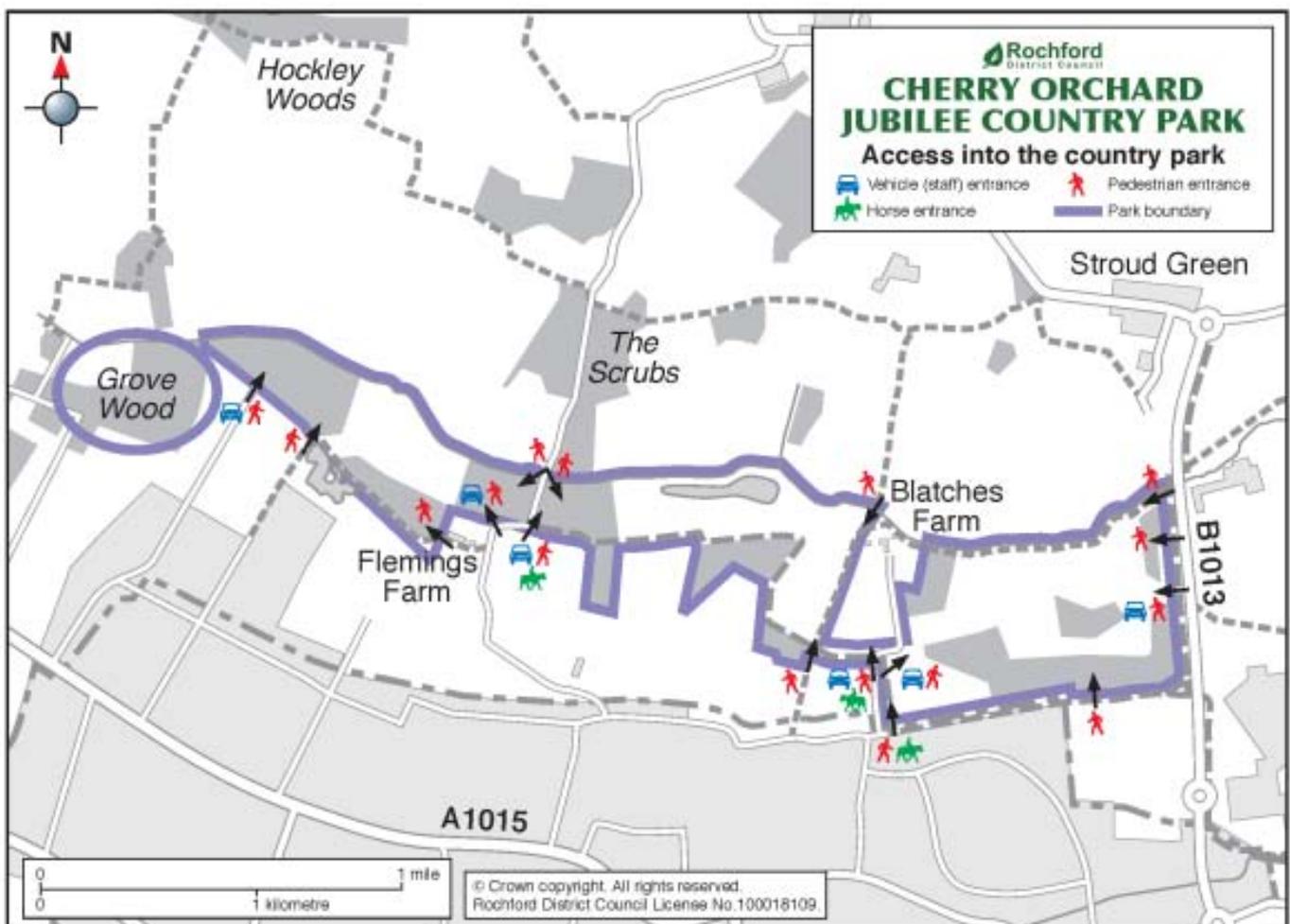
2 Description



Map 1 – Location of the Country Park

Summary Description

- 2.1 The Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park is situated in the rolling countryside of the Roach Valley and is surrounded by the urban areas of Rayleigh, Hockley, Rochford and Southend-on-Sea, in the south west of Rochford District (Map 1). The 83.77 hectare (207 acre) park is newly created and continues to mature, providing recreational facilities for residents and visitors to the area. The woodland, lake, open grassland and network of connecting paths and bridleways also provide habitat for a huge range of animals and plants.
- 2.2 Immediately to the west of the site is the 16.6 hectare (41 acre) Grove Woods but only a part is in the ownership of Rochford District Council (approximately 4 hectares (9.9 acres)). This makes possible access into the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park from the west. It would be beneficial for the Council to either purchase or lease other parts of Grove Wood to ensure appropriate management of the woods in the long term and to provide secure routes through the woods from the proposed car park in Grove Road Recreation Ground and to Hockley Woods (Map 2 for all access points).
- 2.3 The Country Park lies in some of the most beautiful countryside in South Essex and makes the most of an exceptional rolling setting to create a mix of open grassland and woodland a habitat for many plant and animal species.



Map 2 – Access into the Country Park

Location

2.4 Just south of the River Roach, between Rayleigh and Rochford in south east Essex.

Site name:	Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park
County:	Essex
District:	Rochford
Planning Authority:	Rochford District Council
Grid Reference:	TQ 834903
Area:	83.77 hectares
Owner:	Rochford District Council
Manager:	Rochford District Council Environmental Services

Land Tenure

2.5 This is not a legal document. Please refer to the original tenure documents before taking any decisions or action which may have legal implications. The Country Park is owned by Rochford District Council.

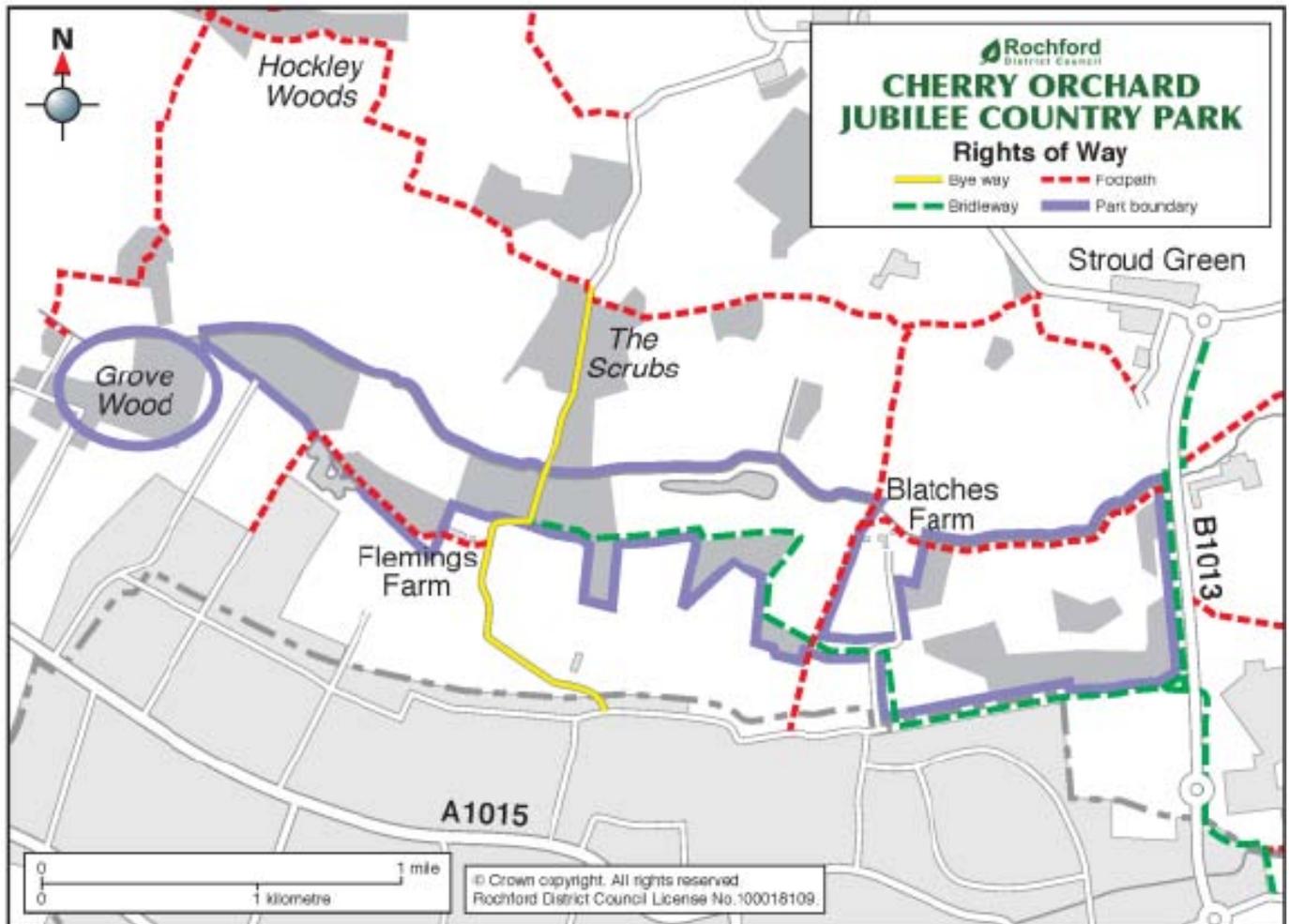
Acquisition Details

2002	Agricultural land either side of the private Blatches Farm acquired from Essex Country Council	42.04 ha
2008	New England Wood acquired from R&W Avery	3.92 ha
2008	Agricultural land between New England Wood and Blatches Farm acquired from R&W Avery	15.28 ha
2008	Agricultural land to south east (including area previously used by the shooting club) of Blatches Farm acquired from R&W Avery	18.61 ha
2008	Agricultural land to the north east acquired from Stolkin and Clements	3.92 ha

Leases

2.6 There are no leases on the land.

Legal Rights of Access



Map 3 – Public Rights of Way in the Country Park

Private

- 2.7 The road leading to Blatches Farm is owned by the farm. The Council has a right of access on this road.

Vehicular

- 2.8 One public byway (Route 2 Rochford Parish) crosses the Country Park from Flemming's farm Road in the south to Gusted Hall Lane in the north (**Map 3**). It is tightly bounded by a ditch and hedge within the Country Park and does not give any opportunity for vehicular access into the park.

Bridleway

- 2.9 There are a number of bridleways in and around the Country Park that allow good access for horse (**Map 3**). Two public bridleways pass through the park. Route 51 (Rochford Parish) passes west from Blatches Chase to Flemming's Farm, road (via Byway 2). Route 54 (Rochford Parish) links the eastern end of Route 51 to Eastwood in the south.

- 2.10 There are three bridleways along the south eastern boundary of the Country Park. Route 10 (Rochford parish) is on the boundary of the Rochford District and Southend Borough with links into Eastwood. Route 48 (Rochford parish) runs along the B1013 Cherry Orchard Way, just outside the park and connecting to Route 10. Route 52 (Rochford Parish) is a short connecting spur just outside the southeast corner of the park.
- 2.11 Route 1 (Rochford Parish upgraded to Bridleway 57 Rochford Parish²) lies to the north of the Country Park but connects to Byway 2 in The Scrubs and passes in an easterly direction passed Primrose Wood and into Ark Lane, Rochford, ensuring a good link to the wider area.

Public Footpath

- 2.12 There are a number of footpaths in and around the Country Park that allow good pedestrian access (**Map 3**). Route 4 (Rochford Parish) passes along the park's northern border Blatches to the Cherry Orchard Way and is a part of the. Route 30 (Rochford Parish) passes east along the southern boundary from Flemming's Farm to join Route 51 (Rayleigh Town) which links to Hillside Road. Route 46 (Rochford Parish) passes north from Noblesgreen, through the park to Blatches and Route 4.
- 2.13 Route 1 (Rochford Parish), to the north of the Country Park, is an extension of Bridleway 57 and runs from The Scrubs towards Hockley Woods, giving good regional access. Route 3 (Rochford Parish) again lies to the north of the park but it links Bridleway 57 to Footpath 4 at Blatches.
- 2.14 Routes 1, 3, 4 and 57 are a part of the Roach Valley Way circular walk promoted by Essex County Council. See Figure 2 for all access points to the Country Park and Figure 3 for public rights of way.
- 2.15 Route 50 (Rayleigh Town) links Connaught Road (adjacent to Grove Wood) to Route 1 (Rochford Parish) via Route 44 (Rochford Parish).

Byelaws

- 2.16 The Council is currently preparing general Byelaws for public open spaces which, when enacted, will apply to the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.

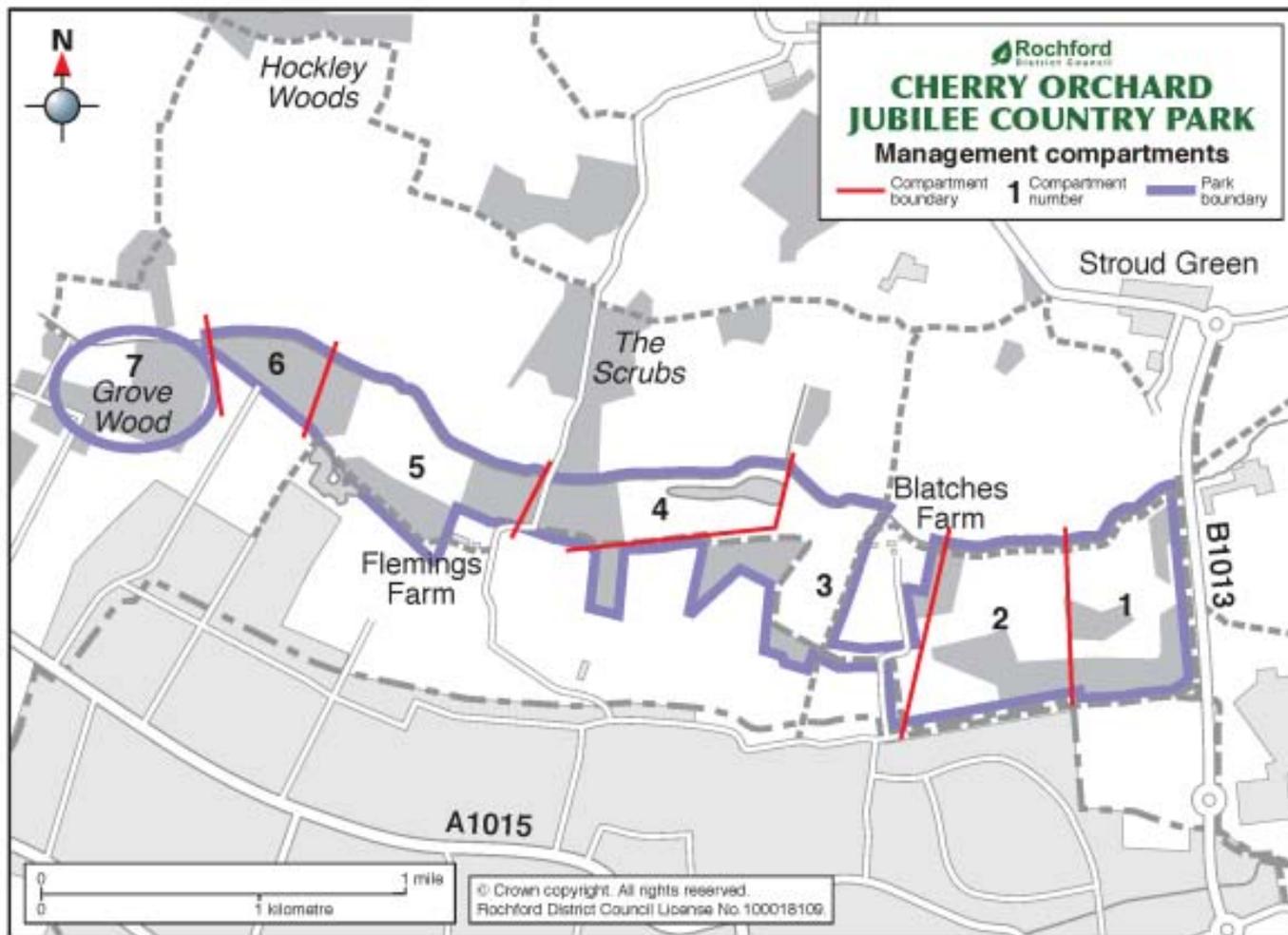
Management Infrastructure

- 2.17 The site is managed by the Rochford District Council Environmental Services who employ one full-time staff to run the site. There are no depot or staff facilities on site but routine maintenance equipment is available from Hockley Woods. This includes a pickup van, tractor and trailer, bandit and rotary PTO driven movers, strimmers and chainsaws. Other machinery is available from elsewhere in the Council. Contractors are occasionally employed on site.

² At the time of writing, the upgrading of Footpath 1 (Rochford) to bridlepath 57 (Rochford) is under appeal with the Secretary of State.

Compartments

2.18 The site has been divided into seven distinct management compartments (Map 4).



Map 4 – Management Compartment Boundaries of the Country Park

Management compartments			
Number	Name	Number	Name
1	Brickearth Fields	5	Arable lands
2	Trafalgar Fields	6	New England Wood
3	Plantations	7	Grove Wood
4	Lake Fields		

Map Coverage

2.19 Ordnance Survey

1:50000 Sheet 178 Thames Estuary

1:25000 Sheet 175 Southend-on-Sea and Basildon

1:25000 Sheet 176 Blackwater Estuary

2.20 British Geological Survey

1:50000 Sheet 258 Southend-on-Sea and Foulness

Photographic Coverage

2.21 Currently, there is no accessible photographic library for the site.

Environmental Information

Physical

Climate

2.22 Average rainfall is less than 500mm/year, the county average being around 600mm/year. Great Wakering, which lies about six miles to the east of the Country Park, is reputed to be the driest place in England. Low humidity levels contribute to the general lack of ferns, mosses and lichens; where they do occur, they do so in dark, sheltered places, such as New England Wood. Exposed parts of the site are prone to the effects of wind but, where there is shelter, summer temperatures are higher than average.

Hydrology

2.23 The northern boundary of the Country Park is marked by a stream that flows east into the River Roach. The river lies within a small and narrow channel being approximately one metre in width throughout its length. The river meanders down the valley. Past engineering works have restricted the stream to a fast flowing water course with any flooding being very temporary. The channel substrate is largely gravel with pockets of silt in the deeper areas. Its banks are typically 1-2 metres in height. The bank slopes vary, being vertical along much of the southern bank and less steep along the north bank. There are a number of natural channel and bank features, including gravelly riffles, gravel side bars and low earth cliffs.

2.24 There are a few large ditches on site, especially at the western end between New England Wood and the former agricultural land, and along the southern boundary. These may be remnants of a more extensive ancient network of drainage and boundary features. There is some evidence of limited waterlogging on site which suggests some impeded drainage.

- 2.25 In 2002, a 320 metre lake was created in the central section of the Country Park on land adjacent to Blatches Farm (average length 320 metres, average width 37 metres and water depth varies from 1 – 3 metres). Water to fill and maintain the lake is taken by pipe from the stream on the northern boundary (under Environmental Licence during the winter only). The outfall from the lake is by pipe back into the stream.

Geology

- 2.26 The geological map shows that the site has a base of London Clay, generally overlain with Bagshot Beds. Most of the site is made up of head or brickearth³. There are river terrace deposits of clay and silt in compartments 1 and 2; the section of river in compartment 1 is alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel). Compartments 3 and 5 (southern section) have a drift covering of clay and silt. Compartments 4, 5 (northern section), 6 and 7 are covered with clay, silt, sand and gravel.

Geomorphology/Landform

- 2.27 The site, being north east facing, lies on the southern side of a gently undulating fluvial valley. At its highest point, on the southern boundary, lies at 40 metres above mean sea level; the western boundary, in New England Wood, is at 30 metres and the land falls gently away to the eastern boundary, which lies at 15 metres. Within the site there are shallow dips and slopes but the feel is of a wide open space gently falling away to the north east.

Soils

- 2.28 The soils naturally found on site are 'brown earths' and 'stagnogley' soils. Brown soils (brown earths) are deep, well-drained (especially where brick-earth is present), fertile soils with no distinguishing features. They provide some of the best agricultural land as they are easy to work.
- 2.29 Stagnogley soils are slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged soils. They are sometimes called **surface water gleys** because the cause of the drainage problem is the rainwater not being able to drain through quickly enough. These are usually clay soils. The lack of oxygen penetration into the soil causes the iron to be reduced and take on the bluish colours. Mottling indicates a zone through which the water table fluctuates, whereas the uniform bluish horizon is below the permanent water table.
- 2.30 Parts of the site are reclaimed from old mineral workings. Here the top soil is London clay with some brick-earth residue. Their characteristics are similar to stagnogley soils.

³ Head is the term for slipped deposits of Bagshot Beds over London Clay. Brickearth is loess (silt) washed down from the surrounding hills.

Biological

- 2.31 There has not yet been a comprehensive wildlife or Phase 1 Habitat survey on site. The species listed in this section have been recorded during occasional visits. The site will host many more species. There has been no survey of the invertebrate or fish life, mosses, lichens or fungi.
- 2.32 In future revisions of this management plan, only habitat communities and indicator or species of note will be recorded in this section.

Flora

- 2.33 A preliminary ecological assessment was carried out in February 2010 (Essex Ecological Services 2010).
- 2.34 New England Wood contained:

Common name	Latin name
Tree canopy	
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Abandoned coppice	
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betula</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Understorey	
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Ground layer	
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Dog's Mercury	<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Wood Avens	<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>
Yellow Archangel	<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>
Early Purple Orchid	<i>Orchis masula</i>
Common Twayblade	<i>Twayblade listera ovata</i>

2.35 The former arable land contained:

Common name	Latin name
Open land	
Cock's Foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Common Couch	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.
Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio</i> sp.
Scarlet Pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>
Scentless Mayweed	<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Hedgerow	
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Willow	<i>Salix</i> sp.
New plantation	
Common Spotted Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>

Specimen trees planted on site:

Common name	Latin name
Black Poplar x 3	<i>Populus nigra</i>
Pedunculate Oak x 200	<i>Quercus robur</i>

Woodland Scheme trees planted on site:

Common name	Latin name
Mixed Native Broadleaves	
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
English Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betula</i>
Lime (small leafed)	<i>Tilia cordata</i>
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>

Common name	Latin name
Mixed Native Broadleaves	
Sweet Chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>
Wild Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Wild Service	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>
Willow (Cricket Bat)	<i>Salix coerulea</i>
Willow (Goat)	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Woody Scrubs	
Crab Apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Dog Wood	<i>Cornaceae spp</i>
Hawthorn (Midland)	<i>Crataegus oxyacanthoides</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Spindl	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>

Fauna

Birds

- 2.36 A survey was conducted in 2006 (Ekins 2006). The criteria used in assessments of this sort are intended to ensure that listings reflect each species' global and European status as well as that within the UK; and additionally measure the importance of the UK population in international terms. The survey used as its base the national review undertaken in 2002. This national review was updated in 2009⁴.
- 2.37 For these reviews, species are placed on three lists: the Red, Amber and Green. An international convention has established the criteria for entries onto these lists (Appendix 2). Species shown on the red and amber lists are at some form of risk but their presence on a site is an indicator of its ecological importance (RSPB et al 2009). In 2006, six BAP Red List species were found:

Common name	Latin name
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Yellowhammer	<i>Emeriza citronelle</i>

⁴ See www.bto.org/psob/index.htm#population

2.38 Three BAP Amber List species were found:

Common name	Latin name
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Species added to Amber List in 2009	
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>

2.39 Other birds seen on site (Green List):

Common name	Latin name
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Chiffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo.</i>
Field fare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>
Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Kestral	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Meadow Pipits	<i>Athus pratensis</i>
Moorhean	<i>Gallinula choropus</i>
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>

2.40 Though not currently found on site, the low earth banks of the stream provide potential nesting habitat for Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*).

Amphibians and Reptiles

Common name	Latin name
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaries</i>
Common Newt	<i>Tritusus vulgaris</i>
Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix heletica</i>
Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>

Mammals

2.41 During a survey in 2002 (Dobson 2002), three species of bat were recorded:

Common name	Latin name
Brown long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrelus pygmaeus</i>

2.42 Other mammals recorded (see Brooks L 2008, Dobson 2002):

Common name	Latin name
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>
Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>
Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Grey Squirrel	<i>Scirius carolinensis</i>
Harvest Mouse	<i>Micromys minutus</i>
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>
Mole	<i>Talpa europaea</i>
Muntjac Deer	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Stoat	<i>Mustela ermine</i>
Vole (Field)	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>
Vole (Water)	<i>Arvicola terrestris</i>
Water Shrew	<i>Neomys fodiens</i>
Weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>
Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>

2.43 Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Water Voles and all bat species in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5).

- 2.44 Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) is declining in the Country Park. New England Wood is potentially a suitable Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) habitat and the stream is potentially suitable for Otters (*Lutra lutra*). Pine Marten (*Martes martes*) has been recorded nearby.

Insect

- 2.45 During a 2010 survey two UK BAP species of bumblebee were recorded foraging within the clover in compartment 2.

Common name	Latin name
Brown-banded carder bee	<i>Bombus humilis</i>
Shrill carder bee	<i>Bombus sylvarum</i>

Cultural

Archaeology/Past Land Use

- 2.46 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments but four sites are recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record. All are situated to the east of the eastern part of the site and include two prehistoric sites, one post medieval and an uncertain finding.
- 2.47 To the east of the site was the former Cherry Orchard Lane Brickworks. Some clay extraction for the brickworks was undertaken on the site and a part of the route of the former Butterly Building Materials railway used for this extraction is visible along the eastern boundary of the site. This railway was the last brickworks railway operating in England.
- 2.48 Historically, the rest of the land has not been dominated by one single land owner or system of management but by a large number of owners managing in different ways. This has resulted in an irregular field pattern laid down to various forms of agriculture. However, Oliver Rackham (Woods of South-East Essex) demonstrates a long history and static pattern of woodlands in the area, with the ancient New England Wood being actively coppiced over the centuries and up until the 1970's.
- 2.49 In recent years, the open land has been used for agriculture. The land to the west has been under intensive arable farming and that to the east has been grazed, most recently by horses. There was a small rifle shooting range in the eastern section until acquisition for a Country Park.

Present Land Use

- 2.50 Permission has been granted for change of use on the bulk of the site from agriculture to recreation. The site is currently managed as a Country Park, with emphasis put on its conservation status, and its opportunities for informal recreation. One part of the open land adjacent to New England Wood may remain as agricultural land, complete with all the obligations and benefits. Defra will expect the landowner to ensure that the agricultural value is not degraded but may be willing to offer some (limited) support for its management.

- 2.51 The bulk of the site is laid down to conservation grassland or left for natural regeneration to grassland. There has been extensive planting of woodland shelter belts throughout the site. A wildlife lake has been created in the central section.

Present Conservation Status

- 2.52 New England Wood is a Local Wildlife Site with District wide importance. It is an ancient woodland typical of the county except that it is a rare example of an ancient wood in a flat valley bottom, where others in the area are on ridges. The woodland is also a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat, falling within the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (UK BAP) and Ancient Woodland (Essex BAP) categories. Grove Wood is a County Wildlife Site.
- 2.53 The former agricultural land is currently of low ecological value, having only recently been abandoned as intensively cultivated or grazed farmland.

Landscape

- 2.54 The European Landscape Convention, 2000, defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. A Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared for the Country Park that describes the landscape of the site and the surrounding area (Landscape Planning Ltd. 2006). The western part of the site lies within an undulating landscape of large arable fields and a pattern of mature woodland sloping into a stream valley. It is a quiet area strongly influenced by natural landscape elements. The eastern part is significantly affected by the presence of visible and audible off-site land uses, including a road, lighting, over-head cables, housing and commercial premises.

Public Interest/Community Relations

- 2.55 A 'Friends of the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park' Group has been established with a working committee formed from volunteers. The Council conducted a public consultation exercise in 2007 with regard to the planned future expansion of the country park, 1237 replies were received of which 76% supported the initiative without reservation and only 1.75% opposed. The full results are shown in Appendix 3.

Interpretation Use/Facilities

- 2.56 There are only limited interpretation facilities at present. A site leaflet is available and there is a dedicated page on the Rochford District Council website. An on-site information board provides some explanation of the planting of the Battle of Trafalgar Memorial Oaks.

Recreational Use/Facilities

- 2.57 Recreational use of the site is unknown but is perceived to be reasonably high. The most popular recreational activities are informal e.g. dog walking; walking; fishing; riding and cycling. Facilities provided for recreation include: paths, gates, surfaced horse and cycle rides, entrance signs, information boards, life rings, litter bins and dog waste bins. Picnic benches are to be provided shortly. There is currently no car park onsite.

3 Confirmation of Features

The Site in Wider Perspective and Implications for Management

- 3.1 In managing the site, the Council has to meet all its legal obligations, especially regarding Health and Safety, both for employees and the visiting public. All work on site is covered by Codes of Practice with risk assessments carried out for each area of work. A series of checks are done, normally annually, to ensure that the Country Park is safe, including inspection of all furniture, paths, fencing and dangerous trees.
- 3.2 In developing Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, the Council recognises the significant contribution it will make to the Thames Gateway Green Grid and to the breadth of informal leisure and recreational opportunities available for the public. In the longer term, the Council is looking to further increase opportunities for informal recreation in the Upper Roach Valley by linking the Country Park with Hockley Woods to the north.
- 3.3 The site lies along the district boundary with Southend-on-Sea and the current use is primary from this neighbouring Borough (from the community of Eastwood). This is partly a result of the location of the current access points. With the acquisition of the land towards the east, there is the potential to provide access from Rochford itself and for the motor car.

Provisional Important List of Features

Evaluation for Nature Conservation

Size

- 3.4 The Country Park covers an area of 83.77 ha (plus land in Grove Wood). This can be broken down by habitat:

Ancient Woodland	3.92 ha
Mature Woodland	(Min 4.4 ha; max 16.6 ha – Grove Wood)
Young plantation	30.81 ha
Open grassland	47.75 ha
Hedge/Ditch	6.1 Km
Open water	1.29 ha
River margins	2.5 Km

Diversity

- 3.5 There are three diverse habitats, grassland, woodland and water. A part the woodland is mature but all the other habitats are newly formed. Species are colonising these habitats; either naturally or by introduction. The ecological diversity is therefore in flux for the time being.

Naturalness

- 3.6 The habitat is not natural. New England Wood is ancient woodland but has been the subject of active management for coppice over a very long period. There are some remnant hedge banks and ditches that may be ancient but again they have been actively managed. The riverine habitat has been significantly modified by drainage and engineering works, partly associated with the sewerage works outfall, and all other habitats have been created since 2001.

Rarity

- 3.7 There are no rare habitats on site. County BAP habitats including ancient woodland. County BAP species including Bullfinch, Dunnock, Green Woodpecker, House Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Skylark, Song Thrush, Starling, Yellowhammer, Brown-banded carder bee, Shrill carder bee and great-crested newt. Protected species including badger, water vole, adder, great-crested newt and bats.

Fragility

- 3.8 Overall, the site is fairly robust and can easily accommodate the current visitor numbers. The new woodland plantations will be at risk from vandalism in their early years. The principle water body is artificial and will be at risk of both drying out and silting up. The river banks are susceptible to erosion during flood conditions or where there is poaching of the ground (from livestock or people). The most important habitat is the grassland and it is crucial that the mowing regimes are suitable to achieve the desired sward conditions. Grasslands can quickly deteriorate, especially by scrubbing over if they are under-mown for more than a few years.

Typicalness

- 3.9 The site reflects a common pattern of rural land use in Essex – pastoral, agricultural and woodland management.

Recorded History

- 3.10 Management records are good since the land was purchased (2002 for phase 1; 2009 for phase 2) and kept on file. Little is known about the management of the land prior to purchase except for basic details of grazing and cultivation by the previous agricultural tenant. There are no records for New England Wood.

Evaluation for Landscape

- 3.11 The extent and quality of the landscape in and around the Country Park is recognised in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan (2006), as it is designated as a Special Landscape Area (Policy NR1). In the plan it is stated that such areas are of great landscape value resulting from a combination of features such as vegetation cover and landform. Their conservation is important to the district as well as the county's natural heritage and there is a presumption against development unless it accords with the character of the area concerned.

- 3.12 A site-specific Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken by Landscape Planning Ltd. in December 2006 to support the extension of the Country Park. Though it concentrated upon the land to be acquired it gives a good insight into the whole of the site.

Eastern Section

- 3.13 The eastern section is affected significantly by off-site land uses which are visible and audible; including the road, lighting, housing and commercial premises (including the brickworks). Overhead power wires cross the site and are clearly visible. It does not have a strong sense of place. There are four recorded archaeological sites (prehistoric and medieval) in this section. The area is generally flat and was formally under rough grazing. Ground levels are uneven, mainly the result of past mineral workings for the Cherry Orchard Lane Brickworks. Towards the centre of this section there is an excavated area, once used as a shooting range. The area has a transient feel to it. This section is currently defined by the proximity of the surrounding land uses. It has an urban fringe feel. The principle influences on the landscape character are the undefined uses of the area, the unmanaged yet unnatural appearance, the strong human influences and the views out into the built environment.

Central section

- 3.14 The central section includes the original land purchase. The former agricultural land has been replaced by areas new native woodland, grassland managed for ecological diversity and a newly created lake. It lays either side of Blatches Farm, which is a collection of residential and farm buildings in private ownership.

Western Section

- 3.15 The western section of the site lies within an undulating landscape of large arable fields and a pattern of mature woodland sloping into a stream valley. It is a quiet area and whilst managed, is strongly influenced by natural landscape elements. The site is a large flat area formerly under arable crops, edged by trees, with mature ancient woodland. This area has few landscape elements. The association of the site with the river, woodland, topography and adjacent fields play a principle influence in defining landscape character and provides an important setting to the area. This section has a calm, established and managed feel. Human activity is generally not audible and the influence of the native vegetation is very strong.

Evaluation for Public Use/Access

- 3.16 The lack of a major area in the countryside open for unrestricted access in the area to the north of Southend is recognized in the Replacement Structure Plan and in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan (2006). The provision of a new Country Park is to provide an accessible and strategically important informal recreational resource (Policy LT3).

- 3.17 The Country Park may be reached via the public footpath network from: Gusted Hall Lane, Hawkwell; Hockley Woods, Hockley; Cherry Orchard Way (B1013), Rochford; and Blatches Chase, Leigh-on-Sea. There are some bus networks that pass the public footpaths running into the Country Park. Regional initiatives will generate new networks (such as the Thames Gateway Greengrid Strategy⁵).
- 3.18 There is a mixture of hard surfaces and wide mown pathways through the woodland to encourage people to use the space. An extensive bridleway has been created for horse riders to provide a safe route through the Country Park, taking the horses off the road for a time. The bridleway joins to Main Road, Hawkwell by the astronomy centre.

Access Issues

- 3.19 There is currently no onsite car parking facility for the Country Park – the nearest car park is in Edwards Hall Park, Bosworth Road, which is open during park opening hours. There are no reliable data on visitor use of the site.

Evaluation for Education

- 3.20 There is currently no education programme in operation on the site though it is used for scouting and guiding activities; and informally by a range of schools. Its proximity to schools and other venues offers a significant potential to the educational sector. Even with limited resources, an effective programme can be developed, provided that the education sector is a willing partner.

Evaluation for Interpretation

- 3.21 There is currently only very limited site interpretation, either on-site or remotely. There are a few sign boards, a basic leaflet and a simple web-page. The diversity of the site's landscape setting lends itself to an interpretative story, with the undeveloped rural land to the west and the industrial history to the west. The proximity to the urban fringe present a significant opportunity to present information to a population often cut off from the natural world. But there would have to be a significant investment in resources for the site's interpretation to be effective.

Confirmed List of Important Features

Public Right of Way network
Essex BAP habitats and species
Ancient woodland
Open water and river banks
Open grassland
Value of the site for informal recreation
Area of peace and tranquillity
Ancient and industrial archaeology

⁵ The Greengrid Strategy is promoted by the Greengrid Partnership and funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Plan put forward in 2003 for delivering growth in the Thames Gateway.

4 Factors which Influence the Features

Internal Natural Factors

- 4.1 Natural succession is the most important process affecting the Country Park and one that needs constant management. Without active management, the grassland will quickly revert to scrub and eventually woodland. A number of the access points/routes are bounded by hedgerows. Without regular management, these quickly become overgrown and both physically impede access and reduce evaporation, so allowing surfaces to become waterlogged.
- 4.2 Mature trees in the Ancient Woodland (Unit 6) may drop limbs as water levels change or during stormy conditions. This is a potential hazard to park users and regular inspection by an arboriculturist is required.
- 4.3 Several plants and animals found in the Country Park can have a significant influence, especially if they occur in large numbers. The Country Park is an ideal habitat for rabbits though they are not present in large numbers at the moment. Grazing by rabbits brings the benefit of close cropped turf adjacent to scrub. A problem can occur if the numbers increase to such that they overgraze plants and damage tree bark. There is a deer herd within the region that can move freely through the park. All newly planted trees are guarded against potential deer damage though there is no evidence of such damage on site.
- 4.4 There are five injurious weeds which are classified under The Weeds Act 1959. These are:
- common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*);
 - spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*);
 - creeping thistle (*Cirsium avense*);
 - broadleaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*); and
 - curled dock (*Rumex crispus*).

Ragwort and dock is found throughout the site (except compartment 6); spear thistle is found in compartment 5. The Council is required to ensure that these plants do not spread onto agricultural land or become mixed with animal fodder.

Internal Man Induced Factors

- 4.5 The Council has chosen to enter into a Countryside Stewardship Agreement (CSA) and Woodland Grant Schemes (WGS). There is a need to ensure that the contractual prescriptions are met. This requires regular contact with the Forestry Commission and Natural England. The CSA requires active management to achieve and maintain an area of neutral grassland with good hedgerows suitable for wildlife and well-maintained rights of way free of obstruction. The WGS requires the planting and maintenance of seed sourced native broadleaf trees with a scrub understory with unfettered public access to the new woodland. The public are to be given information about the schemes.

- 4.6 Visitor pressure has the potential to disturb wildlife and cause erosion. In practice, the majority of visitors keep to the maintained path network in the Country Park, which generally avoids areas sensitive to wildlife.
- 4.7 Creation of lake and its intake/outtake. Management implications for land, water and stream.

Factors Arising from Legislation

Highways Acts

- 4.8 Highways include byways, bridleways and footpaths. These are rights of way; people have the right to pass and re-pass along them without obstruction or hindrance, even where they pass over 'private' land. There are some rights of way on the land. The maintenance of a right of way is generally the responsibility of the Highway Authority (Essex County Council) (Highways Act 1980 s41&130⁶). The surface of the right of way belongs to the Highway Authority but the sub-soil belongs to the adjoining landowners (Highways Act 1980 s263).
- 4.9 The landowner cannot do anything to restrict the use and enjoyment of the right of way without the permission of the Highway Authority. Site management actions and visitor events must take this into consideration.

Wildlife Acts

- 4.10 There are a number of Acts protecting wildlife in general and species in particular. Several protected species occur in the Country Park including adder, badger, water vole and bats. Water voles are found nearby and may colonise the site. Their requirements need to be considered and the necessary licences obtained before management work is carried out.

Water Acts

- 4.11 The Environment Agency is responsible for flood protection, water quality and fisheries. Their consent is required to extract water from the river into the lake and discharge the overflow back into the river.

Reservoirs Act 1975

- 4.12 A lake has been created in compartment 4 and it is estimated that it is comprised of 27,000 cubic metres of water. Such a body of water may be classed as a "raised reservoir" under the Reservoirs Act 1975 if it is capable of holding water above the natural level of any part of the adjoining land. The land to the east slopes away from the 'dam' of the lake and it is likely that the lake is a reservoir as defined by the Act.

⁶ This is dependent on when and how the right of way was created. Some routes created before 1949 and some dedicated by the landowner since 1949 are not maintainable at public expense.

4.13 In addition, the Act defines a “large raised reservoir” as one capable of holding more than 25,000 cubic metres of water above the adjoining land. The lake may hold 27,000 cubic metres of water but surveys have not yet shown what volume is held above the adjoining land. If the lake is a large raised reservoir, then it must be regularly inspected by an independent civil engineer. The first inspection must be within two years of construction and thereafter the inspections must be within ten years.

Planning Acts

4.14 Much of the open land was formally in agricultural use. A change of use to a Country Park is held to be a ‘material change of use’ under the planning acts and so requires planning permission. Permission has been granted for the bulk of the land but one area adjacent to New England Wood is not shown on the permissions granted. It may still be agricultural land, complete with all the obligations to manage it as such. Country Park activities that require access onto this land will each need approval unless the 28 day rule applies (14 days if it is vehicular related). This means that a notice board or structure could only be placed, or a non-agricultural activity undertaken, on the land without permission for 28 days in any year.

Owner Objectives

4.15 The Replacement Local Plan (2006) commits Rochford District Council to the provision of Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park to provide an accessible and strategically important informal recreational resource. As discussed in the introduction, the Council agreed its objectives for creating the Country Park in 2000 and published its Open Spaces Strategy in 2009, in which the vision for the park is set out. The identified objectives are to:

- Provide access to the whole of the site for all sections of the community but especially for those groups with access ability issues;
- Retain the open space and natural contour of the land;
- Remove the intensive agriculture from the valley; and
- Increase the ecological importance and biodiversity of the site in a managed way.

Physical Constraints/Considerations

4.16 Vehicle access in the Country Park can be difficult. In general, the park is very dry during the summer months with access to all areas but in the winter access is restricted to the main tracks to avoid rutted the ground.

4.17 Some access routes are poorly surfaced and drained, which impedes access by visitors and staff.

Available Resources

4.18 Some resources have been made available but these are limited. In the absence of an approved management plan, long term planning has not been possible. The stated aspirations for the site are beyond the current resources. Given the current public sector financial position, there is likely to be a period of budget restraint or even cuts. This is at a time when the site needs capital investment.

- 4.19 There may be opportunities to link into regional initiatives, such as the Thames Gateway (perhaps linked to the Greengrid Strategy⁷ or the Stonebridge Park vision, a sub regional park in the Terry Farrell Parklands Vision⁸).
- 4.20 In the current economic climate, new grants from either of the two main sources (Defra and Natural England) are unlikely. Natural England is the normal partner in the development of a Country Park and will offer assistance but the majority of its grant aid streams are currently closed to new applications. Some additional national funds may be available through the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, England Woodlands Grant Scheme and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It may still be possible to extend the existing Countryside Stewardship Schemes.
- 4.21 It may be possible to access the Rural Development Programme for England funding, known as LEADER. LEADER is aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. It is a bottom-up method of delivering support for rural development through implementing a local rural development strategy. Support is aimed primarily at Local Action Groups; community driven projects implemented within local strategies that show an element of originality or experimentation and complement other activities.
- 4.22 Volunteers and charitable bodies working in partnership with the Council may be able to access small pockets of grant aid. Sources of funding vary over time and the opportunity should be taken to monitor the online reference pages⁹.

Environmental and Other Relationships which may Influence the Features

- 4.23 The broad prediction for climate change effects are warmer, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters. The river valley may become more prone to flooding in the winter and early spring. This may cause increased erosion to the bank with the potential to harm the biodiversity value; or it may increase the range of habitat types by creating additional wetlands. Care will have to be taken in placing structures at risk from flooding on the land.
- 4.24 Given the current difficulties of access in winter, strategies to either improve the access infrastructure (subject to resources being available) or negate its need during wet periods will have to be considered.

⁷ The Greengrid Strategy is promoted by the Greengrid Partnership and funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Plan put forward in 2003 for delivering growth in the Thames Gateway.

⁸ Catherine Bickmore Associates, Southend-on-Sea: proposed countryside access scoping study, for the Land Restoration Trust Renaissance Southend Ltd July 2009.

⁹ Natural England suggest www.grantsonline.org.uk/

Summary of Factors which Influence or may Influence the Features in General

Public Right of Way network
Essex BAP habitats and species
Natural succession
Ground conditions in winter
Policy obligations
Legislative obligations
Contractual obligations
Financial support and resources

5 Prescriptive Plan

Country Park Vision

5.1 The Country Park will provide for visitors of all ages, abilities and interests the Cherry Orchard Countryside Experience. Everyone will be able to see and be involved in what the living countryside is all about. This will be a living, sustainable and accessible landscape where wildlife, recreation and agriculture can all flourish.

Country Park Aims and Objectives

5.2 To work towards the vision, the following aims and objectives will be met:

Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park aims and objectives	
Aims	Objectives
1 To provide a welcoming, safe and accessible site for all.	1.1 That sufficient clear signage to inform the visitor is provided on site and from existing right of way networks.
	1.2 That welcome and entrance areas are improved, to include access from Cherry Orchard Way link road and onsite car parking (which does not dominate the Country Park).
	1.3 That statutory Health and Safety obligations are met.
	1.4 That regular safety checks of site resources and equipment are undertaken.
	1.5 That the site is attractive and accessible to all.
2 To provide clean and well maintained facilities that enhances the visitors' experience.	2.1 That the site is kept clean and tidy.
	2.2 That a maintenance schedule for buildings and equipment is created and used.
3 To manage the Country Park in a sustainable manner for informal recreation.	3.1 That prominent views within and from the Country Park are maintained.
	3.2 That sustainable methods of design and management have been employed.

Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park aims and objectives		
Aims	Objectives	
	3.3	That different areas are provided for a range of recreation activities.
	3.4	That the rights of way and permissive network within the Country Park is maintained.
4	To provide opportunities for community involvement in the Country Park.	<p>4.1 That the community is consulted and feedback sought regarding the Country Park.</p> <p>4.2 That, opportunities are provided for local community participation in the Country Park.</p> <p>4.3 That the Country Park is promoted locally.</p>
5	To deliver education and event programmes to raise awareness about the Country Park and environmental issues.	<p>5.1 That educational facilities are developed and used in conjunction with the Education Authority.</p> <p>5.2 That links with local youth groups are developed and encouraged.</p> <p>5.3 That an events programme with activities and organised walks is provided.</p> <p>5.4 That a 'traditional' orchard celebrating the late 19th C/early 20th C period (when fruit production in the Rochford area was at its peak) be created.</p>
6	To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the Country Park.	<p>6.1 That a diverse mixture of habitats is created and maintained in a favourable condition for wildlife.</p> <p>6.2 That best practice land management techniques for wildlife are used wherever possible.</p> <p>6.3 That Biodiversity Action Plans are followed.</p> <p>6.4 That the species distribution and abundance within the Country Park is monitored and recorded.</p> <p>6.5 That habitat links with the wider landscape are maintained and encouraged.</p>
7	To promote the health benefits of using the Country Park as well as the surrounding countryside.	<p>7.1 That walking, riding and cycling in and from the Country Park is encouraged.</p> <p>7.2 That a series of self-guided trails of varying lengths as part of a network in the broader area is provided.</p> <p>7.3 That the use of the local footpath and bridleway network is encouraged</p>
8	To provide information about the Country Park for the visitor	<p>8.1 That the Country Park is promoted locally.</p> <p>8.2 That an environmentally sustainable information/reception building is created.</p> <p>8.3 That visitors are provided with relevant information leaflets.</p> <p>8.4 That information about the Country Park is provided through the media, internet and written articles.</p> <p>8.5 That an interpretive strategy for the Country Park is prepared and reviewed.</p>

Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park aims and objectives

Aims		Objectives	
9	To implement effective management strategies.	9.1	That an interpretive strategy for the Country Park is prepared and reviewed.
		9.2	That feedback is sought and used in the Country Park management plan.
		9.3	That the management plan used as a working document.

Country Park Five Year Action Plan – 2011 to 2016

5.3 The next five years will see the continuing development of the Country Park on the outskirts of Rochford. The aspirations for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park are discussed below and refined in the light of the current understanding of the site’s condition. A series of proposals are then presented for each compartment. The aims and objectives are supported by a series of actions intended to achieve the proposals (set out in Appendix 1).

General Actions

Aspirations

5.4 The Council wishes create a Country Park and provide access to the whole of the site for all sections of the community but especially for those with access ability issues. The intent is to retain the open space and natural contour of the land but remove the intensive agriculture from the valley. There is a desire to increase the ecological importance and biodiversity of the site in a managed way.

5.5 During the acquisition phase a number of specific amenities were identified as useful elements in the Country Park. These included an increase in woodland, wetland and water cover; and car parking either in the site or immediately adjacent to its boundary. There is an ambition to develop the access links into the wider countryside and the surrounding communities, especially within Rochford District. Some specific schemes were suggested that include the creation of a lake, the planting of specimen trees and the development of an orchard or arboretum. Buildings are required to service the needs of the visitors and site staff. The need for an information centre, workshop and toilets has been anticipated in forward budget plans.

Commentary on aspirations

5.6 The aspirations must now be modified to fit in more closely to the needs of local residents during a period of budgetary constraint. Since the year 2000, when the project was first discussed, a number of actions have been taken. There has been significant tree planting and the reversion of arable land into conservation / amenity grassland. A lake has been excavated and a number of specimen trees and a memorial avenue planted. The opportunity has also been taken to survey the land and review its contribution to the region. The landscape assessment and ecological surveys enable decision making to be built upon sound foundations.

- 5.7 The landscape character of the valley is an important part of the region's heritage. All actions should strengthen this character and not detract from it. Some of the aspirations have the ability to harm the landscape character, as discussed in the sections that follow. The need to improve access to and within the site is clearly proven. The wish to add facilities and feature has not been born out of any proven need. The desired schemes need testing.
- 5.8 The aspiration to increase wetland areas needs to be approached with caution for three reasons. Firstly, wetland areas are not a feature of this medieval landscape. Its introduction could detract from the landscape character and, not being a natural element, prove costly to build and maintain. Secondly, such a construction could significantly upset the ecological balance of the river with its potential to support the otter and vole. Thirdly, a lake has already been constructed in an area where it would not naturally form. Over time it is very likely to revert to a wetland area.

Opportunities

- 5.9 The site is owned by the Council without any constraint. The site is close to a large local population who will clearly benefit from access to open land. The surrounding area is well served by the rights of way network. There could be opportunities arising from the redevelopment of the London Southend Airport, the Stonebridge Park vision and the site lies within the Thames Gateway 'Greengrid' area
- 5.10 An option to address the desire to increase the ecological importance and biodiversity of the site is to manage the Country Park as a wildlife receptor site. This would need the agreement of English Nature. There is a presumption in law that protected species will not be disturbed when development is proposed. On occasion, English Nature will determine that there is an 'imperative reason of overriding public interest' to allow a protected site to be damaged¹⁰. In such circumstances, mitigating action must be taken to aid the protected species and one option is to move them to a new and safe (in the long term) site. The habitat must be established before such agreements will be contemplated but the opportunity exists to create new habitats for some protected species in the Country Park. The process requires a detailed written mitigation strategy for the safeguard of protected species to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval who may grant accredited status to receive native protected species.

Constraints

- 5.11 The site is a wonderful, tranquil open valley framed, in the main, with ancient woodlands and hedgerows, apart from at its eastern end where the suburban backdrop dominates. The medieval layout of the land is still visible and should not be lost. The importance of the landscape is recognised in policy documents. The valley is prone to flooding and there is a presumption against development in such areas. The river has significant ecological potential and this will limit the use of its water and bank-side features. Vehicular access to the site is very difficult being constrained either by existing development or by heavy traffic.

¹⁰ See the Habitats Regulations.

5.12 The Council has entered into formal agreements with Defra, Natural England and the Forestry Commission. Those agreements have obligations attached.

Proposals

Detailed proposals are set out in the compartment sections that follow but some general positions are established here:

- The contractual obligations of the Woodland Grant Schemes and Countryside Stewardship Agreement will be met. However, all tree planting scheme layouts will build on the medieval land patterns, not detract from them.
- Facilities for the public will only be introduced if they are a safety requirement or the need is established through local consultation. Information and interpretation for the site will be developed in a strategic and coordinated manner. Way marking (both on and off the site) and entrance signing will be carefully planned to enhance the environment as well as inform the public. A proliferation of signing will be avoided.
- The site will be managed in accordance with the principles of sustainability in accordance with BS8555. External accreditation will be considered in order to guide management actions¹¹.
- Car-parking will be provided to enhance access from both the east and west of the site. But the intent is to encourage access via the rights of way network or public transport.
- The opportunities to develop partnerships associated with the site will be explored and supported. This will include links with the local community, its clubs, societies and schools. The Council will endeavour to support other agencies and councils in achieving their targets provided that a benefit to the Country Park accrues.
- Volunteering opportunities on the site will be developed and supported to ensure that local stakeholders feel able to contribute and 'own' the site.

Compartment 1

5.13 'Brickearth Fields' is the most easterly section of the site, fronted by Cherry Orchard Way and formerly a mineral working site.

¹¹ BS 8555 is the UKAS accredited Acorn Scheme for the phased implementation of an Environmental Management System. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment is the professional membership body for promoting best practice standards in environmental management, auditing and assessment for all industry sectors.

Aspirations

- 5.14 The wish is to restore the rural character to this area but also to create a 'country park gateway' for the residents of Rochford. This compartment has been earmarked for the development of a car-park and visitor facilities, which might include a children's playground. The electricity cables and poles are to be removed by EDF, as the power lines no longer carry electricity. This work is planned to be carried out in 2011.

Opportunities

- 5.15 The landscape character assessment states that this compartment has the least sense of place and the most urban feel. Management actions are less constrained by the need to preserve tranquillity and rural character. The site has had an interesting industrial history and is close to centres of business enterprise. Developments of neighbouring land may provide knock-on benefits to the Country Park.
- 5.16 This compartment is the most suited for siting buildings. It has the least valuable landscape character and is close to the road network and centres of population. An education centre, cafe, toilet block and/or an events area could be constructed; there may be an opportunity to use the old shooting range for some form of adventure activity, such as archery.
- 5.17 An educational or historical orchard/arboretum could be planted in this compartment without harming the medieval character of the wider landscape. The design and makeup of any orchard should take clues not only from the cultivars that were once grown in the District but also other aspects of former orchards of the area. New planting should be consistent with 'traditional' orchards of late 19th C/early 20th C; a period when Rochford had a history of top fruit production.
- 5.18 There is an opportunity to develop interpretation on the ancient and industrial archaeology present on/under/adjacent to the site.
- 5.19 The compartment lies within the Thames Gateway Green Grid and its restoration will support the economic regeneration initiatives that surround it.
- 5.20 There are plans, as part of the expansion of Southend Airport, to form a new roundabout in Cherry Orchard Way, creating access to the Country Park and to a new commercial zone (this is likely to be started in 2012).

Constraints

- 5.21 There are Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the site which must be preserved. This limits some management actions. Similarly, power cables pass over the land that must remain accessible to the utilities company and in a safe condition though it is understood that these lines are redundant and will be removed by the utility company.
- 5.22 Current visitor use of the site is low, as the area has been in private use until recently. Investment in formal facilities for the public is expensive and must be justified before commitments are made. Some facilities can attract the public and generate an income, such as a cafe and sales outlet; or are valued by the public, such as toilet facilities. Others may be seen as a luxury at a time of budget restraint, such as a visitor centre. A

cafe or shop will ensure that staff or contractors are on site and able to monitor public use around them. Care will be needed to undertake development at an appropriate and acceptable scale. Multi-use facilities are likely to give the best value for public funds, especially if private investment can also be attracted.

- 5.23 Vehicular access is very poor. Cherry Orchard Way is a busy road and the Highway Authority will impose a high standard of design for an improved access and egress. **(Note the action reported in paragraph 5.20)**
- 5.24 The compartment suffers from typical urban fringe issues. The views out are not the most conducive for a rural experience. Many buildings are visible during the day and there are lights at night. The roads are busy and noisy. The compartment has also recently suffered from vandalism and fly-tipping. This adds to the problems of clearing the materials abandoned by previous occupiers.
- 5.25 There is an indication that badgers are active in this compartment. They are a protected species.

Proposals

- Abandoned materials will be removed from the site. The new plantations will be maintained as specified in the agreements.
- Access for a car-park (possibly temporary) will be sought. This will require the construction of new access routes for pedestrians and service vehicles into the Country Park.
- Opportunities to secure a new permanent vehicular access to the Country Park from the Cherry Orchard Way as a part of other development will be explored.
- Hard-standing, suitable for vehicles, will be constructed on the site, complete with landscaping, to allow vegetation to mature before the facility is in use.
- Opportunities to re-open the old railway tunnel under B1013 for pedestrian access will be explored.
- If the need is proven, a cafe and toilet block will be constructed. The building will be designed to provide information and interpretation of the site within the entrances to, and on the walls of, the cafe. A trading pitch will be established to gauge commercial interest.
- An adventure play-ground for youth and a trim-trail for adults will be constructed; their design will reflect the history and interest on the site. Other adventure sports, such as archery, will be examined.
- An events area will be laid out close to vehicular access points.
- Staff facilities will be constructed, to include a small public reception desk and display area. If temporary buildings are available, one will be placed sensitively on the site so as not to detract from current initiatives to improve the ambiance and setting of the Country Park, for staff to meet visitors and store materials.

- An historic arboretum strategy will be prepared and costed.
- Support application from EPN to remove redundant cables and posts.

Compartment 2

5.26 'Trafalgar Fields' is a large open compartment with established plantations and newly planted specimen trees. A large housing estate lies to its south and the area is well used by the public.

Aspirations

5.27 This compartment is to become an area of parkland and meadow. An Oak Avenue is to commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar and specimen trees are to form the parkland. Black Poplar and other species are to reflect the ecology of the region. This large informal recreation area is to be framed with new woodland to screen off the built development but maintain the rural views to the north.

Opportunities

5.28 The site is ideal for informal recreation with meadows to wander over and a river side walk. The open land can be developed for events, some vehicular access is possible. The plantations will eventually enable the development of woodland glades and shaded picnic sites. A main pedestrian access point can be developed on the southern boundary, complete with an interpretation area.

Constraints

5.29 There are private properties up against the boundary and some of those properties own access through a part of the site. The area has an 'urban-fringe' feel to the south and there is fly-tipping. There has been some 'odd' tree planting in the compartment that will look out of place in the years to come.

Proposals

- The contractual obligations of the Woodland Grant Schemes and Countryside Stewardship Agreement will be met.
- The entrance to the Oak Avenue will be upgrade to reflect the creation of the new Country Park. Interpretation and way-marking will be brought up to date and displayed in a style created for the Country Park.
- An informal events arena will be designed close to the vehicular access points.

Compartment 3

5.30 'Plantations' is being developed as a woodland glade area and is the link between the more urban eastern section and the tranquil and rural western section of the Country Park.

Aspirations

5.31 The intent is to develop a series of woodland glades and a network of access routes.

Opportunities

5.32 There are well established plantations and laid out tracks.

Constraints

5.33 The Woodland Grant Scheme obligations determine the management regime. The plantations have to be protected from 'predators' such as deer and vandals. There is a requirement to maintain deer fencing around each woodland. There are private access routes across the compartment that must be kept free.

Proposals

Meet the contractual obligations of the Woodland Grant Schemes.

Compartment 4

5.34 'Lake Fields' has been in the Council's ownership for some time. It is an area of gently sloping open grassland with a dense woodland backdrop to the south and open rural views to the north.

Aspirations

5.35 The area is to be developed as a meadow for informal recreation with a wildlife lake as the focal point.

Opportunities

5.36 The site is very tranquil and feels remote, despite being close houses in the south. It lends itself to be a meadow picnic land. An interesting riverside walk can be developed and there are good links into The Scrubs and on to Hockley Woods.

Constraints

5.37 The lake is artificial and may be classed as a raised reservoir. If it is, then there is a regulatory regime that must be followed. In any case, an area of deep water has been created and the public invited to enjoy it; there are management obligations associated with safety. The lake can only be maintained by active management; water is taken from the river by licence; and water flows back into the river by licence. The licences do not allow water to flow in the summer. There is a danger that evaporation and low turbidity will lead to a lack of oxygen in the water warm weather, leading to fish deaths. Slow water flow may also encourage the deposition of sediments. Without regular clearing, the lake will slowly silt up. Clearing will disturb the establishment of water plant life.

5.38 Southend Airport lies to the east of the Country Park and care must be taken not to increase the risk of bird-strikes within the runway approach flight path. This will need to be monitored.

5.39 Though access to the site is good it is a little remote. This restricts the ability for people to bring items with them.

Proposals

- Develop the section as a quiet picnic area.
- The status of the lake will be agreed and, if required, the statutory inspection regime introduced. Strategies will be developed to maintain the quality of the water during warm periods¹².
- The deposition of sediment into the lake will be monitored. The opportunity may be taken to allow a part of the lake to become a wildlife wetland.
- Drainage dyke to be fenced to prevent disturbance by dogs and encourage colonisation by water voles.
- Clear brambles from river banks to encourage colonisation by water voles.

Compartment 5

5.40 'Arable Lands' has only recently been acquired and still clearly shows its recent arable past. The site is very remote and tranquil with woodland to the south and west. The views to the north are of rolling arable land and woodland blocks seen over the river. There is evidence of impeded drainage along the northern boundary.

Aspirations

5.41 The compartment is to be converted into a flower rich meadow and there is a desire to create an extensive marsh land along its northern boundary. There has been some woodland planting. The original intent had been to graze the land but this has not been pursued.

Opportunities

5.42 A traditional medieval landscape can be restored with meadowland and hedge and ditch management. The nature conservation potential is high, not only for wildflowers but also for river bank life, such as water vole. Provided the issue of impeded drainage is addressed, a high quality riverside walk can be created. Alternatively, the drainage issue can be exacerbated and a new marshland habitat formed; this would exclude the public from the river bank. The footpath links are good to the site. There are opportunities to improve access for pedestrians, horses and cycles. There may be opportunities to secure a Countryside Stewardship Scheme Agreement on the land.

¹² The local Fire Brigade may welcome the opportunity to train with their pumps which, as a by-product, has the effect of adding oxygen into still water

Constraints

- 5.43 The landscape character assessment suggests that this section is of high landscape value and care should be taken not to degrade the sense of place. Artificial features will look out of place in this compartment. The ecological surveys suggest that management actions may be constrained by nature conservation opportunities. The site is of potential value to water vole, otter and badger; all protected species.
- 5.44 The area is remote and access is poor for vehicles. The ground is wet in places and easily damaged by the passage of vehicles (it is this characteristic that suggests the development of a marsh area). There is vehicle access to the site and the neighbouring farmer may have a right to bring vehicles (including large agricultural vehicles) across the land. If a marshland habitat is to be created then strategies must be put in place to enable vehicle maintenance access to the river and its embankments.
- 5.45 It is possible that a part of the site does not enjoy the benefit of planning permission for recreational use. This limits the use of that land to 28 days for recreational activities, other than informal walking.

Proposals

- Meet the contractual obligations of the Woodland Grant Scheme and explore the opportunities for further grant support to create the wildflower meadow.
- Introduce measures to remove fertility from the land so as to encourage wild flowers to establish. A hay cut in late June/early July can support this, provided no fertilizers are added to the land. The option of reseedling the land will be considered in later years if arable species persist.
- The river side bank will be managed so as to maximize the opportunities for water voles to colonize the area. There will be no attempt to create an artificial wetland area but vehicle routes will be moved away from the northern boundary. That part of the site will not be drained.
- The hedgerow and ditch to the north of the site will be managed in order to restore its integrity and wildlife value. Opportunities will be taken to gain the space to allow horses to pass, even if this means reducing the size of the woodland plantation.
- A permissive bridleway route will be created to link to Gusted Hall and potentially Hockley Woods.
- Consider the enhancement of access from Edwards Hall Park in consultation with Southend Borough Council together with a permissive route from Blatches Farm to New England Wood.
- There is an opportunity to re-route the section of Public Footpath No. 30 (Rochford Parish) that passes through Flemming's Farm with a contribution from the land owner, into the Country Park.

Compartment 6

- 5.46 'New England Wood' is isolated and tranquil ancient woodland of oak standards over ash and hornbeam coppice with a high ecological value. But the woodland is becoming derelict and its value is diminishing.

Aspirations

- 5.47 To restore the woodland into a traditional management regime that includes a coppice rotation but increase public access (on foot and horse) through the compartment into neighbouring woods.

Opportunities

- 5.48 The restoration of medieval woodland practices. This will ensure the long-term survival of the tree species and the creation of a vibrant ground flora habitat. There is also the opportunity to introduce a timber and coppice industry. Access through the wood can be improved with horse and pedestrian links. By passing westward through Grove Woods it is possible to reach Connaught Road, where a car park is planned for construction in 2010/11.

Constraints

- 5.49 The land has a very high nature conservation value and disturbance should be avoided. The land is wet, which makes it susceptible to damage by trampling, whether by people or horses. There is the danger of over-use by horses because of the location of stables on neighbouring land.
- 5.50 Traditional woodland management is not always understood by the general public. Coppicing, in particular, can look dramatic in its early years. Good coppice management requires a wood to be divided into compartments that are cut on a rotation to match the cycle of the timber species (in this case a 20 year rotation). This means that there will always be an area of woodland either being, or recently, cleared. In addition, if timber is cut, there will need to be a means of extracting it from the site. Given that the land is wet in and around the site, the potential for damage is high.
- 5.51 If a commercially viable operation is to be introduced there will be the need to manage a range of woods in combination as there would need to be an equal area of coppice available each year, on a 20 year rotation. New England Wood is too small to be split into 20 commercially viable compartments.
- 5.52 To the west of the wood is a sewage farm. This may detract from the recreational experience.

Proposals

- A woodland management plan will be drawn up to reintroduce coppicing. Opportunities to employ local craftsmen or train people in traditional skills will be explored. The possibility of securing the UK woodland assurance standard accreditation will be explored¹³.
- Interpretative material will be developed to explain the coppicing cycle.
- A raised permissive route will be constructed through the site to allow access for pedestrians and horses.
- The river side bank will be managed so as to maximize the opportunities for water voles to colonize the area.

Compartment 7

5.53 'Grove Wood' is an attractive and well used block of woodland lying between New England Wood and the Connaught Road access. Though not ancient woodland the site is listed as a County Wildlife Site.

Aspirations

5.54 To increase public access (on foot and horse) through the compartment into the Country Park and restore the woodland into a traditional management regime that includes a coppice rotation.

Opportunities

5.55 The compartment's western boundary is Connaught Road, where a car park is planned for construction in 2011/12. Access through the wood can be improved with horse and pedestrian links. The restoration of medieval woodland practices. This will ensure the long-term survival of the tree species and the creation of a vibrant ground flora habitat. There is also the opportunity to introduce a timber and coppice industry. There is an opportunity to improve access through Rawreth Hall Woods to Hockley Woods.

Constraints

- 5.56 Part of the woods is owned by the council, other sections are either not registered or are owned by neighbouring landowners.
- 5.57 The land is wet, which makes it susceptible to damage by trampling, whether by people or horses.

¹³ The UK Woodland Assurance Standard is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable woodland management in the United Kingdom - www.ukwas.org.uk/

- 5.58 Traditional woodland management is not always understood by the general public. Coppicing, in particular, can look dramatic in its early years. Good coppice management requires a wood to be divided into compartments that are cut on a rotation to match the cycle of the timber species (in this case a 20 year rotation). This means that there will always be an area of woodland either being, or recently, cleared. In addition, if timber is cut, there will need to be a means of extracting it from the site. Given that the land is wet in and around the site, the potential for damage is high.
- 5.59 If a commercially viable operation is to be introduced there will be the need to manage a range of woods in combination as there would need to be an equal area of coppice available each year, on a 20 year rotation.
- 5.60 To the north of the wood is a sewage farm. This may detract from the recreational experience.

Proposals

- Consider the option to seek ownership of whole site through negotiation, land purchase or CPO.
- Development of bridle route and surfaced footpath linking car park in
- Grove Road recreation ground to Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- A car park will be constructed in Connaught Road.
- Upgrading and fencing of Grove Road recreation ground play facilities.
- The route to Hockley Woods will be improved. Consideration will be given to gaining an interest in Rawrath Hall Woods.
- To protect the perimeter of Grove Woods where it abuts Grove Road and Connaught Road.

Progress up to 2011

- 5.61 **This is the first management plan for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. There is nothing to report. In future revisions of the plan this section will be used to report on the implementation of the published action plan.**

Country Park – Finances

- 5.62 On the 25 January 2011, the Council agreed that £460,000 is to be provided as part of the capital budget in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Country Park.

Indicative capital expenditure programme

2010-11

Car park and temporary roadway off Cherry Orchard Way	£40,000
Aboretum of fruit trees year 1	£10,000

2011-12

Service building and or other staff and public facilities	£140,000
Permissive route for horses and pedestrian through New England Wood to Flemings Farm	£45,000
Grove Woods additional car parking	£60,000
Aboretum of fruit trees year 2	£10,000
Provision of notice boards, signs and waymarks	

2012-13

Construction of wetland	£35,000
Arboretum of fruit trees year 3	£10,000

A revenue budget of £8,500 pa has been established to cover routine maintenance.

Appendix 1

Table 1 – Capital Projects – Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park Management Plan 2011 to 2016

Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
1 That sufficient clear signage to inform the visitor is provided on site and from existing right of way networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provide notice boards and ensure that they are up to date with relevant information. (ii) Provide waymark signs throughout the park and on all adjacent rights of way. (iii) Provide highway signs including finger posts (v) Provide appropriate information signs on historic features, habitats and management regimes including coppicing (iv) Install new tourism 'Brown Signs' to identify Cherry orchard Way, Grove Woods and Edwards Hall car parks. 	Short	Capital and revenue	<p>It is intended that new signs will be installed at the entrance from Cherry Orchard Way. These will be installed by the end of April 2011.</p> <p>A design brief will be issued to brand the park so all signs will have the same logo. This will be undertaken in 2011.</p> <p>Install new signs where need including "Brown Signs" to identify the country park.</p> <p>Negotiation with Southend Borough Council required in respect of Edward Hall.</p>
2 That welcome and entrance areas are improved, to include access from Cherry Orchard Way link road and onsite car parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop a car park next to Grove Wood, complete with a permissive bridleway link through to compartment 6. 	Short	Capital	Two new car parks will be constructed at Grove Woods and Cherry Orchard Way. A temporary roadway off Cherry Orchard Way will also be constructed. The work to Cherry Orchard Way and the access road will be completed April 2011 and the car park at Grove woods by July 2011.

Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park Management Plan 2011-2016

Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Review the option to create a permanent public vehicle access and enlarged car park into compartment 1 in the light of development proposals associated with the London Southend Airport. (iii) Create a landscaped hard standing area for vehicles in compartment 1. (iv) Explore the opportunities to re-open the old railway tunnel under B1013 for pedestrian access. (v) Construction pedestrian entrance from public footpath to the south of compartment 1. (vi) Consider the enhancement of access from Edwards Hall Park. (vii) Commission a 'Cherry Orchard Jubilee' design brief for gateways and signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium Short Short Short Short Short 		Planning Work ongoing.
3	<p>That sustainable methods of design and management have been employed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Investigate accreditation under the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment Acorn Scheme through the phased implementation of an Environmental Management Scheme in accordance with BS8555. (ii) Commission on inspection of the lake to ensure compliance with the Reservoirs Act 1975. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium Short 	Capital and revenue	This under investigation and being reviewed.

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
4 That different areas are provided for a range of recreation.	(i) Install picnic table and benches in compartments 2 and 4.	Short	Capital and revenue	This under investigation and being reviewed.
	(ii) Cut informal paths through meadow grassland in compartments 1, 2, 4 and 5.	Short		
	(iii) Create areas to walk and sit under shade in the summer by developing the woodland glades in compartment 2.	Medium		
	(iv) Commission a feasibility study for the introduction of an archery club in compartment 1.	Medium		
	(v) If need is proven, construct an adventure play ground and trim trail in compartment 1.	Medium		
	(vi) Develop a strategy for supporting events in compartments 1 and 2.	Medium		
	(vii) A river side walk will be created in compartments 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.	Medium		
	(viii) Investigate funding opportunities for such features ensuring a balance of corporate and individual sponsorship.	Short		

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
<p>5 That the rights of way and permissive network within the Country Park is Maintained.</p>	(i) Maintain width and height of bridleways for horse and vehicle use.	Ongoing	Capital and revenue	Permissive route for horses and pedestrians through New England Wood to Flemings farm.
	(ii) Monitor surface degradation and wear of paths against H&S check list schedule and repair damage where necessary.			
	(iii) Monitor the paths for flooding in winter months and make appropriate path improvements.			
	(iv) Grade the grass length alongside paths to create a transition into the local habitat.			
	(v) Re-grade surfaced paths to a 15 year rotation.			
	(vi) Where suitable, amend the position of the paths to give appropriate space for hedgerows.			
	(vii) Construct a permissive route through Grove Wood and New England Wood.	Medium		Decision from ECC on funding expected in 2012.
	(viii) Explore the opportunities to provide a link to Hockley Woods via both Gusted Hall and Rawreth Hall Woods.	Medium		
	(x) Explore the opportunities to working with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to utilise access through Edwards Hall park	Short		

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
6 That a 'traditional' orchard be created.	(i) Commission a feasibility study with specialist advice and support.	Short	£10,000 in year 2011/12	Arboretum of fruit trees be establish and maintained.
	(ii) Source orchard stock.	Short	£10,000 in year 2012/13	
	(iii) Secure planting site and prepare the ground in compartment 1.	Short		
	(iv) Develop educational and interpretative resources.	Short		
7 That a diverse mixture of habitats is created and maintained in a favourable condition for wildlife.	(i) Where possible, allow summer wildflowers to set seed before cutting.	Ongoing		Construction of a wetland. Under technical review. Work in progress.
	(ii) Monitor wear of ground of grassland in compartments 2 and 4; section off worn areas for recovery in off-season.			
	(iii) Fill in gaps in hedgerows with suitable species rich mixture.			
	(iv) Encourage the development of woodland ground flora in new plantations.			
	(v) River banks will be regularly inspected and managed so as to attract water vole and otter.			
	(vi) Specimen trees and the oak avenue in compartment 2 will be regularly inspected and maintained in a healthy and safe condition.			
	(vii) A woodland management plan will be prepared to reintroduce coppice with standards rotation management in compartment 6.	Medium		

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments	
	<p>(viii) The condition of the lake in compartment 4 will be monitored in warm weather and oxygen added if required.</p> <p>(ix) Consider the provision of bee hives.</p> <p>(x) That the perimeter of Grove Wood is protected where it abuts Grove Road and Connaught Road.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Short</p>			
8	Improve the visual amenity in the park	Removal of power cables	Short	Small income	EPN have confirmed that all overhead.
9	That environmentally sustainable education/reception facilities are created.	<p>(i) Funding opportunities for an Educational Centre will be researched.</p> <p>(ii) Maintain an external information board to act as a first point of call for visitors.</p> <p>(iii) Maintain an internal notice board for the Country Park and local events/interests.</p> <p>(iv) The construction of staff facilities will be consider including a small public reception desk and display area.</p> <p>(v) Provide a trading pitch for a catering concession. Temporary buildings will only be used as a last resort and will be sited sensitively.</p> <p>(vi) If need is proven, construct a cafe and toilet block in compartment 1.</p>	<p>2011 and ongoing</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Short</p> <p>Medium</p>	Capital	Staff and public buildings and facilities such as coffee or tea rooms. To seek external funding.

Table 2 – General Activities – Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park Management Plan 2010 to 2015

Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
1 That the community is consulted and feedback sought regarding the Country Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Set-up and run a stakeholders forum to meet biannually and provide opinion on Country Park management. (ii) Seek feedback from visitors to the Country Park through internally produced comment cards. (iii) Seek feedback from visitors to the Country Park through external websites in Rochford and Southend. (iv) Encourage informal feedback to site staff. (v) Monitor visitor numbers and report monthly. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. Original customer consultation was completed in 2007.
2 That the Country Park is promoted locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Maintain good links with the local press and inform them of all events and new projects. (ii) Send out event information, posters and flyers to local TICs, libraries and schools. (iii) Issue Country Park news on information boards within the Country Park. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
3 That educational facilities are developed and used in conjunction with the Education Authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Create and maintain a set of outdoor education resources for site staff. (ii) Attend training days and group meetings with local teachers. (iii) Seek links with local schools and encourage them to use the Country Park. (iv) Run wildlife education events for general public. (v) Encourage university fieldwork. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
4 That links with local youth groups are developed and encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Promote services available and appropriate events to local youth groups. (ii) Maintain an up to date list of contacts for local youth groups. (iii) Canvas local youth groups as to types of activities they desire to do in the Country Park. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
5 That an events programme with activities and organised walks is provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop and run a programme including 2 large events throughout the year. (ii) Target events (including birthday parties and toddler groups) for a variety interest groups and ages. (iii) Co-ordinate activities with national and local events and holidays. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
6 That the species distribution and abundance within the Country Park is monitored and recorded throughout the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Collate records of surveys and sightings. (ii) Dedicate staff time to surveying. (iii) Encourage links with local Field Clubs, recorders and enthusiasts to aid in surveying 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
7 That habitat links with the wider landscape are maintained and encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provide input into future development plans for the area adjacent to the Country Park. (ii) Co-ordinate plans with Thames Gateway initiatives. (iii) Encourage partnership working with neighbouring land owners to promote wildlife corridors. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
8 That walking, riding and cycling in and from the Country Park is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop links with the NHS and local health programmes. (ii) Investigate feasibility of developing a trim trail. (iii) Designate and provide areas to secure bicycles. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
9 That a series of self-guided trails of varying lengths as part of a network in the broader area is provided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Design circular trails of varying lengths to take in the Country Park and surrounding countryside. (ii) Produce trail guides and market in TICs and on site. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
10 That the use of the local footpath and bridleway network is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Improve signage of footpaths and bridleways leading out of the Country Park. (ii) Provide information to public about destinations of path network. (iii) Provide secure parking facilities for cycles. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
11 That the Country Park is promoted locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Produce an up to date site leaflet for visitors. (ii) Publicise Country Park events in accordance with the Council's marketing strategy. (iii) Keep information about the Country Park up to date on in house and external websites. (iv) Provide reciprocal promotion of other country parks. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
12 That visitors are provided with relevant information leaflets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review the site leaflet on a regular basis. (ii) Maintain stock of Country Parks leaflets. (iii) Provide interpretation to new-work/projects. 	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.

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Project	Actions	Time scale	Budget Implications	Comments
13 That information about the Country Park is provided through the Media, internet and written articles.	(i) Keep information about the Country Park up to date on in house and external websites.	2011 to end of plan	Revenue	Work in progress and developing within existing resources. A dedicated resource maybe required.
	(ii) Issue press releases about Country Park events/stories.			
	(iii) Supply articles about the Country Park for journals and magazines.			
14. That the site is attractive and acceptable to all.	Ensure access to the site and any building is DDA compliant.	Ongoing		
	Carry out litter patrols on a daily basis.	Short		
	Establish and enforce bye-laws for the Country Park	Short		

Appendix 2 – Criteria used to assess status of bird species

The criteria used in assessments are intended to ensure that Birds of Conservation Concern listings reflect each species' global and European status as well as that within the UK; and additionally measure the importance of the UK population in international terms.

The Red List Criteria

Species that meet any of the following criteria are red listed: **IUCN** Global Conservation Status. Species listed by BirdLife International as being Globally Threatened using IUCN criteria.

HD Historical Decline. A severe decline in the UK between 1800 and 1995, without substantial recent recovery.

BDp Breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years (BDp1) or the entire period used for assessments since the first BoCC review, starting in 1969 ("longer term") (BDp2).

WDp Non-breeding Population Decline. Severe decline in the UK non-breeding population size, of more than 50%, over 25 years (WDp1) or the longer-term (WDp2).

BDr Breeding Range Decline. Severe decline in the UK range, of more than 50%, as measured by number of 10 km squares occupied by breeding birds, over 25 years (BDr1) or the longer-term (BDr2).

The Amber List Criteria

Species that meet any of the following criteria, but none of the red list criteria, are amber listed:

SPEC European Conservation status. Categorized as a Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC 1, 2 or 3).

HDrec Historical Decline – Recovery. Red listed for Historical Decline in a previous review but with substantial recent recovery (more than doubled in the last 25 years).

BDMp Breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria BDp1 and BDp2, but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%).

WDMp Non-breeding Population Decline. As for red list criteria WDp1 and WDp2, but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%).

BDMr Breeding Range Decline. As for red list criteria BDr1 and BDr2, but with moderate decline (by more than 25% but less than 50%).

BR and **WR** Rarity. UK breeding population of less than 300 pairs (BR), or non-breeding population of less than 900 individuals (WR).

BL and **WL** Localisation. At least 50% of the UK breeding (BL) or non-breeding (WL) population found in 10 or fewer sites.

BI and **WI** International Importance. At least 20% of the European breeding (BI) or non-breeding (WI) population found in the UK.

The Green List Criteria

All regularly occurring species that do not qualify under any of the red or amber criteria are green listed. The green list also includes those species listed as recovering from Historical Decline in the last review that have continued to recover and do not qualify under any of the other criteria.

Documents

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Forestry Commission, Woodland Grant Scheme 2002 – 2009, July 2001

Forestry Commission, Woodland Grant Scheme 2009 – 2016, February 2009

Hatch P. (Essex Ecology Services Ltd.), Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park (Western Extension), Rochford Preliminary Ecological Assessment, February 2010

HMSO, Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, July 2002

Land Restoration Trust, Renaissance Southend Ltd., Southend-on-Sea: proposed countryside access scoping study, Catherine Bickmore Associates, July 2009

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Rochford District Council, Local Development Framework suite of documents, www.rochford.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/policy/local_development_framework.aspx

Rochford District Council, Open Space Study 2009, January 2010
www.rochford.gov.uk/PDF/planning_evibase_openspacestudy.pdf

Rochford District Council, The Rochford District Replacement Local Plan 2006 (saved policies)
www.rochford.gov.uk/planning__building_control/policy/local_plan_2006/rochford_district_replacement.aspx

Rochford District Council, Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park leaflet

Rochford District Council, Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, Indicative proposals, phase 2 development RSPB et al, Birds of conservation concern 3, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 2009

Contacts for Orchards

The industrial champion is English Apples and Pears Ltd. (Adrian Barlow), Contact details:

Forest Lodge, Bulls Hill, Walford, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire. HR9 5RH
Phone: 01732 529781
Email: info@englishapplesandpears.co.uk
www.englishapplesandpears.co.uk

'Common Ground' organises and supports community run orchards. Contact details:

Gold Hill House, 21 High Street Shaftesbury, Dorset. SP7 8JE
Phone: 01747 850820
Fasimile: 01747 850821
Email: info@commonground.org.uk
www.commonground.org.uk
england-in-particular.info/orchards/o-corch.html

Brogdale National Fruit Collection – a Defra owned collection run at Brogdale by the University of Reading. Help may be available with the old traditional varieties and also to run a National Apple Day. Contact details:

Brogdale Farm, Brogdale Road, Faversham, Kent. ME13 8XZ
Phone: 01795 536250
Email: enquiries@brogdalecollections.co.uk
www.brogdale.org

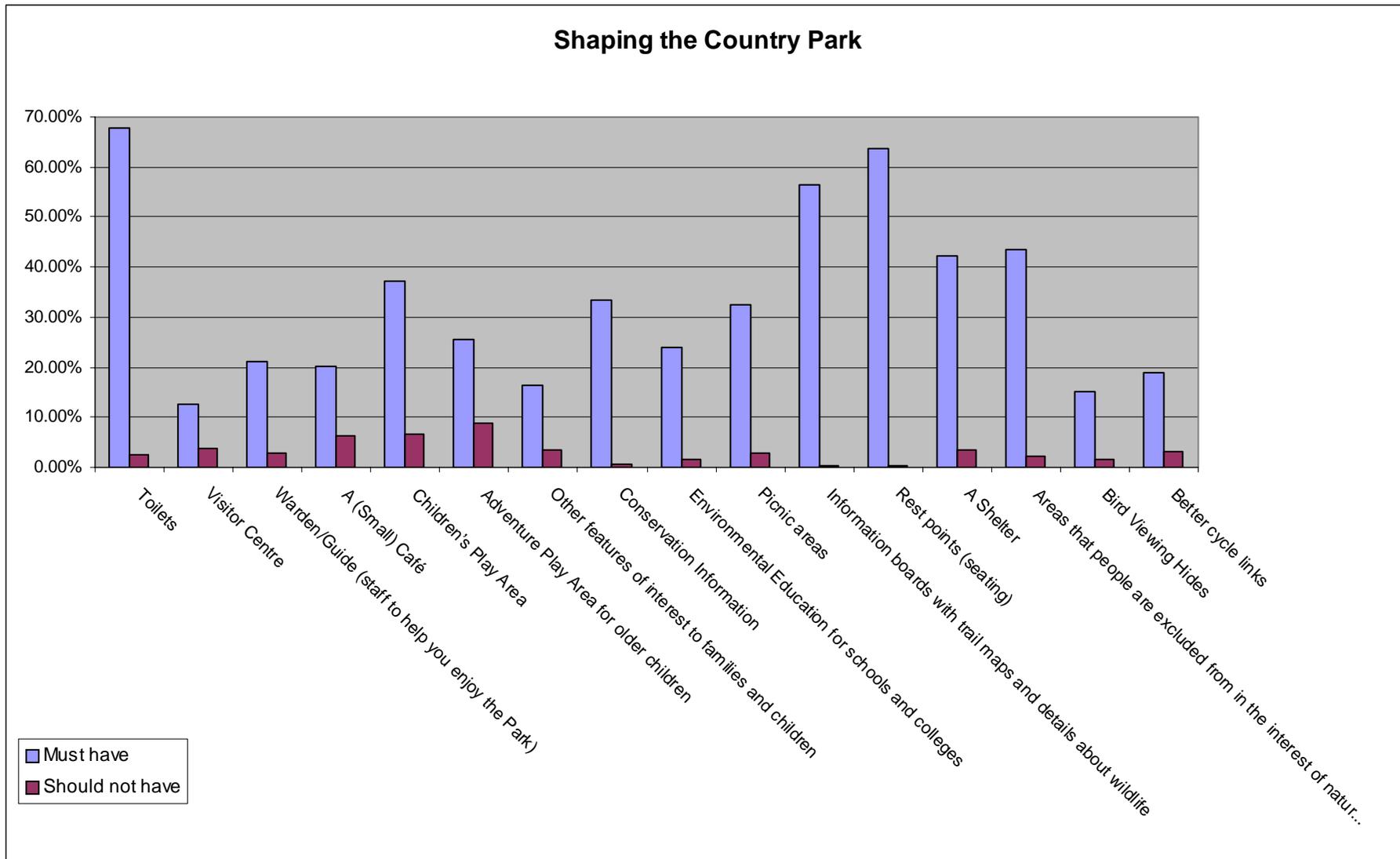
Dr. Nigel Russell, Natural England's regional contact for advice on traditional orchards. Contact details:

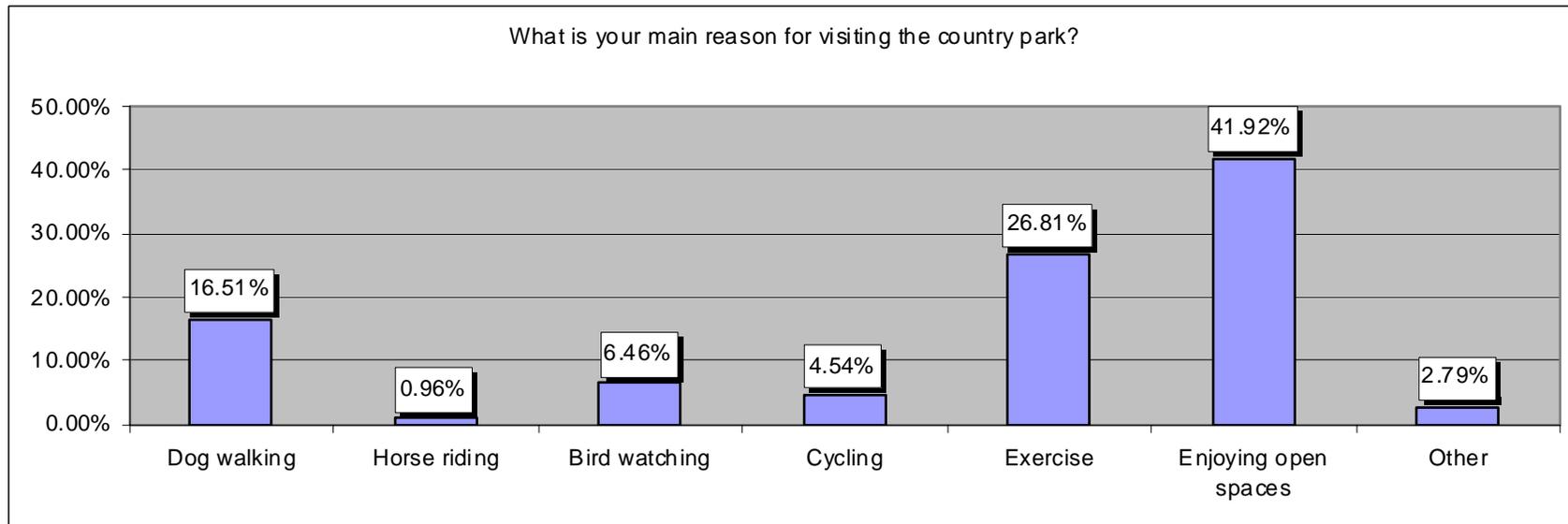
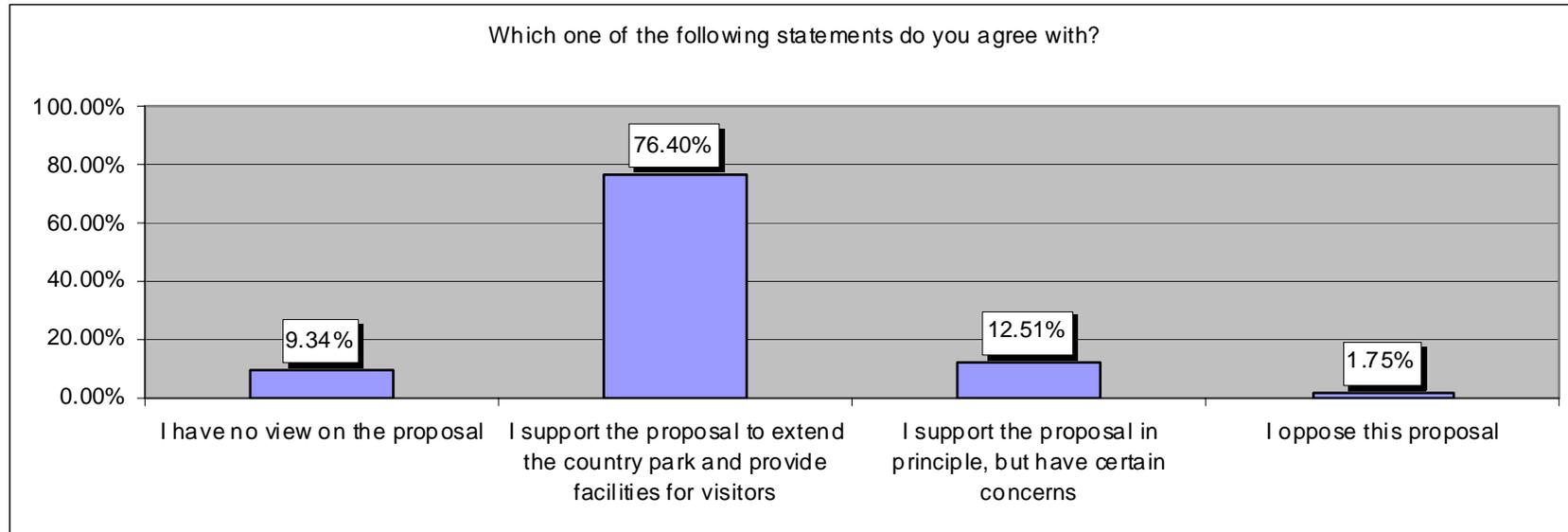
Natural England, Eastbrook, Shaftesbury Rd., Cambridge. CB2 8DR
Phone: 03000 602 101
Email: Nigel.R.Russell@naturalengland.org.uk

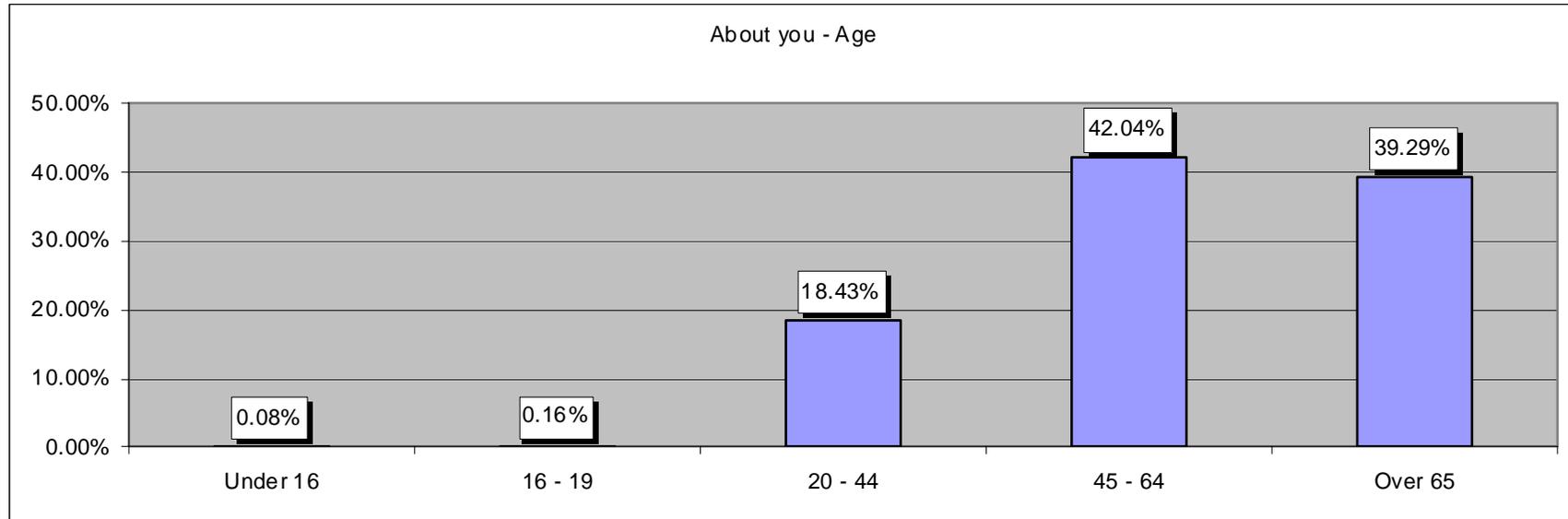
Royal Horticultural Society Fruit Group. Contact details:

80 Vincent Square, London. SW1P 2PE
Tel: 0845 260 5000
Email: fruitgroup@rhs.org.uk
www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/Plant-science/Specialist/RHS-Fruit-Group

Appendix 3 – Summary of Feedback from Customer Consultation







RDM and website survey Autumn 2007



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