

Bishop's Hall Park Hatch Road Country Park

**Management Plan
2014 - 2019**

Prepared for Brentwood Borough Council

**BLACKWOOD
bayne
Ltd**

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Introduction

About these Plans

These plans are part of a series of management plans produced for Brentwood's urban parks and cemeteries.

The plans cover the period 2014 – 2019. This plan is for Bishop's Hall Park and also includes Hatch Road Country Park. Hatch Road Country Park is a more recent addition to Brentwood Borough Council's estate and is adjacent to Bishop's Hall Park. Plans have also been produced for King George's Playing Fields, Hutton Recreation Grounds, Warley Playing Fields and the two cemeteries; Woodman Road Cemetery and London Road Cemetery.

The aim of these plans is to provide direction for the parks so that the provision of high quality open spaces for the residents of Brentwood is assured. This is done both in terms of presenting a strategic direction, or 'Vision', for each site and through detailing the capital and maintenance actions required to achieve this.

Set against a backdrop of limited funding, these plans will help to prioritise actions to those which meet the overall, long-term aim for the site. In order to ensure long term quality and to reduce ongoing maintenance costs it is important to adopt a principle of 'invest to save'. Aging infrastructure becomes a liability, incurring ongoing repair cost, whereas timely replacement with well-specified, long lasting infrastructure will reduce this ongoing maintenance liability. However, such investment requires an evaluated and targeted approach to ensure investment takes place in the areas of highest priority where the need, and the potential return on investment, is greatest. These plans provide this, and form the basis for the future asset management of the parks and forward capital planning.

Strategic Objectives for Quality Spaces

All of the parks in this report serve many functions including, amongst many others, play, sport, walking, events and access to nature. In all of these parks several of these functions need to be provided at the same time and a balance struck between competing needs.

In order to help assess each park and to organise proposed actions, five management categories have been used, against which the sites have been evaluated:

- A welcoming place;
- A safe and secure place;
- A clean and well-maintained place;
- Sustainability;
- Conservation and heritage;

Taken together, ensuring attainment against all of these five management categories (at a level appropriate to each individual park) will ensure high quality service delivery to meet the needs of all users to the park.

A Welcoming Place

Objective: That the overall impression of visitors is positive and that the park is inviting.

People visit parks for many reasons. A welcoming site draws people and makes them feel welcome through its appearance, facilities and maintenance. This includes location of paths, provision of information, entrances and signing.

Signing

Signing should have the following features:

- Signs should be easy to read;
- Signs should be well-maintained and clear of graffiti;
- Ideally should have a coherent design rather than a mixture of styles;
- Should serve a purpose – avoid over-signing a park and remove redundant signing;
- Messages should be friendly and welcoming. It is necessary to tell visitors clearly what can and can't be done, but avoid too much signing 'forbidding' activities;
- Information provided on opening and closing times;
- Information provided on who owns and manages the park;
- Up to date contact details, including 'helpline' telephone number, web and email as appropriate;

Physical Access

Considering physical access around the site and links to it can greatly improve the experience of visitors. Elements can include:

- Links with public transport;
- Safe access from surrounding roads including, for example, pelican crossings;
- Links with cycle routes;
- Safe and secure car parking with facilities for those with disabilities;
- Limited access by vehicles to ensure safety (including maintenance vehicles);
- Attractive entrances, clear sightlines;
- Benches and seating around the site, also in quieter areas and overlooking views;
- Adequate control of dogs and dog fouling.

Good Design

Good design can make people feel welcome, can encourage them to explore and can visit more. Poor design can dissuade people from staying, visit less often or even compromise safety.

The adoption of a standardised form of design and style, for example in litter bins, benches and other furniture, can help to ensure that all Brentwood Borough Council sites belong to a 'family' and reach an adequate standard. However, individual features of some sites should also be respected in the design, for example heritage or natural features, which may require adjustment of this approach. A design standard is currently being developed.

A selection of some of the many elements which can be considered in design are:

- Choosing fixtures and furniture which are durable and have a low environmental impact;
- Screening working and storage areas;
- Creating interest and intimacy with tree planting, breaking up 'bleak' landscapes (for example sports pitches);
- Providing footpaths on the routes people wish to use;
- Choosing planting which can be maintained within available budgets, so that it remains attractive.

A Safe and Secure Place

Objective: To ensure that the parks are safe and secure places for all visitors to use.

People can be dissuaded from using greenspaces by safety fears. There are also a range of legal requirements which relate to the management of greenspaces, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which encompasses those affected by what you do as well as those working for the organisation.

Some of the elements which can be considered include:

- Information on who to contact in an emergency on information boards;
- Tree planting to provide shade, especially around play areas;
- Consideration of sight lines and safe movement around the site;
- Emergency equipment where appropriate, e.g. lifebelts;
- High design standard for equipment and furniture;
- Child protection issues address in play policies and strategies;
- Risk assessments in place for staff and use of facilities;
- Encourage visitors to report problems and provide information on how to do this.

In addition, the control of dogs is an important issue in its own right. Fouling is unpleasant and can cause disease (toxocariasis) and dog aggression, or even simply dogs jumping up at visitors, can be off-putting to visitors. Brentwood's Open Space Strategy highlights dog fouling as a particular concern for park users.

Work across the country has successfully created behaviour change amongst dog owners without the need for confrontational or enforcement, but rather through understanding why dog owners make the decision to allow their dog to behave in an anti-social way or to not pick up after their dog.

A key part of this is social pressure; will others judge me or how will they react if I do (or don't) behave in a particular way? It is important to create an atmosphere of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the park.

The main factors influencing behaviour are, with the most effective first:

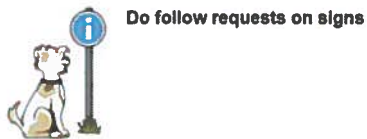
- Signing providing clear explanation for restrictions;
- Good behaviour by other dog walkers;
- Being seen by wardens/rangers/parks staff.

Signing and information provision therefore needs to be:

- Clear about what behaviour is expected of the owner and dog;
- Clear about why this behaviour is expected;
- Presented in an understandable and friendly way.

An example of such an approach has been developed in Dorset, where a 'Doggy Do' Code of Conduct has been produced.¹ It is proposed that a similar approach is adopted for Brentwood Borough Council sites.

The main Code of Conduct should be displayed on or near all main orientation boards. Smaller 'reminder' boards or waymarkers can then be installed around the park to reinforce the main message.



It is not considered feasible to implement a requirement for dogs to be kept on leads at the park. However, good behaviour should be expected and dog faeces picked up. All play areas should be dog-free zones.

Brentwood Borough Council Parks, Countryside, Cemeteries and Open Spaces Department has in place the following policies and operational guides:

- Risk assessments;
- Inspections programmes for play areas.

¹ <http://www.dorsetdogs.org.uk/>

A Clean and Well-Maintained Place

Objective: To ensure high standards of maintenance and cleanliness.

A clean and well-maintained park is obviously important for visitors, and reflects well on the Council. A poorly maintained park can lead to misuse and will deter visitors.

The elements to be considered include:

- Well maintained litter bins, thoughtfully positioned to encourage use and regularly emptied;
- Regular litter picks;
- High standard of horticultural maintenance;
- Consideration of ongoing maintenance requirements in the design of beds and planting to ensure that maintenance of a high standard can be implemented;
- Furniture and fixings should be maintained and repaired if broken or damaged;
- Buildings and structures should be well maintained;
- Graffiti, flyposting etc. removed;
- Paths and car parks swept and edges maintained;
- Regular inspections.

Sustainability

Objective: To ensure that environmentally sound maintenance practices are implemented.

Managing green spaces in an environmentally sound way includes elements such as the choice of materials, use of chemicals, energy conservation and waste recycling.

Brentwood Borough Council Parks, Countryside, Cemeteries and Open Spaces Department will develop an Environmental Policy which will cover areas including:

- Limiting use of pesticides and chemicals to that which is essential;
- Avoid using peat and tropical hardwoods;
- Timber certified by the Forest Stewardship Council;
- Use recycled materials where possible;
- Reduce waste;
- Provide bins to enable visitors to recycle
- Consider the future watering, chemical and replacement input when designing beds and planting;
- Reduce pollution, for example through proper handling of fuels and chemicals and reducing nuisance from noise or smoke from bonfires;
- Implement water efficiency measures in park maintenance;
- Implement energy efficiency measures

Conservation and Heritage

Objective: To increase biodiversity in the parks and to protect, conserve and enhance the heritage components.

As well as often having a rich history themselves, all parks sit within a surrounding landscape which has particular cultural, ecological and landscape features. It is important when considering the design and management of a park to respect and incorporate these elements.

There are many benefits to enhancing biodiversity in parks. Maintenance of biodiversity habitats can be more cost-effective, for example through reducing the frequency of grass cutting. The wildlife which is attracted is not only beneficial in its own right, but will add interest to a park and enable visitors to experience nature. Moreover, local authorities also have a legal duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in their functions through Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

Elements to consider include:

- Improving biodiversity through linking with surrounding habitats, diversifying habitats on site and providing for species (e.g. through bird and bat boxes);
- Create new habitats where appropriate, for example wild flower meadows;
- Respecting and considering the historic character in design of the park;
- Where parks have specific and, in some cases, protected heritage features, ensure that management plans are in place to conserve these;
- Identify, protect and maintain elements of the built environment which are of historical or design importance.

Policy Context

These plans link with several Brentwood Borough Council policy and strategy documents.

Brentwood Borough Council's **Corporate Plan** (2013-2019) recognises the importance of the environment and greenspace to the Borough. The environment is included in the first theme, 'Street Scene and Environment', with a medium term priority for a parks and playground strategy.

The Council's **Open Space Strategy** provides a thorough analysis of provision and actions across all of the open spaces in the Borough. The supporting consultant's report highlighted the need for review of maintenance and the adoption of quality criteria, both of which are being taken forward through these management plans.

Brentwood Play Strategy (2007-2010) sets out how the Council will address the play needs of children and young people in the Borough. In addition, Brentwood Council's **Children and Young People's Strategy** (2007-2011) set out to work with young people to develop a range of facilities that will benefit their leisure and play time.

Chapters 1, Leisure and Culture, and 11, Sustainable Development and the Local Environment, of the **Brentwood Community Strategy** (2004-2009) are both relevant to the delivery of parks. The first prioritises the provision of high quality and accessible leisure for all residents and the second highlights the importance of the environment, countryside and greenspace of Borough for local residents.

Brentwood's **Environmental Policy** (2009) sets out the actions that the Council will take in its operation to manage environmental impacts.

Bishop's Hall Park

Site Description

Site Summary

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 4.4 hectares; • Four grass fields separated by mature trees and hedges; • Two ditches run east-west across the site; • Play equipment and car park at southern end; • Adjacent to Bishop's Hall Community Centre in the south; • Adjacent to Hatch Road Country Park in the north.
Rights of Way and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no public rights of way across the site but access is permitted throughout. • Green Lane which runs along western boundary is a byway.
Access Points – Pedestrian and Vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car park and main entrance off Elizabeth Road/Green Lane, TQ 590 953. • Pedestrian access at various points: Green Lane, Doddinghurst Road and from the adjacent Hatch Road Country Park, see Plan 1.
Bylaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no bylaws for this site.
Tree Preservation Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior play area: up to 8 years of age, cradle and junior swings, sand play table, roundabout; • Senior play area: 8 years and above, Mobil's, swings, basket swing, cable runway, climbing frame; • Enclosed hard court area; • Two open fields (mown); • Surfaced access paths; • Car park; • Adjacent and links to Hatch Road Country Park to the north.
Non-statutory designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt.

Site Assessment and Actions

General Overview

This medium-sized park provides open green space for general recreation alongside senior and junior play facilities and a hard court area. It is surrounded by trees and hedges, which shield it from the Doddinghurst Road and surrounding housing and create a mature and attractive setting for the park. The current features of the park are shown in Plan 1.

The park is on the north-eastern outskirts of Brentwood and, although it primarily serves the local population of Pilgrim's Hatch, as one of Brentwood's larger parks and with substantial play facilities it potentially has a catchment for visitors beyond this local area. It is also located close to the Brentwood Centre, a potential source of visitors.

This park received investment over the last 10 years, with the play areas, path and hard court upgraded in 2011, which has greatly improved the facilities of the park.

To the north and linking to the site is Hatch Road Country Park, also owned and managed by Brentwood Borough Council. This park is also around 4 hectares, almost doubling the size of the green space. Taken together these two sites provide a substantial green area. However, links between the two sites could be greatly improved, both in terms of providing information for visitors, for improving access and for linking habitats.

Vision and Objectives

VISION

For Bishop's Hall Park to be a high quality, inviting, family-friendly park of sufficient quality and providing a sufficient range of facilities to serve a wide catchment across the whole of north Brentwood.

Over-arching objectives for this park are:

- 1 To provide a range of good quality play facilities for all ages, from young children to young adults;
- 2 To maximise the benefits of the size and setting of the park, to provide a multi-functional park for all members of the local community with areas for quiet recreation and walking as well as play;
- 3 To improve links with the adjacent Hatch Road Country Park, both for increasing recreational space and to improve nature conservation value;

The play areas, hard court and car park are all located together in the south of the park (in the field marked as 'Community Field' in Plan 1). This gives a natural focus to the park for recreational activities in this area.

The Middle Field is an open, regularly mown, grass field, with no play equipment, but crossed by a surfaced path with links with Green Lane. This extensive field is under-utilised as, apart from dog walkers who circuit the field, visitors generally cross the field using the path.

The Top Field is again a mown field, which abuts Hatch Road Country Park, and is mainly used as a cut through to the Country Park.

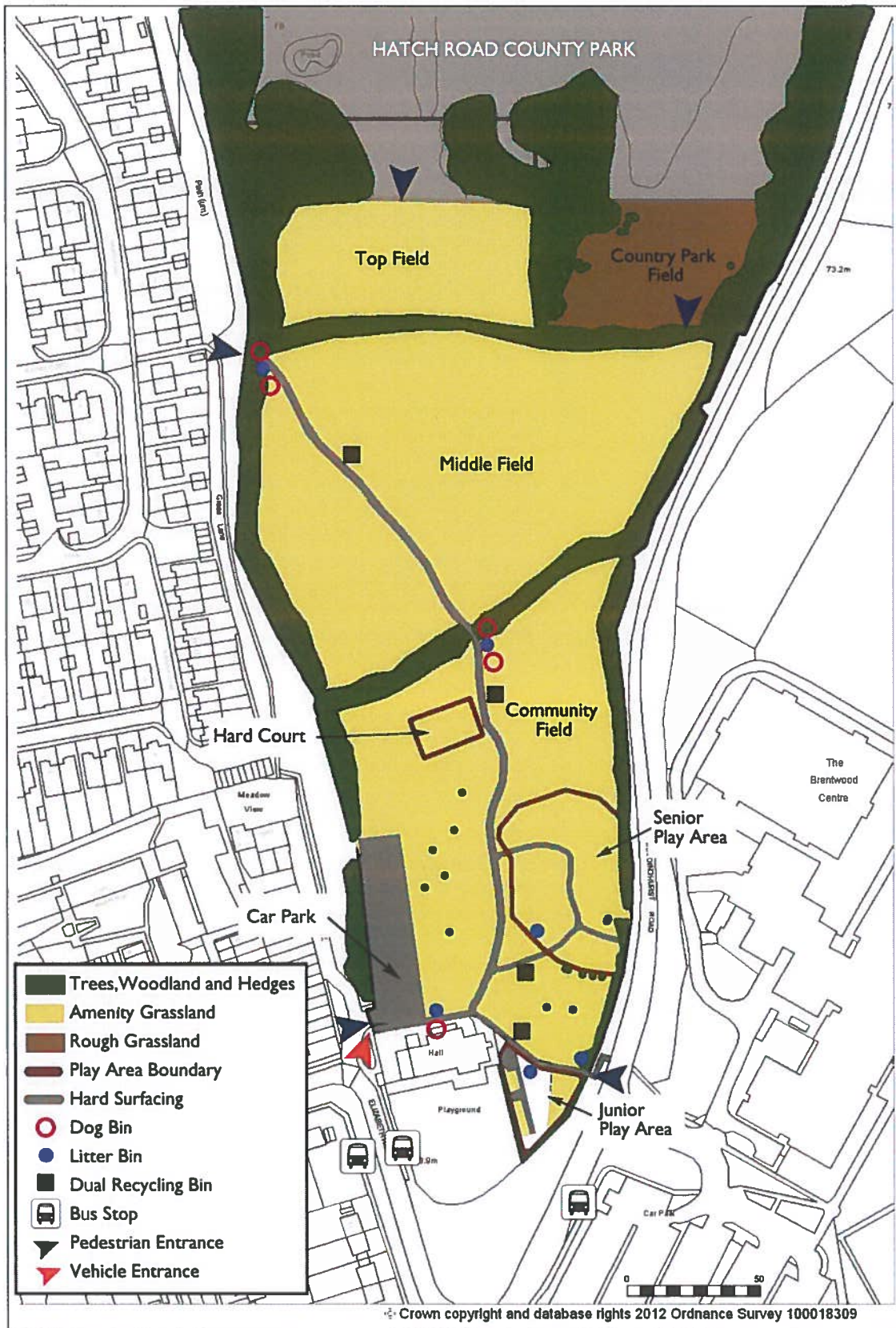
The Country Park Field was once part of Bishop's Hall Park rather than the Country Park, but was not regularly mown and since Brentwood Council has adopted the Country Park has now been incorporated into the Country Park.

From south to north there is, therefore, a natural transition for the park, with a concentration of recreational activity in the south within a 'formal' park, leading to a quieter open space and links to the semi-natural habitats of Hatch Road Country Park in the north. As both parks are under the management of Brentwood Borough Council, the management plans for both are contained in this document. They should be viewed as a whole with a continuum of habitats, rather than two parks for two separate uses.

This broader vision for the park and its relationship with Hatch Road Country Park leads to more specific objectives for each field of the park:

- To concentrate play and recreational activity around the Community Field, with areas for seating, picnicking and family fun. Provide picnic benches for families and shade trees. Dogs on leads and all fouling picked up;
- Utilise and enhance the Middle Field more fully for quiet recreation. Enhance nature conservation and enhance landscape setting and provide a transition to the semi-natural habitats of Hatch Road Country Park;
- Top Field enhanced to provide a transition to the semi-natural habitats of Hatch Road Country Park (Country Park Field continue to be managed as part of the Country Park).

Plan 1: Bishop's Hall Park – Current Features and Site Layout



A Welcoming Place

Signing

An assessment of the current signing and the actions required is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Bishops Hall Park - Signing Assessment

	Assessment	Actions Required
Entrance Signs	There are no signs at any entrance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install sign at main entrance off Green Lane. To contain information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening times; • That BBC manage the site and contact details; • Where dogs are permitted/prohibited, need to be kept on leads and areas fouling not permitted; • Map of site showing facilities and routes, also including Hatch Road Country Park. • Install smaller welcome signs at pedestrian entrances at Doddinghurst Road and Green Lane. Green Lane sign to include information on Hatch Road Country Park; • Welcome signs at two entrances from Hatch Road Country Park. Double sided boards to inform of entrance and exit from the two parks. Inform that dog fouling is not permitted.
Dog Signing	<p>There is no signing on site indicating where dogs are permitted or prohibited, where dogs must be on leads and where fouling is not permitted.</p> <p>Existing signs at play areas (see below) prohibit dogs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information at all entrances that dog fouling is not permitted in new corporate dog signing; • Ensure visitors are clear on the distinction between Hatch Road Country Park and Bishop's Hall Park in terms of dog restrictions and acceptable behaviours.
Play Area Signing	There are signs at both play areas. The signs have out of date information and are in poor condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace signs at both play areas.
Style, Clarity and Maintenance	Only signing currently in place is at the play areas, which should be replaced (see previous).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all new signing fits with BBC corporate style across all the park; • Ensure messages on new signing are welcoming and friendly.
Signing around the area	Signed from the Doddinghurst Road (to adjacent Bishops Hall Park Social Centre).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing adequate, no action required.

Physical Access

This assessment is based on the suitability of the park for all sectors of the community.

Table 2: Bishop's Hall Park – Physical Access Assessment

Access to the site	Assessment	Actions Required
Access to the site	<p><u>Public Transport:</u> Bus stop outside of Brentwood Centre (Route 261 Brentwood to Blackmore) and on Green Lane (Route 73 Warley to Bishops Hall Estate).</p> <p><u>Cycle Routes:</u> No cycle routes to the park. Green Lane is a byway therefore cycles permitted. Cycling is informally permitted in the park as the surfaced path provides a useful traffic-free through route.</p> <p><u>Road Crossings:</u> Path from Brentwood Centre crosses Doddinghurst Road. Island in centre of road, no Pelican crossing. Close to entrance to Brentwood Centre. Safety rails on Bishop's Hall Park side of the road.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to permit cycling on an informal basis.
Benches and Resting Places	<p><u>Benches:</u> There are no benches on site.</p> <p><u>Picnic Benches:</u> There is a picnic bench in the junior play area but none elsewhere on site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide benches in play areas and in Middle Field as part of enhancements; • Provide picnic benches around play areas to increase family use.
Car Parking	<p><u>Condition:</u> The car park surface is in good condition. Low railing was installed in 2012-13 and is also in good condition. Trees overhang car park adjacent to Green Lane. There is fencing along this tree line which is in poor condition.</p> <p><u>Disabled Parking:</u> There are no marked bays in the car park and therefore there is no designated disabled parking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lift trees on Green Lane boundary of car park to 2.5m; • Replace fence along Green Lane boundary with car park. Block up informal entrance at north of car park for safety reasons; • Mark parking bays and include disabled parking.
Paths and Access Routes	<p>Surfaced path constructed in 2010-11 links Community Field with Green Lane, through Middle Field.</p> <p>Main path continues into and around senior play area.</p> <p>Lit, surfaced path from Doddinghurst Road to car park.</p> <p>Surfaced paths provide good all weather access to the main through routes.</p> <p>Poor access links to Hatch Road Country Park. In particular poor bridge at north-eastern entrance and both entrance points overgrown.</p> <p>Limited route choice around Middle Field and between Middle Field and Hatch Road Country Park.</p> <p>Access around Bishop's Hall Park and Hatch Road Country Park should be viewed as a whole. A surfaced path around both sites would enable more people to access the Country Park. Within the Country Park this should be of self-binding gravel rather than tarmac.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve entrance points between Country Park and Bishop's Hall Park, in particular improving bridge access, cutting back vegetation, signing and surfacing; • Opening a second access route between Hatch Road Country Park and Middle Field as part of landscaping improvements; • Extend surfaced path into Hatch Road Country Park to provide a continuous circuit.

Good Design

The park has a rational layout, with all play facilities near to the car park and together in the Community Field. The play facilities fit well within this field, with ample surrounding space for informal recreation. Of all the play facilities, the hard court area is the most isolated in it's surroundings.

Some tree planting (Silver birch) has been carried out, between the car park and the senior play area and to the south of the senior play area. It would be beneficial to add to the tree planting in these areas, potentially with trees which will grow to be more substantial than Silver birch, to strengthen the landscape setting of the park and provide shaded seating areas. The north-eastern corner of the field should remain open to provide area for informal play (see Plan 2).

The Middle Field is under-utilised and in landscape and design terms has little interest. It could be enhanced through tree planting, habitat improvement and seating, see Plan 2.

The infrastructure of the park is relatively new which helps to produce a coherent design. There still remain some older, poor condition, bins alongside newer recycling bins. Over time these should be replaced.

In the northern section, the design of the park should reflect the transition between formal recreational park and the Country Park. The Middle Field at present is under-utilised and is a rather barren, mown open space. An extensive wildflower meadow would complement the semi-natural habitats of the Country Park but could be managed in a more 'formal' way befitting Bishop's Hall. Along with parkland tree planting and seating, this would create an attractive space for quiet recreation.

The Top Field is adjacent to the Country Park. The hedgerows in this field should be planted, a path installed and further wildflowers sown.

Table 3: Bishop's Hall Park – Summary of Design Actions

Area	Actions
Community Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plant parkland trees for shade, retaining clear site lines;• Provide seating and picnic benches.
Middle Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parkland tree planting;• Wildflower meadow creation with mown paths;• Seating.
Top Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hedge and tree planting;• Surfaced path;• Sow wildflowers.

A Safe and Secure Place

The following table provides an assessment of safety and security.

Table 4: Bishop's Hall Park - Safe and Secure Place Assessment

	Assessment	Actions Required
A Safer Park	<p>There have historically been moderate to high levels of anti-social behaviour at this park, but problems have decreased in recent years as more people have used the park following improvements to facilities.</p> <p>Safety inspections are carried on and <i>ad hoc</i> basis when required.</p> <p>There is no CCTV at the park, but this would be considered if required, for both the park and Community Hall.</p> <p>There is lighting along the path between the Doddinghurst Road and the Community Hall. This could be extended along the surfaced path across the site if required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None at present. Future actions which could be considered if the need arises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV. • Lighting along surfaced path. • Introduce a method of annual inspections with computer generated reports.
Safe Design	<p>The play areas and equipment are mainly of recent construction and of good quality. Some improvements are required which are detailed in the Action Table.</p> <p>Sight lines throughout most of the park are good as the fields are clear, open spaces. It is important to retain these sight lines, especially between the Community Centre and ball court.</p> <p>The entrances to Hatch Road Country Park are overgrown and have poor sight lines, as well as a poor quality access bridge.</p> <p>The relatively new surfaced path is of good quality. The path leading from Doddinghurst Road to Green Lane is lit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement improvements to play equipment as detailed in Action Table; • Clear vegetation around entrances to Hatch Road Country Park; • Ensure that good sight lines are maintained in any tree planting or other habitat improvements; • Any trees planted would need to be fairly mature to withstand vandalism.
Dogs	<p>Play areas are dog free and ample greenspace within the fencing provides a large dog-free area.</p> <p>There is no signing to indicate acceptable behaviour of dogs.</p> <p>No dog fouling should be permitted within Bishop's Hall Park. The distinction in acceptable dog behaviour between Hatch Road Country Park should be made clear to visitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement dog zoning, • Include information on dogs at entrances and clearly distinguish dog zones.

A Clean and Well-Maintained Place

The maintenance and inspection programme for this park is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Regular Maintenance, Bishop's Hall Park

Area	Maintenance
Amenity grass	Cut every fortnight with tractor.
Play Area	Senior play area cut every three weeks on ride on mower. Junior play area cut by hand every fortnight.
Headlands	Flail annually.
Hedges	Doddinghurst Road - cut on road side twice a year. Hedge around junior play area – cut twice a year. Hedge next to Community Hall – cut once a year.
Ditches	These require regular maintenance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Lift overhanging trees over ditches;· Clear culverts;· Clear silt from ditches.

There are no horticultural beds within the park itself, but there are two located at the park entrance on Green Lane (one outside the Community Hall and the other on the left hand side of Green Lane). These are in poor condition and should be replanted with low maintenance perennials.

Sustainability

Management of this park is low intensity, with no planted beds and little requirement for chemical input.

Some dual purpose litter and recycling bins have been installed and existing litter bins should be replaced with these over time.

Nature Conservation and Heritage

The park is located in a landscape of mature trees and hedgerows, which add maturity, seclusion and aesthetic appeal. These hedgerows and the current field structure has been in existence since at least the middle of the 19th Century and as such is a historic component of the site.

It would be beneficial to enhance the site through wildflower meadows and tree planting in the Middle and Top Fields as previously outlined.

This site has slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, with moderate to high fertility. Ideally, wildflower meadows should have low fertility soils, so this needs to be incorporated in the design.

Action Table

A spreadsheet of all the required actions has been provided alongside this document. This spreadsheet is intended to be a live, working document to be updated by Brentwood Borough Council staff. Provided here is a summary of actions at the time this plan was produced.

The actions are show in Plan 2.

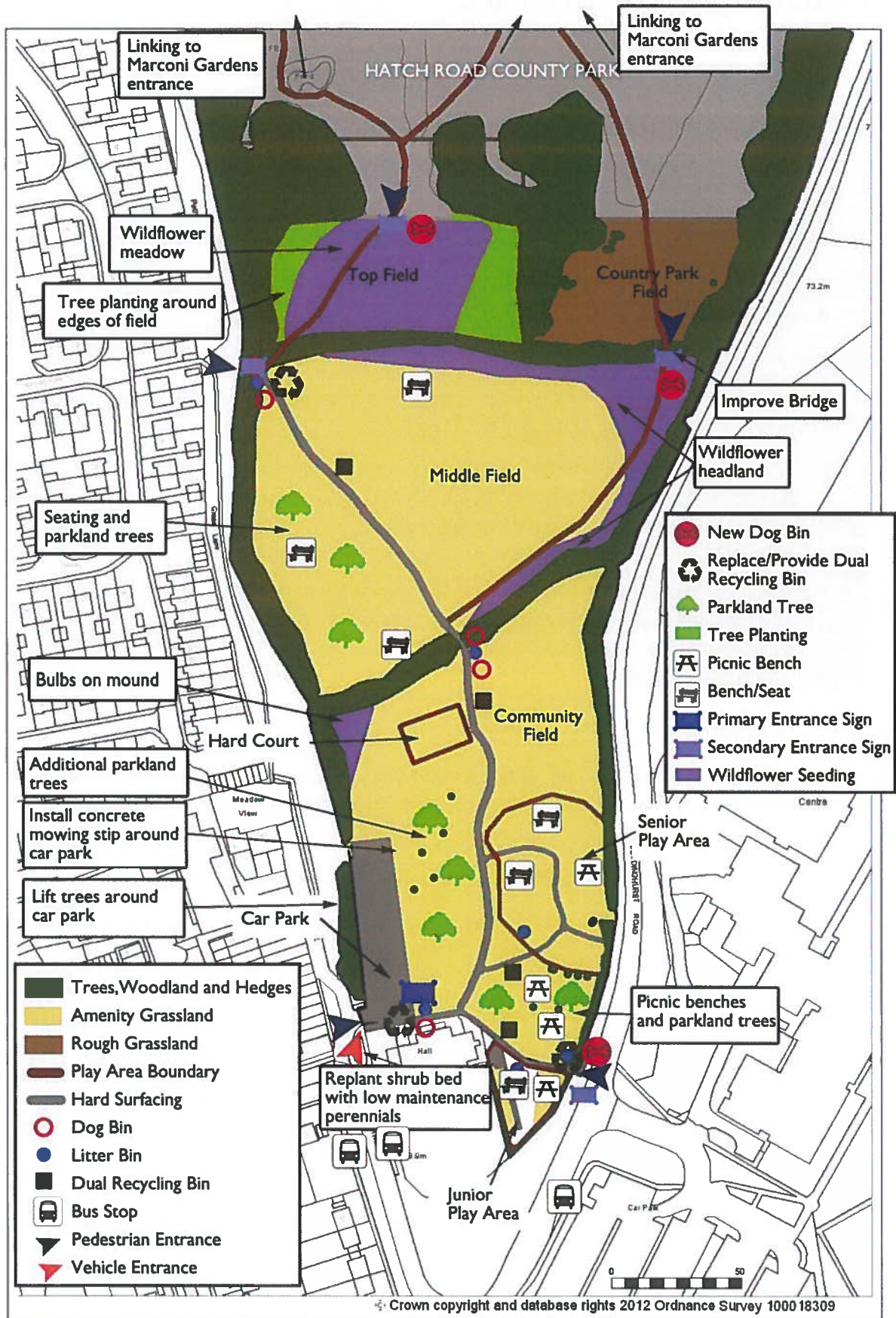
Compartment/ Area of Site	Description	Internal or External Contractor	Financial Year: 2014/15	Financial Year: 2015/16	Financial Year: 2016/17	Financial Year: 2017/18	Financial Year: 2018/19
Year 1 2014/15							
Boundary to front of site (Green Lane)	BH1 Install concrete mowing strip under length of railings.	External	✓				
Main Entrance (Green Lane)	BH2 Install new entrance name board and showing - Opening times; That BBC manage the site and contact details; Where dogs are permitted/prohibited, need to be kept on leads and fouling not permitted; Map of site showing facilities and routes, also including Hatch Road Country Park; That cycling is /not permitted.	External	✓				
Secondary Entrances (Doddinghurst Road, Green Lane north)	BH3 Install site name and welcome signs. Green Lane sign to include information on Hatch Road Country Park.	External	✓				
Entrances from Hatch Road Country Park	BH4 Welcome signs at two entrances from Hatch Road Country Park. Double sided boards to inform of entrance and exit from the two parks. Inform of no dog fouling on entry to Bishop's Hall.	External	✓				
Car Park Boundary	BH5 Lift trees to 2.5 metres and clear vegetation from underneath.	External	✓				
Various locations through site	BH11 Remove old redundant bins from site	Internal	✓				

Compartment/ Area of Site		Description	Internal or External Contractor	Financial Year 2014/15	Financial Year 2015/16	Financial Year 2016/17	Financial Year 2017/18	Financial Year 2018/19
Junior Play Area	BH12	Remove redundant signage from entrance and replace with new corporate compliant style.	External	✓				
Junior Play Area (Railings)	BH13	Install mowing strip under railings in junior play area.	External	✓				
Junior Play Area (Climbing Frame)	BH15	Replace rotting platforms of climbing frame.	External	✓				
Junior Play Area (Sand & Bark pit)	BH17	Top up with sand and bark.	Internal	✓				
Entrance from Brentwood Centre	BH18	Install dog waste bin adjacent to litter bin.	Internal	✓				
Entrances from Hatch Road Country Park	BH19	Install dog waste bins at both entrances.	Internal	✓				
Senior Play Area	BH20	Remove redundant signage from entrance and replace with new corporate compliant style.	External	✓				
Senior Play Area (Railings)	BH21	Install mowing strip under railings in junior play area.	External	✓				
Senior Play Area (Embankment Slide)	BH22	Replace rotting steps either side of embankment slide.	External	✓				
Second Field (Middle Field)	BH28	Lift trees around headland to 4m to allow tractor to pass underneath.	External	✓				
Green Lane Boundary	BH32	Clear all fly tipped vegetation and clear sycamore.	Internal	✓				

Compartment/ Area of Site	Description	Internal or External Contractor	Financial Year 2014/15	Financial Year 2015/16	Financial Year 2016/17	Financial Year 2017/18	Financial Year 2018/19
Year 2 2015/16							
Car Park Boundary	BH6 Remove dilapidated wooden post and rail fence and replace with railings to match existing with concrete mowing strip.	External		✓			
Car Park	BH7 Sweep and white line with parking spaces. Include disabled parking bays.	External		✓			
Senior Play Area (Log Retaining Wall)	BH23 Stain retaining log wall by embankment slide.	Internal		✓			
Central ditch line	BH24 Lift trees to 2.5 metres and clear vegetation from underneath.	External		✓			
Central ditch line	BH25 Clear out ditch.	External		✓			
Year 3 2016/17							
Shrub beds to front of community centre	BH8 Strip out expired shrubs beds and replant with low maintenance grasses and mulch.	Internal			✓		
Along headlands of site	BH9 Undertake bulb planting to provide seasonal variety in floral displays.	Internal			✓		
Various locations through site	BH10 Under take planting of specimen trees	Internal			✓		
Third Field (Top Field)	BH30 Install all weather self-binding gravel footpath through to Hatch Road Country Park.	External			✓		
Country Park Field	BH31 Clear back vegetation and replace bridge to Hatch Road Country Park.	Internal			✓		

Compartment/ Area of Site	Description	Internal or External Contractor	Financial Year 2014/15	Financial Year 2015/16	Financial Year 2016/17	Financial Year 2017/18	Financial Year 2018/19
Year 4 2017/18							
Junior Play Area (Footpath)	BH14 Remove cracking tarmac and resurface where sinking	External				✓	
Junior Play Area (Furniture)	BH16 Replace existing corroded furniture and replace with recycled plastic examples, 2 x picnic tables and 1 x bench.	External				✓	
Second Field (Middle Field)	BH27 Sow headland with wildflower mix to promote biodiversity.	External				✓	
Third Field (Top Field)	BH29 Sow entire field with wild flower mix to promote biodiversity.	Internal				✓	
Year 4 2017/18							
Central ditch line	BH26 Reinforce banks of ditch with a form of shoring to aid in clearing yearly and prevent erosion.	External					✓

Plan 2: Bishop's Hall Park – Summary of Main Actions



Hatch Road Country Park

Site Description

Ownership / Management	Owned by Brentwood Borough Council.
Size	Approx 3.8 hectares.
Rights of Way and Access	No rights of way across site. Byway 155 and 165 (Brentwood), also known as Green Lane, adjoins western boundary. Informal public access permitted across whole site.
Access Points – Pedestrian and Vehicle	Vehicle access point towards north of the site grid ref: TQ 591 958 Formal pedestrian access points from Marconi Gardens, grid refs: TQ 591 958 and TQ 590 957 Informal access point from the south across Bishops Hall playing fields, grid ref: TQ 592 956
Byelaws	None
Tree Preservation Order	25/96 lists 28 preserved trees on the site and in the adjacent Marconi Gardens, see Appendix.
Statutory Designations	None.
Non-statutory designations	Local Wildlife Site: Brentwood Radio Station Grassland G14, designated 1992.
Planning Designations	C3 County Wildlife Sites. GB1 GB2 GB3 H10 Metropolitan Green Belt.

About This Plan

This management plan covers the site of Hatch Road Country Park. The site is located to the north western side of Brentwood town, at the junction of Hatch Road (Pilgrims Hatch) and Doddinghurst Road.

The boundary of the site is shown in Plan 3, along with key locations and features.

The plan evaluates the habitats and biodiversity of the site, and sets out the actions required to manage the site.

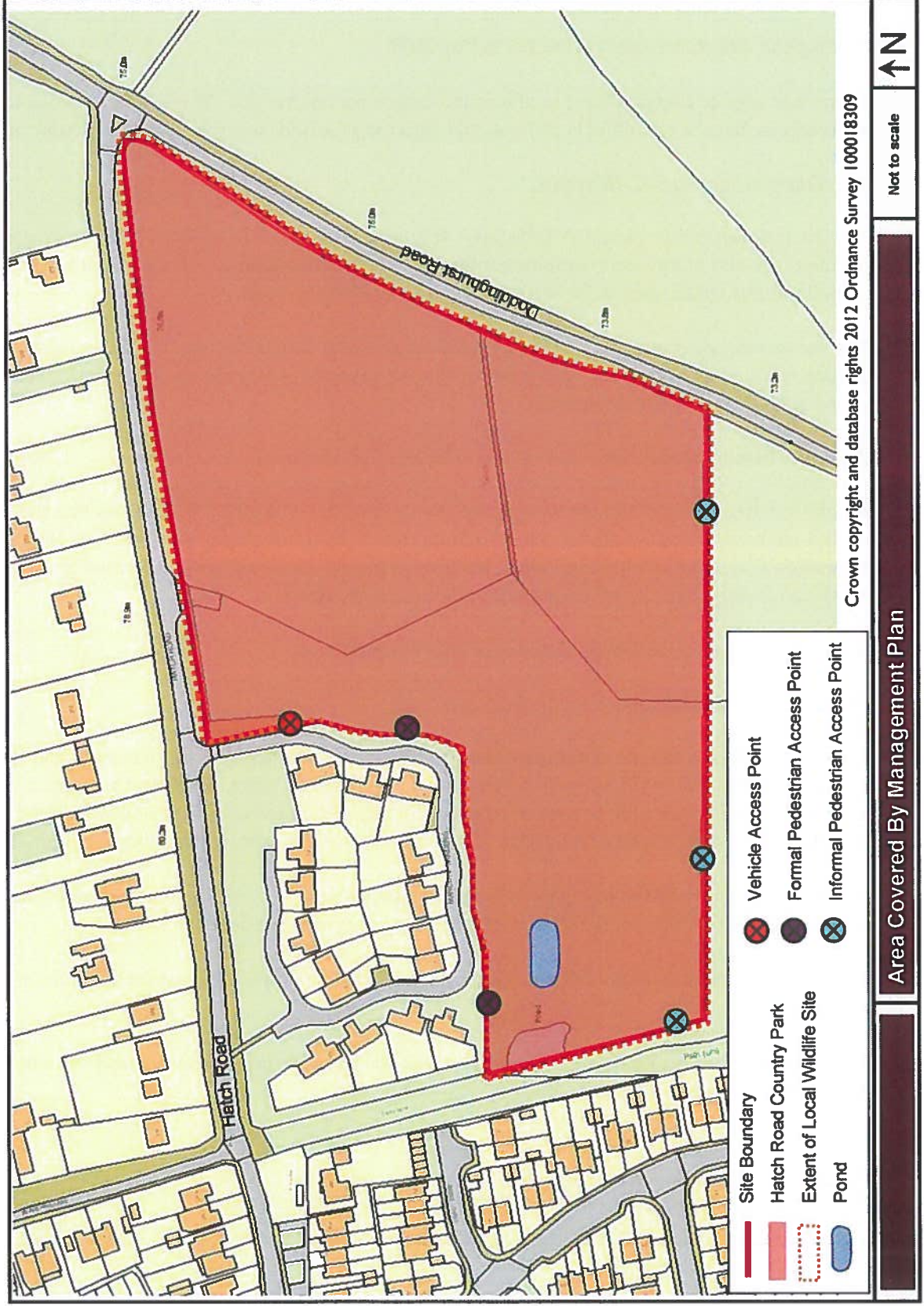
Detailed management actions are set out for the next 10 years.

The formulation of this plan did not include detailed surveys of the site, but used previously documented surveys, supplemented by several walk-over evaluations of the site at different times of the year. It is accepted that there is benefit in updating the records for the site but this was beyond the scope of this document at this time.

Geology and Soils

The site located on Boulder Clays, overlain with seasonally wet, clayey soils of the Windsor Association.

Plan 3: Hatch Road Country Park - Area Covered by Management Plan



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Not to scale

Area Covered By Management Plan



Landform

The site rises slightly from east to west, from around 75m above Ordnance datum (MSL) to 80m above Ordnance datum (MSL).

A pond on the western boundary is shown on Ordnance Survey maps. This pond is no longer present and the location is now covered with scrub.

A new pond was constructed on the site in May 2008.

There is an area of wetter ground on the south-eastern part of the site. There is no evidence of a watercourse, but the woodland in this area and adjacent grassland have species of damp habitats.

Site Designations and Constraints

The site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.² It is unclear whether the designated area was altered to reflect the loss of the north-western corner to residential development. If this has not been carried out this would need to be rectified by the Essex Wildlife Trust.

The site was designed due to its value as a grassland site with botanical interest. Species listed in the citation include lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and sweet vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*)."

Previous Management Plans, Surveys and Other Documents

A botanical assessment of the site was carried out by EECOS Ltd in 2006.³ This survey lists the flora on site and records relative abundance of each species. It does not classify the areas into National Vegetation Classification vegetation types, but groups the area into four general areas of grassland which can distinguished due to differences in species composition.

It makes some general recommendations for future management.

History and Past Management of the Site

The Country Park is the site of a former British Telecom depot which was constructed in the early 20th century (marked on OS maps of 1936). The buildings, hardstanding compound and access track associated with this were located in the centre of the site. This area is currently not within the boundary of the designated Local Wildlife Site. The extent of the compound is shown in Plan 4.

In 2001 planning permission was granted for the construction of 16 dwellings in the north-western portion of the site.⁴ The construction of the housing estate was completed in 2004.

The building works caused disturbance to some areas of the site, although all areas have now re-vegetated.

The location of the former depot was regraded with soil and a portion of this site now lies within the boundary of the country park.

² Local Wildlife Site: Brentwood Radio Station Grassland G14, designated 1992.

³ Essex Ecology Services Ltd (January 2007); BT Hatch Road Brentwood Botanical Survey.

⁴ BRW/222/2001.

The site was transferred to the ownership of Brentwood Borough Council in 2005 as part of a s106 agreement. A dowry of £30,000 was also transferred to the Council in 2007 to carry out essential short term management.

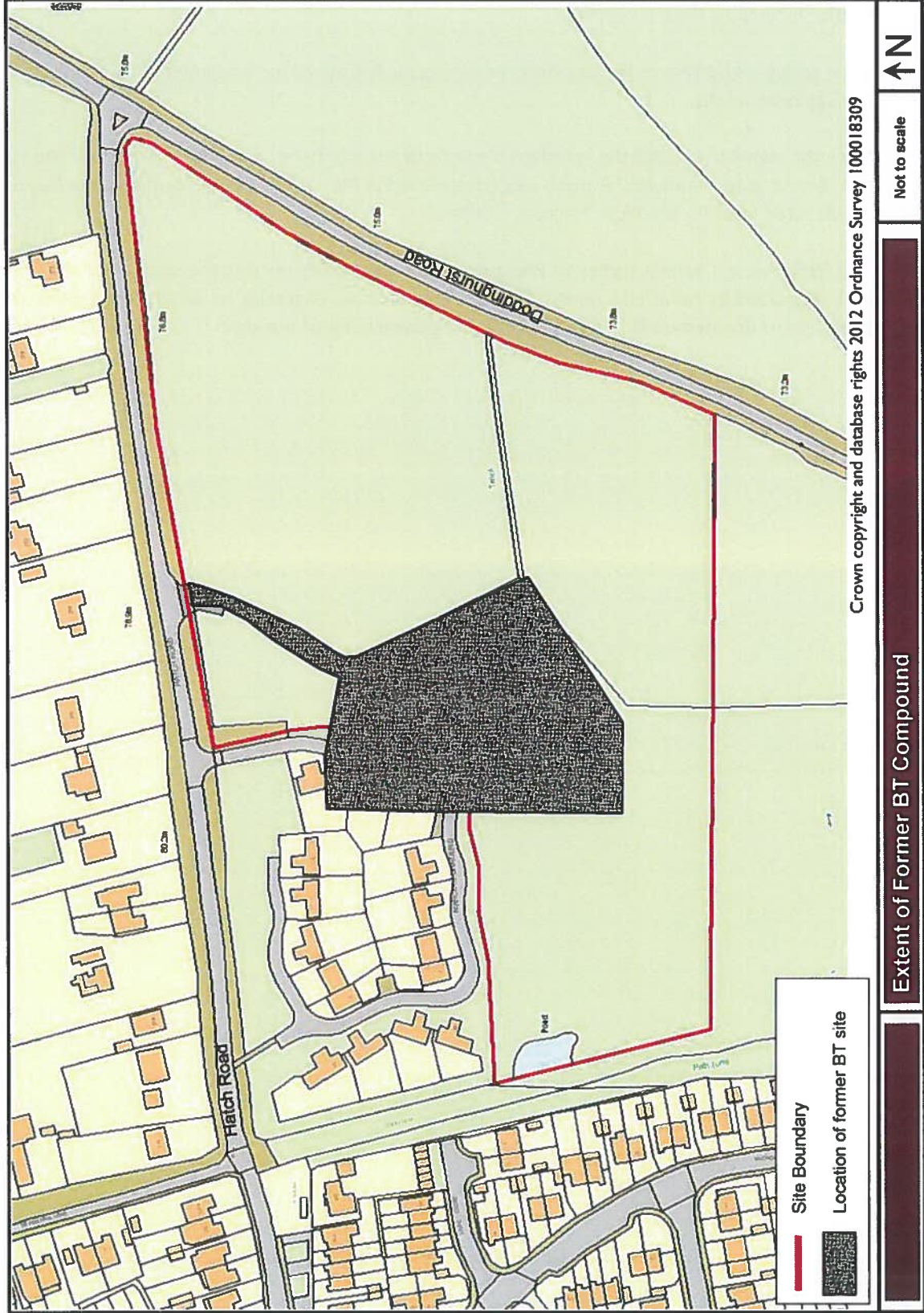
In 2007 the site suffered from traveller incursions. Following this, improvements were made to prevent unauthorised vehicle access. This included the installation of the vehicle gate and the digging of a ditch around the Marconi Road boundary of the site. Since this work was implemented no further incursions have occurred.

Since taking ownership of the site Brentwood Borough Council has implemented a range of management works.

Since the summer of 2008 the grassland sections of the site have been cut in spring and late summer and the cut grass removed. A pond was constructed in May 2008. Access bridges have been constructed into the site from Marconi Gardens.

The 1992 Phase 1 habitat survey of Brentwood Borough mentions that the site was at the time partially grazed by tethered animals. There are no records of grazing or other management of the site prior to Brentwood Borough Council taking ownership of the site.

Plan 4: Hatch Road Country Park - Extent of Former BT Compound



Ecological Evaluation

Management Compartments

The habitat types on the site are shown in Plan 5.

Due to the small size of the site it has not been compartmentalised into traditional management compartments, but areas of note are labelled and listed. Features of interest and management proposals are shown on the relevant plans.

Woodland and Trees

There are several areas of woodland on the site, along with mature hedgerows and shaws and trees planted as part of the planning conditions of the construction of Marconi Gardens, see Plan 6.

On the northern and eastern boundaries of the site is a narrow shaw of trees (marked as **W1**). This row of trees creates a visual screen and buffer from the adjacent roads. The shaw is comprised of mature trees of oak, ash and hornbeam and is a valuable habitat as well as a key landscape feature. Many of the trees are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (number 25/96, see Appendix).

In the north-eastern corner of the site scrub and tree cover is developing in the corner formed by the two boundary shaws.

New tree planting of native species was carried out in 2007-8 along the eastern boundary (**W2**) to extend this hedgerow. Part of this planting has taken place in the north-eastern corner of the grassland which was highlighted as an area of floristic diversity in the 2007 survey. However, as the survey did not specifically identify the location of species of particular interest it is not known whether trees have been planted on the site of any of the key species.

In 2009 the establishment of this new planting could be assessed as variable across the area of planting. Some areas have a high establishment of trees; in other areas there is a high failure rate. This planting will require further maintenance if the woodland is to establish successfully.

In the central area of the site are the remnants of hedgerows.

There are two small groups of trees plus a stretch of high 'hedgerow' which are the remnants of the trees surrounding the BT depot (**W3**). These are comprised of native species including hawthorn and willow.

On maps dating from the 1800's a hedge is shown running from the north to the south of the site hedgerow. The only remaining section of this older hedgerow is adjacent to the southern boundary of the site and it has expanded to form a small area of woodland (**W4**). The central area of this woodland is wetter than the rest of the site, although there is no evidence of a distinct stream or ditch. There is a large dead tree in the centre of this area of woodland.

On the western boundary of the site is Green Lane, an ancient trackway bordered by mature trees. This tree cover is expanding into the site (**W5**).

On the boundary between the country park and Marconi Gardens is a hedge, planted at the time of the construction of the houses (**W6**).

Plan 5: Hatch Road Country Park - Habitats



Plan 6: Hatch Road Country Park - Woodland and Trees



As part of the planning conditions several individual standard trees (mainly ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*) were planted (**W7**). These were planted on the disturbed area of land to the east of Marconi Gardens and as such do not impinge on the more grassland habitat of the wider LoWS. Some of these trees adjacent to the eastern side of Marconi Gardens have not survived.

There are numerous individual self-seeded trees and scrub across the whole site. It is clear from the examination of aerial photographs that the cover of scrub and woodland has increased. The presence of a mix of mature trees, young trees and scrub adds to the diversity of the site, but this increase in tree cover is detrimental if it reduces significantly the amount of grassland. It is important that a balance is struck between a level of tree cover which adds to the biodiversity of the site and that which would be detrimental to the grassland habitat, for which the site has been designated a LoWS.

There are also opportunities for some tree planting around the edge of the site bordering Marconi Gardens. This area still retains evidence of disturbance and this edge of the site is not screened as fully as the other site boundaries. It is still very apparent that the residential area is an intrusion on the site. The attempts at landscape planting as part of the development of Marconi Gardens has assisted, but the planting is disjointed and does not adequately set the site in its new landscape. This could be improved through some further tree planting.

There is an area of land between the mature existing hedgerow and the newly planted hedgerow which could be planted, which would improve screening and would also help to visually improve this entrance. The addition of hedgerow trees in the stretch of hedgerow W3 and the extension of this planting to meet the ash trees planted as part of the landscaping works would help to create a more coherent and intact landscape setting for the site boundaries adjacent to the residential area.

Grassland

The main habitat of the site is grassland. The species are typical of semi-natural lowland grassland on a neutral to slightly acidic soil (mesotrophic grassland). The mix of species suggests that the grassland has not been significantly improved with chemicals and there is no evidence of reseeded with agricultural leys.

It is for the grassland habitat that the site was designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (now termed Local Wildlife Site) in 1992.

The citation lists that the site contains “a good range of species including Lady’s bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*).”

The grassland still maintains features of being unimproved and as such is a key habitat of nature conservation value. Such unimproved grasslands are valuable lowland habitats which have historically has high levels of loss. However, the grassland has reached the stage of a tall grass community, where grasses that grow aggressively have out-competed finer grasses and flowers, resulting in a loss of diversity.

The ecological survey of 2007⁵ compartmentalises the grassland habitat into four areas between which there is some difference in species composition. These areas are shown in Plan 7.

⁵ Essex Ecology Services Ltd (January 2007); BT Hatch Road Brentwood Botanical Survey.

Area A is the western most field to the south of the residential area. In the 2007 survey it is described as a grassland with a wide range of species. The most frequent grass species are *Agrostis* spp, with sweet vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), rough meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*) and tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) also present. Also of botanical interest is lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and the grassland also contains other species including black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*).

Area B is the area directly to the east of Marconi Gardens. It partly covers the former site of the BT depot and the area was disturbed during the construction of Marconi Gardens. The 2007 survey records that the area reflects this past disturbance, with species such as creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), bristly oxtongue (*Picris ecgioides*), horse-radish (*Armoracia rusticana*) and teasel (*Dipsacus fullomum*) forming a greater component of the grassland than the other areas of the site.

Area C This area of grassland is described in the 2007 survey as being dominated by false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), but with localised areas of botanical interest in the north-east corner including lady's bedstraw and burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and a localised patch of betony (*Stachys officinalis*).

Area D in the south eastern most corner of the site is characterised by damper conditions, as does the adjacent woodland area W4. Species recorded here in 2007 include marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and localised meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*).

Area E is outside of the boundary of Hatch Road Country Park. It is a small area of rough grassland (approximately 0.4 hectares) between the Country Park and the Bishops Hall Playing Field and is also owned by Brentwood Borough Council. This area was not included in the 2007 survey but it is rank grassland, dominated by false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). Scrub is encroaching across the area. This area of grassland has not been cut for many years and was not included in the haycutting of the Country Park site in 2008 and 2009. If this area remains uncut it will continue to be an area from which thistles and other weed species will re-infect the wildlife site, therefore hindering efforts to restore the biodiversity value of the site.

Cutting of the grassland, with the cutting being removed, started in 2008, with the implementation of both a mid summer (June) and late summer (September) cut.

The sward in 2009 was still vigorous and dense and dominated by false oat-grass. However, comparison with Area E, which has received no management in recent years, highlights that the management is already having a positive effect, with a lower level of creeping thistle, hogweed and other weed species.

Human activity created grasslands habitats and therefore annual management is required in order to prevent degradation of the habitat, and ultimately reversion to a scrub habitat. Management is also key to maintaining and increasing floristic diversity.

This management is either through cutting and removing the cut grass or through grazing. The aim of both forms of management in biodiversity terms is to remove nutrients from the site to provide more favourable conditions for 'finer' grass species and flowers and create less favourable conditions for coarse grasses, to break up any thatched grass in the sward and to create seeding places for the establishment of flower species.

Grazing produces a diverse structure with areas of short and long grass and the stocking levels of animals on each field can be controlled to give the desired result. This must be balanced with the initial costs of fencing and water provision and potential problems with sourcing graziers and public access. Cutting requires intervention only once a year and avoids possible conflict but incurs an annual cost

As there has not been any past monitoring of the site and management during the time of ownership by BT is unclear, it is not possible to definitively determine that there has been decrease in floristic diversity. However, it is possible to infer through the limited occurrences of those species of floristic interest recorded in the 2007 survey, along with the predominance of a 'rank' grassland sward and vigorous sward growth, that the floristic diversity of the site has decreased since its designation in 1992.

Therefore management in the form of cutting or grazing is essential on this site to halt decline in floristic diversity and to work to increase the floristic diversity. Due to the vigorous growth of the sward still evident after two seasons of cutting in the spring and summer, intensive cutting could be required for several seasons. The long term aim will be to revert to an annual hay-cut.

Grazing is unlikely to be a practical option due to the small scale of the site and lack of proximity of nearby grazing land and capital outlay will be required to fence and install water on the site. Due to public access on the site, cattle would be the most appropriate grazing animals.

At present the entire site is cut, apart from some areas around the scrub margins. This extensive cutting removes all hibernation areas for invertebrates, although to date this has been addressed to some extent through the area of land directly to the south of the site remaining unmanaged. However, if this area is brought into management to enhance the biodiversity value of this area of land and to help prevent the spread of thistles and other undesirable species back onto the main Country Park site, this refuge area will be lost.

Pond

There is a created pond in the field to the south of Marconi Gardens. This was constructed in May 2008. It is approximately 13m by 20m and lined with puddled clay. Wetland plants were planted and wildflower seed sown around the edge of the pond.

The creation of the pond has not been entirely successful and the pond does not hold water throughout the year. There is no water inlet to the pond and therefore it relies on the pond filling entirely through precipitation.

Mammals

There is a possible badger sett on the western boundary just south of the south-western most property of Marconi Gardens and roughly on the location shown on Ordnance survey maps as a pond.

There were signs of activity at the time of the formulation of this plan (2009).

If this is indeed a badger sett this will need to be taken into account before carrying out management works in the vicinity which could result in disturbance to the sett (see paragraph 0).

It is possible that there are bats present in the pill boxes and in mature trees surrounding the site.

Access and Interpretation Evaluation

Access

There is full public access across the site.

There are two formal pedestrian access points from Marconi Gardens, along with a vehicle access point from Marconi Gardens close to Hatch Road. Access is also gained from the south through both fields adjacent to the Bishops Hall Playing Fields. See Plan 3 for current access points.

There are several informal paths across the site. None of these paths are surfaced.

There are two pill boxes on the site. One is close to the southern site boundary within woodland W4, the other is close to the eastern boundary (Doddinghurst Road). The structure close to the eastern has attracted some anti-social behaviour and is due to be removed in 2010.

From October 2004, under Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), service providers have been expected to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding physical features which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to make use of a service. It requires that provision for disabled people is considered equally with that of all other visitors when determining the management of access to the countryside.

The level of access that is reasonable to provide at Hatch Road Country Park needs to be assessed on a number of parameters:

- Current physical access around the site and the natural physical features of the site (eg topography) which may enhance or limit access;
- Ability of the public to reach the site;
- Provision of access across the range of countryside sites in the area.

To determine current standards an accessibility assessment was carried out using 'BT Countryside for All' and a checklist adapted from the Sensory Trust. Table 6 provides a brief evaluation of the main issues relating to accessibility on the site.

Weald Country Park within the vicinity of Hatch Road Country Park already provides high standards of 'access for all' provision, especially for wheelchairs. However, this site is a useful local and community site and access to some parts could be improved.

There are few resting places in the park which limits comfortable enjoyment by a range of people, including the elderly.

It would be appropriate to make access improvements. This would not have to be across the entire site as the site is already fully accessible to a wide section of the population due to the flat topography and easy to use grass paths. Improvements in key areas of interest close to an entrance way could be achieved with low resource input and would open up the site for a wider range of the people. A key location for this would be in the south-western part of the site around the pond, which can be accessed both from Marconi Gardens and would be accessible to the wider population of Pilgrims Hatch using Green Lane.

The areas around the entrances are key to the site being welcoming to visitors. There are opportunities to keep these entrances clearer of vegetation.

Table 6: Hatch Road Country Park - Access Assessment

Access/Routes		
Are all parts of the site accessible to people with limited mobility, including wheelchairs	No	The site is flat and level with well-trodden grass paths which are easy to use for people with a range of mobility abilities but not manual wheelchairs
Are the most popular features/areas accessible? Are the areas nearest to main point of entry accessible?	No	As above, access is easily gained but not suitable for wheelchair access
Are there compensatory routes around difficult areas, offering an equivalent quality of experience?	No	
Are path surfaces firm, even and non-slip?	Partly	Grassy paths are broadly accessible to pedestrians in summer, but are not wheelchair accessible and could become muddy during the winter.
Are entrances accessible?	No	Bridge structure from one entrance from Marconi Gardens and grass path entrance from other Marconi Gardens entrance
No car park is available, is there a drop off point close to the entrance?	Yes	Marconi Gardens offers a quiet drop off point
Comfort		
Is there adequate resting/seating provision on walks/trails?	Partly	Limited benches or seating on site.
Are there pleasant seating areas close to entrances(s) for people with limited mobility?	Partly	Bench close to pond.
Safety		
Does the site have waymarking, maps (tactile or otherwise) or other orientation devices?	No	Interpretation commissioned and will be installed in 2010.
Are there clear sightlines from pathways, particularly curves or gradients?	Yes	Mainly good due to landform of the site giving good views.
Has the creation of dead-ends and 'entrapment zones' been avoided?	Yes	
Accessibility in Context of Other Countryside Sites		
Are there other nearby countryside sites that provide access for all?	Yes	Weald Country Park offers high levels of access and extensive Country Park facilities. This site is a valuable site for the local community which live in close proximity but is not promoted for visitors from further afield.
Capacity of Site		
Are there limits placed on providing reasonable access, for example through the landform of the site?	No	

Community and Educational Use

Brentwood Conservation Volunteers, a group of volunteers from the local community, carry out periodic management of the site under the guidance of Brentwood Borough council staff.

There is currently no educational use of the site. Pilgrims Hatch Primary School is within a mile walking distance of the site and therefore the site offers potential for use by the school. The site should be promoted to the school for such use. Notwithstanding the limited staff resources from Brentwood Borough Council to organise school visits, the school may wish to use the site independently which would help to foster local interest in the site amongst families.

Due to the close proximity of Pilgrims Hatch there is great potential to increase community engagement in the site. The formation of a 'Friends' Group or volunteer wardens to help manage the site could be beneficial in the long term. Real community interest in a site can help to prevent and manage problems such as flytipping and vandalism. However, this approach does require considerable staff resources in the short-term. Within the current staff structure there is likely to be insufficient staff time available to undertake substantial community involvement in this site.

It is possible that interested local individuals could assist with monitoring and checking the site for the key floristic species which management is trying to increase.

There is potential to raise awareness of the nature conservation value of the site with local residents. This could be done utilising existing community newsletters, on site notice boards and through the local school.

Interpretation Provision

Interpretation boards have been commissioned and are due to be installed in 2010.

There is currently no entrance signing naming the site or stating that it is available for public access and owned and management by Brentwood Council. Such signage would help to create a sense of identity for the site.

Summary of Evaluation

This section serves to summarise the main points of the evaluation section.

Table 7: Hatch Road Country Park - Ecological Evaluation of Habitats

Criteria	Grassland	Woodland and Scrub	Pond
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall low species diversity apart from localised areas of greater botanical interest The grassland retains some characteristics of unimproved grassland which is of higher biodiversity value than improved grassland habitats Grassland is formed and maintained through human management practices. As the grassland communities have been unimproved they retain some botanical interest The centre of the site has been heavily disturbed 	<p><u>Species Diversity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited diversity of tree species in most areas of woodland <p><u>Structural Diversity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of ages in the woodland and scrub from mature trees in the hedgerow/shaws surrounding the site to younger trees and scrub developing The scrub and shaws have developed through self-seeding The hedgerow bounding Beads Hall Lane which also forms the western boundary of the site is likely to be ancient, following the course of this ancient trackway There are some limited remnants of the old hedgerow pattern There are few non-native tree species on the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low diversity of plants Pond sparsely vegetated
Naturalness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unimproved grassland is uncommon The site supports some locally uncommon species including lady's bedstraw (<i>Galium verum</i>) burnet saxifrage (<i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i>) and sweet vernal-grass (<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created pond with no natural water inlet
Rarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The grassland will decrease in biodiversity value unless management is continued in the form of cutting or grazing The grassland is at risk from scrub encroachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No rare species and not a rare habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No rare species recorded
Fragility		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust habitat which is readily regenerating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pond dries out in the summer It is therefore currently not a robust habitat

Criteria	Grassland	Woodland and Scrub	Pond
<p>Position in the Ecological Unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unimproved grassland is becoming uncommon in Essex and forms only a small proportion of the land cover in the Borough ▪ Since 1930, nationally 95% of flower-rich neutral grasslands have been lost. The sites owned by Brentwood Borough Council would form a very significant semi-natural grassland habitat in Essex with appropriate management. ▪ This habitat exists only in isolated sites and this site is not linked to any other unimproved grassland sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the surrounding landscape are mature hedgerows and isolated small woodlands. This mature shaws on this site forms an important landscape and ecological link in this network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not connected or close to any other wetland habitat ▪ Useful biodiversity addition to the site if the issue of water retention can be solved

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Mature trees and shaws surrounding site grounds the site in the surrounding landscape, provides valuable habitat and links to other nearby mature hedgerows and small woodlands</p>	<p>Disturbance of area to the east of Marconi Gardens during construction works has altered the vegetation community structure and introduced non-native species</p>
<p>Some uncommon grassland species remain despite lack of management during previous ownership and disturbance of some areas of the site during construction works</p>	<p>Lack of management has resulted in the grassland developing into a rank grassland with a dense sward, threatening the viability of the more uncommon flora</p>
<p>Diversity of age structure of woodland and scrub provides a range of habitats</p>	<p>Recent tree planting has taken place in an area identified as having botanical interest (north eastern corner)</p>
<p>Inclusion of the pond has the potential to add a valuable habitat</p>	<p>Presence of Marconi Gardens residential area remains intrusive in the landscape</p>
<p>In close proximity to residential area creating a locally important public access site</p>	
<p>The mosaic of trees, scrub and grassland adds to the biodiversity value of the site</p>	
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Enhancement of the pond would add a valuable wetland habitat</p>	<p>Further reduction in the area of grassland due to encroachment of scrub</p>
<p>Further tree planting to continue to reduce the impact of Marconi Gardens</p>	<p>Due to proximity to urban areas there is a possibility of anti-social use, eg fly-tipping, travellers, motor-bike use</p>
<p>Establishment of refuge strips in the grassland which are cut on rotation</p>	<p>Cessation of management of the grassland would result in loss of species of interest</p>
<p>Instate management of adjacent area of land to increase biodiversity value and to limit spread of thistles and other weeds species back onto the main site</p>	<p>Re-colonisation of site with thistles and other weed species from the adjacent Brentwood Borough Council owned land and from the area of disturbed land to the east of Marconi Gardens</p>
<p>Proximity of Marconi Gardens and extensive residential area nearby offers the potential of community engagement</p>	
<p>Promote access links from the south from Beads Hall Lane and Bishops Hall Playing fields</p>	
<p>Create a greater sense of identity, eg with entrance signage, and promote understanding of the value of the site</p>	
<p>Improvement of standard of access and 'access for all'</p>	
<p>Monitoring of the presence and extent of key species would help to guide future management</p>	

Factors Influencing Management Objectives

General Factors Influencing Management Objectives

The needs of nature conservation need to be balanced with the public amenity role of the site. This influences, for example, the choice of hay-cutting to manage the grassland versus grazing.

Management Structure and Resources

The site is currently managed by staff and volunteers working under the auspices of Brentwood Borough Council.

There is a current budget available for the management of the site (£19,746) which is the remaining amount of the dowry associated with the transfer of the site to Brentwood Borough Council.

Due to current and future public spending constraints it is likely that ongoing budget resources available from Brentwood Borough Council for management will be limited.

As there is public access the site may qualify for grants from some lottery sources. It may be necessary to apply for these through a site based community group, which at present does not exist for the site.

The site is not in the Essex target area for Higher Level Stewardship.

Although the site has some biodiversity value it is unlikely to be sufficiently attractive to funders giving grants for biodiversity management.

Management through the volunteer work parties of the Brentwood Conservation Volunteers could continue if sufficient supervisory staff time is allocated by Brentwood Borough Council. This would be the most cost-effective form of management.

Designation and Legal Constraints

A Tree Preservation Order is in place for some of the mature trees on the northern and eastern boundary of the site.

Wider Influencing Factors

Climate Change

Climate change is a factor which needs to be taken into account when formulating management objectives, especially for woodland habitats for which management actions have a long timescale.

Although the exact effects of climate change on this site cannot be predicted, some general principles which can be applied to habitat management should be considered in formulating management objectives:

- Reduce habitat fragmentation and increasing the connectivity of the landscape so that species can move in response to changing climate;
- Enhance populations of species and maintain favourable habitat conditions for them.

This requires that habitat management creates a robust habitat. It also requires that the site is not viewed in isolation, but as a key habitat within the wider landscape.

Management Aims and Objectives

The management aims are:

Aim 1 To manage the site to conserve and enhance the habitats, in particular the grassland habitat for which the site is designated a LoWS

Objectives

- 1 To implement management to halt the further decline in floristic diversity of the grassland and to aim to increase the diversity, especially of key species as identified within the LoWs citation;
- 2 To reduce scrub coverage of grassland areas where this scrub is compromising the grassland habitat;
- 3 To retain a mosaic of shrub, wetland and sub-shrub habitats;
- 4 To improve biodiversity of the pond/wetland area;
- 5 To gain further understanding of the populations of key species and the effects of management, setting limits of acceptable change;

Aim 2 To provide a publicly accessible site

Objectives

- 6 To improve access for people with a range of abilities, at a level appropriate to the status of the park as a site for local people;

Aim 3 To improve the landscape setting of the site

Objectives

- 7 To carry out further landscaping around Marconi gardens to embed the residential area in the landscape and to further screen the development from the Country Park;

Aim 4 To extend understanding and involvement from the local community and schools

Objectives

- 8 To install interpretation and entrance boards to increase site identity;
- 9 To promote awareness of the nature conservation value of the site with adjacent residents and the local community of Pilgrims Hatch;
- 10 To promote the site as an education resource.

Management Actions

Grassland Management Actions

Grassland management areas are shown in Plan 7.

Two hay-cuts during the growing season should continue for two or possibly three more seasons. The first spring cut should be brought forward from June to April, with later summer hay-cut remaining in August/early September. Monitor the effect of this cutting regime on the sward and move to an annual late summer haycut when grass growth has become less vigorous.

The thistles on the site and in the adjacent Area E should be topped in June until the amount of this species has reduced.

Continue to leave margins of longer grass around woodland and scrub edges. In addition, leave refuge strips of uncut grass in each of fields. Cut these refuge strips and grass margins on rotation to improve diversity of the refuge areas and to control creeping thistle and other weed species. Leave some refuge areas intact at all times.

It is imperative that the field of rank grassland adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the site (**Area E**), also owned by Brentwood Borough Council, is brought into management as soon possible to prevent re-infestation of the LoWS grassland, and to improve the extent of grassland habitat. Whilst this remains uncut it is hindering the efforts to restore the biodiversity value of the grassland.

The disturbed areas of grassland (**Area B**) requires more intensive cutting for two or possible three seasons in order to control species such as nettle and horse-radish and prevent spread of these species into the wider grassland. Consider spot treatment of undesired species if necessary if cutting is not sufficiently effective. Small areas of teasel can remain as a seed source for birds but this species should also be cut to prevent further spread.

Also consider more regular cutting of the area around the pond if this area becomes a more easily accessible area of the site. It would be appropriate to implement more intensive management in this area.

Although the presence of key species of floristic interest was confirmed through the 2007 survey and the approximate locations of these species, further detail is required to determine the extent of these species. The grassland should be monitored, with a first action plotting those areas of higher botanical interest. At a minimum a simple walk-over survey should be conducted each year before the late summer hay cut.

Management should be adjusted depending on the levels of key species recorded annually, which includes species of floristic interest and importantly undesirable species such as creeping thistle and the spread of undesirable species from the disturbed grassland in Area B. This survey should extend to the area of recent planting in the north eastern corner.

Keep entrances more clear of vegetation to maintain a welcoming aspect to the site.

Woodland, Scrub and Landscape Enhancement Management Actions

Woodland, scrub and landscape enhancement actions are shown in Plan 8.

Remove scrub from areas of the site in order to prevent further loss of grassland habitat:

- Remove satellite scrub in Areas A, C and D;
- Reduce extent of scrub in Areas A, C and D;
- Monitor extent of scrub around woodland edges and prevent further spread, cutting edge scrub on rotation if necessary.

Further planting around the Marconi Gardens boundary be beneficial to strengthen the landscape setting of this site edge and would be sited on the area of previously disturbed grassland and therefore would not impinge on the more floristically diverse grassland:

- The area between the hedge planted as part of the landscaping works and the existing boundary hedge (marked P1 on Plan 8) to produce a more cohesive landscape edge
- Implement a larger area of planting to join the existing hedgerow W3 with the standard trees planted as landscaping (W7) (marked P2 on Plan 8). Incorporate hedgerow trees within the hedgerow W3. This would provide an area of planting which is more blended into the landscape and would enhance the setting of the entrances

An outline plan for this planting is shown in Plan 9.

The pond should be monitored during the next few seasons as the lack of water may be due to the low levels of rainfall in 2008 and 2009 and the pond may fill during the coming years. However, if there is sufficient rainfall but the pond does not fill it is likely that the lining of the pond is compromised. The options to remedy the situation are limited as there is no natural source of water on site to fill the pond and filling through non-natural means is not sustainable. The possible options are:

- Take no action and accept the pond will remain as it is, albeit as an unattractive feature of the site;
- Regrade the pond into a marshy area, filling it halfway with soil and consider using a liner to assist water retention;
- Fill the pond in.

It is suggested that in order to determine which course of action is taken a community consultation exercise is carried out with adjacent residents and users of the site, presenting the three options. This will raise awareness of the issues and will provide a mandate for the decision and acceptance by users.

Access and Community

Formalise the entrance from Green Lane, tidying and clearing the entrance and installing low key entrance signage. This would open up the site to residents from Pilgrims Hatch and would avoid the requirement to walk along Hatch Road which does not have pavements.

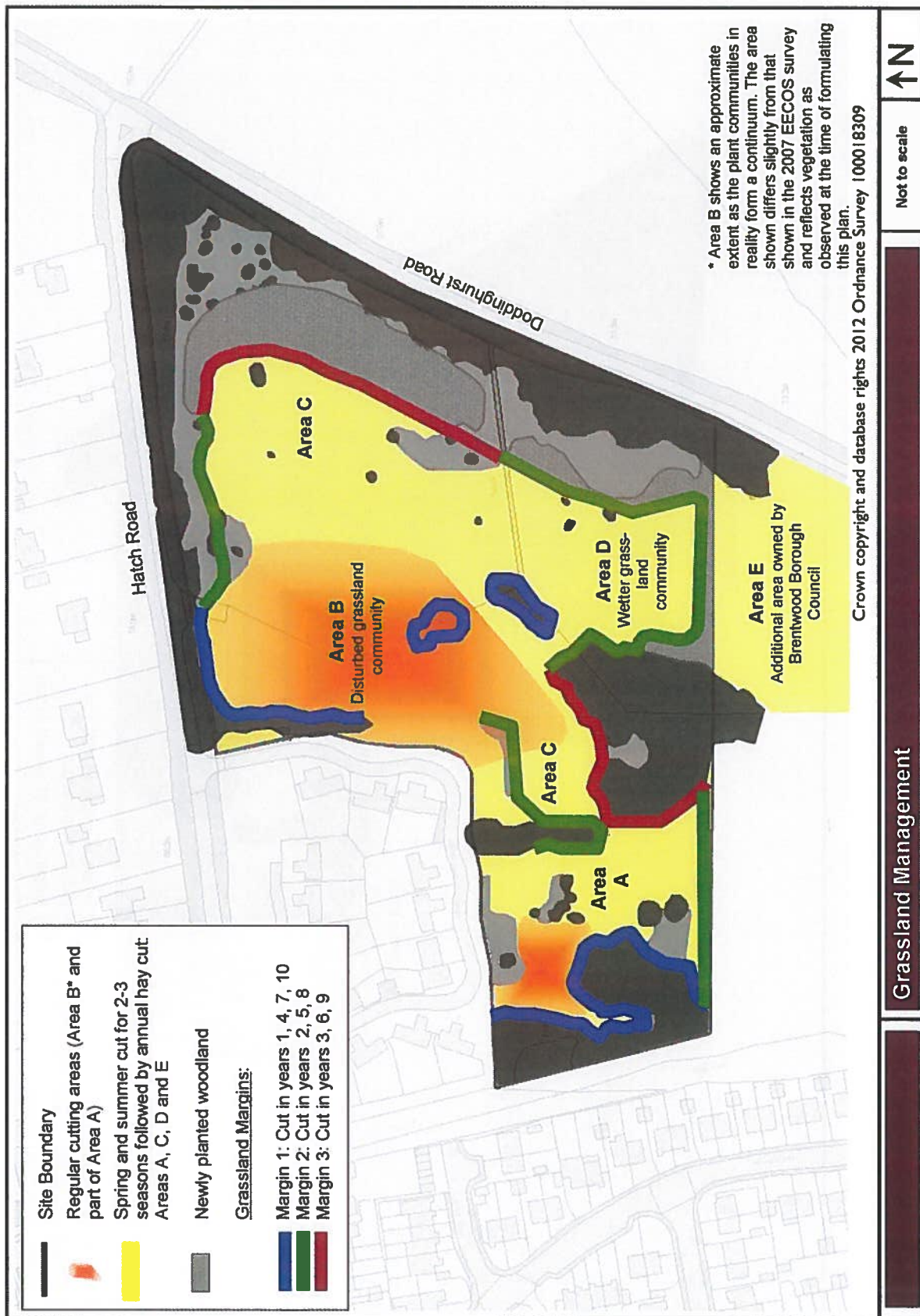
Zone the area around the pond as an easy access area, keeping the grass in the area more regularly cut. Consider surfacing a path from Marconi entrance to this area.

More benches would make the site more useable for those with mobility impairments. A key area should be around the pond.

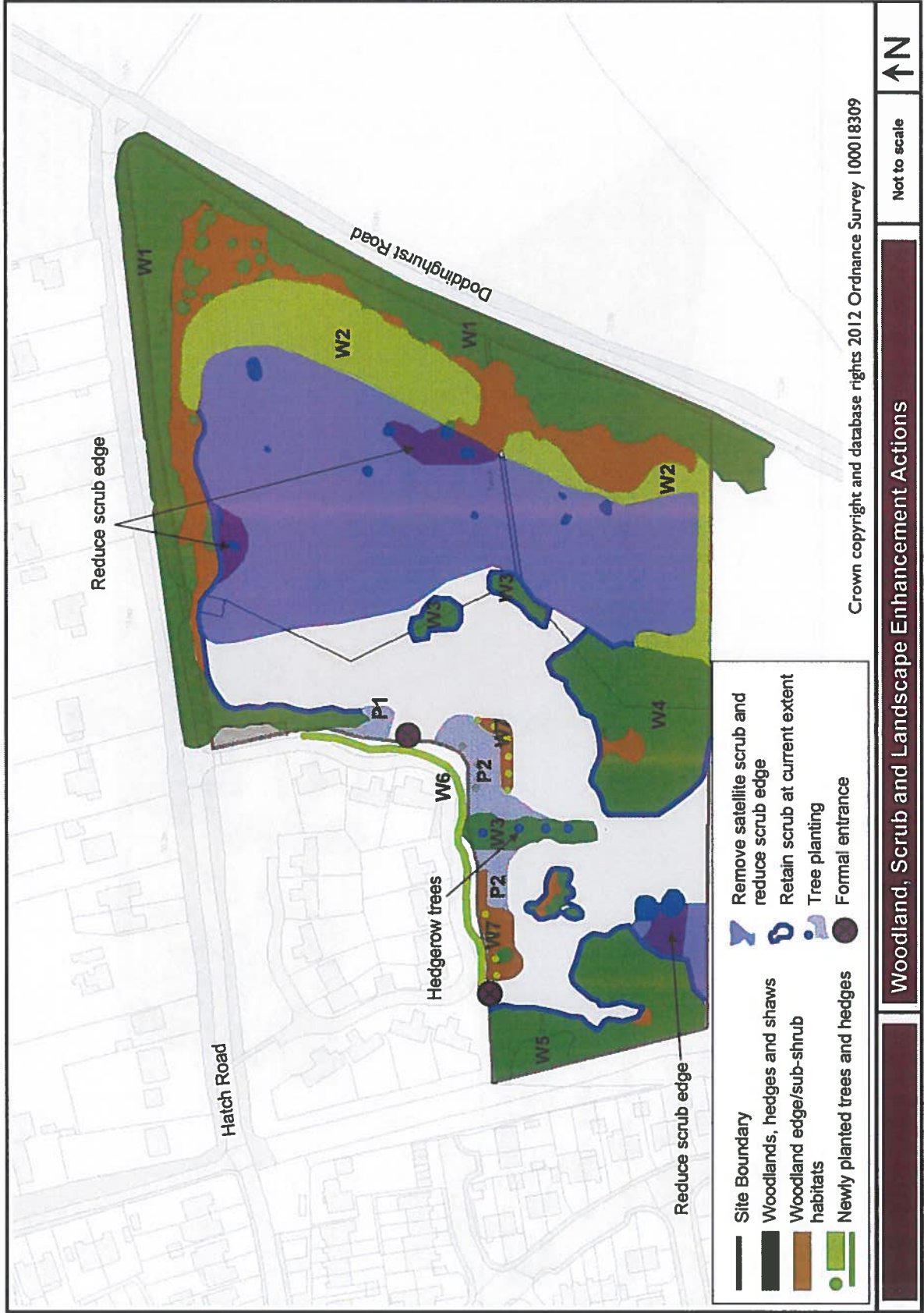
Install entrance signage, including low key entrance signage at the informal Bishops Hall entrance.

Make the entrances more welcoming through preventing them becoming overgrown with vegetation.

Plan 7: Hatch Road Country Park - Grassland Management



Plan 8: Hatch Road Country Park – Woodland, Scrub and Landscape Enhancement Actions



Protected Wildlife

There are a number of animals protected under law which are either known to be present or believed to be present on the site.

Under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 an offences would constitute:

- intentional killing, injuring, taking;
- possession or control (live or dead animal, part or derivative);
- damage to, destruction of, obstruction of access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection;
- disturbance of animal occupying such a structure or place;
- selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative);
- advertising for buying or selling such things.

Species which may inhabit the site which are given full protection under Schedule 5 are:

- All bats (in pill boxes and mature trees);
- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*).

Bats and their roosts and great crested newts are and also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994, which defines them as "European protected species of animals". This makes it an offence deliberately to kill, capture, or disturb a European Protected Species, or to damage or destroy the breeding site or resting place of such an animal. If a management action is likely to result in breach of these regulations a licence must be applied for to Natural England.

For any works which may affect these species Natural England must be consulted and consent obtained.

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which makes it an offence to damage or obstruct a badger sett which shows signs of current use by badgers, or to disturb a badger within a sett. Different agencies are responsible for issuing licences for disturbing a sett depending on the purpose of the work, ie for conservation, forestry or for works to a Scheduled Monument. It is therefore advisable to consult with these agencies to determine the correct procedure for any given management action.

Action Table

Actions for Hatch Road Country Park are shown in Table .

Table 8: Hatch Road Country Park – Management Actions

Code	Description	Year of Management Plan	Actual Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Priority	Suitable for Volunteers?	Type of Work
HR4	Cut refuge margins 3; leave uncut margins 1 and 2.	1	2014			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR16	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	1	2014			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR7	Cut refuge margins 1; leave uncut margins 2 and 3	2	2015			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR17	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	2	2015			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR10	Cut refuge margins 2; leave uncut margins 1 and 3	3	2016			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR18	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	3	2016			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR11	Cut refuge margins 3; leave uncut margins 1 and 2.	4	2017			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR19	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	4	2017			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR12	Cut refuge margins 1; leave uncut margins 2 and 3	5	2018			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer

Code	Description	Year of Management Plan	Actual Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Priority	Suitable for Volunteers?	Type of Work
HR20	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	5	2018			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR13	Cut refuge margins 2; leave uncut margins 1 and 3	6	2019			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR21	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	6	2019			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR14	Cut refuge margins 3; leave uncut margins 1 and 2	7	2020			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR22	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	7	2020			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR15	Cut refuge margins 1; leave uncut margins 2 and 3	8	2021			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR23	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	8	2021			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR24	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	9	2022			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer
HR25	Hay cut, late summer. Cut and remove arisings. Leave some refuge areas uncut; see relevant year for details.	10	2023			x		1	No	Grass/vegetation cutting - summer