

ANNEX C

**MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR HUNTINGDON RIVERSIDE
PARK – EASTERN END**

**May 2007
COUNTRYSIDE AND PARK SERVICES
HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

DRAFT



SITE DESCRIPTION

Huntingdon Riverside Park is a linear park owned by Huntingdonshire District Council which stretches from Huntingdon's Old River Bridge at the western end, to Church Lane in Hartford at the eastern end. The site is bounded by the River Great Ouse on one side and Huntingdon town on the other.

The park is designated in planning policy as an Area of Best landscape and an Open Space and Gap for Protection which restricts development on the land. Much of the site is in the floodplain identified by the Environment Agency.

The western part of the park is semi-formal parkland with a number of single trees, and a hard surfaced path running through it. At the western end there is also a children's play area, a large carpark, Purvis Marine boat repair yard, a boat club, a pavilion and two football pitches.

To the east of the football pitches a line of mature Poplar and Willow trees marks the point where Riverside Park changes to a more rural environment with more naturalised tree belts and pockets of woodland, a wide expanse of meadow, ditches and wet areas as well as ancient trees. In addition to the hard surface path which continues from the southern end, there are less formal grass mown paths around the meadow.

This management plan is concerned with the area of Riverside Park which is east of the football pitches. Also included is the small mown area by Church Lane at the very eastern point where there is a small car park and an area of mown grass.

The eastern end of Riverside Park, to which this management plan refers, total's 0.0901 km² or 0.3478 miles².

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

The eastern end of Riverside Park has been divided into zones, which are shown on the aerial photo.

ZONE 1: Poplars and Grassland Strip

ZONE 2: Meadow

ZONE 3: Tree Belt

ZONE 4: Woodland Pocket

ZONE 5: Car park and Green

For each zone the main plant / tree species are noted and a proposal given for management of that area. A separate map has been used to identify particular areas within the zones where work has been suggested.

ZONE 1: POPLARS AND GRASSLAND STRIP

Main Species: Poplar and Willow trees, bramble and nettle.

Hedge along grassland strip consists of Hawthorn and Elm.

- The line of Poplars and Willows at the edge of the playing field have been cut in the past and this should be continued. The trees should be checked every 8 years to see if the tops need cutting.

- The path running parallel to the Poplars should be mown between April and September if the ground is dry. To encourage wildflowers along the edge of the path, a 1 meter strip along the middle could be mown with the blade on low and for 1 meter either side the blade could be raised slightly.
- The entrance from the playing field at point 1A should be kept accessible. The bramble bush here needs to be trimmed each year in the autumn to prevent it from growing across the path.
- The grassland strip which runs parallel to the road is kept short by rabbits but periodic mowing of the nettles and creeping thistles will discourage these from spreading.
- The hedgerow along the grassland strip, which is an important boundary to the road, both visually and for wildlife, is thin and gappy. To encourage the hedge to thicken out, the hedge bottom should not be sprayed with herbicides and an unmown strip of 2 meters from the base should be left. This will benefit all wildlife from invertebrates to small mammals.
- The Guided Bus Route is expected to have an impact on this hedgerow when the route is constructed. Reinstatement of a native, rabbit protected hedge needs to take place following this work.
- There is a dangerous manhole cover in the grassland strip which has a hole in the corner big enough for a child or dog to lose their foot through. This needs to be dealt with to avoid any accidents.

ZONE 2: MEADOW

Main Species: Cut-leaved Cranesbill, Meadow and Creeping Buttercup, Cow Parsley, Meadowsweet, Dock species, Dandelion, Ground Ivy, Cleavers, Nettle, Sorrel as well as Cuckoo Flower, Pond Sedge, Marsh Marigold, Reed Sweet Grass and Common Reed in wetter areas.

- Mow the meadow once per year in June / July and ensure hay is removed from site. This will encourage less coarse grasses and more wildflowers to grow. There are areas where trees such as Poplar and Blackthorn are encroaching onto the meadow. Annual mowing is important to limit the succession to woodland.
- Between April and September mow the grass around benches and either side of the hard surfaced path – 1 meter either side, unless the path is close to the river bank when a ½ meter strip should be cut.
- Between April and September mow a grass path around the meadow 1 ½ meters wide, keeping well away from the river bank. This provides more varied walks for visitors to the site.
- The wet corner of the meadow at point 2A is good for Marsh Marigold and Meadowsweet and should be included in the hay cut. If this is not possible to do by machine, it should be cut and raked off by hand. This will help to reduce the dominance of the coarse grasses. The Poplar is seeding in this area and the small poplars should be cut to prevent encroachment into the meadow.
- Leave some areas of the meadow which are close to the river out of the hay cut to discourage people getting close to the river during the summertime. Monitor scrub encroachment in these areas in order to maintain viewpoints of the river and Westside Common.
- At 2B the Ash tree has lost a large limb which needs clearing up. The wood could be cut up into smaller sections and placed away from the path in zone 4 as a habitat pile for invertebrates and small mammals.
- At the footbridge at point 2C, on the side of the bridge which is furthest away from the river bank, the two willows could be re-pollarded during the winter time.

- Create a large glade at 2D between the Horse Chestnut trees, and another glade nearer the footbridge at 2C. These should be mown in September, raked up and the cuttings removed. For the first two years mow them again at the first cut of the year in April and then in July, removing the cuttings. This will reduce the amount of nettles and increase the variety of wildflowers.
- At 2E the Weeping Willow should be removed.

ZONE 3: TREE BELT

Main Species: Willows, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elm, Maple, Ash, Lime, Black Walnut, Apple, Ornamental fruit trees,

- At point 3A cut a small glade either side of the path and rake off the cuttings, to reduce the stinging nettles and add variety. Avoid making the glade too big as this will encourage unwanted public access into the wooded area. Maintain the standing dead wood in the area where possible. The glade should be cut on one side of the path one year and the other side the following year.
- The wooden bridges either side of 3A should be inspected regularly to check they are safe and are not rotten.
- At 3B the Elm with 3 stands should be re-coppiced and the leaning branch of the other Elm next to the bridge should be taken off.
- At 3C on the other side of the bridge, the dead elms should be cut down at shoulder height.
- Create glades on the edge of the tree belt at 3D and 3E by again cutting the vegetation and raking off the cuttings. Since the meadow circular path passes next to these areas, the dead Elms which are near to the path should be removed.
- Set up a programme to remove the non native trees in the tree belt. This work would need to be carried out over 10 years to avoid too much public concern. The gaps and hollows in the tree belt could be planted up with native shrub willows.
- Maintain standing dead wood as much as possible to provide valuable habitat for invertebrates and birds. Standing dead wood close to paths should be inspected, closely monitored and removed only if necessary.
- There are several dead Elm trees along the tree belt on the meadow side which are a potential danger to the public taking the circular mown path around the meadow. Some of these need to be cut down and stacked to form habitat piles.
- Consider developing a programme of pollarding for some of the ancient Willows in order to prolong their life. Some of the younger Willows on the edge of the grassland strip could be pollarded first to allow light onto the ancient Willows. The very old Willows will need a lot of light if they are going to survive any pollarding.

ZONE 4: WOODLAND POCKET

Main Species: Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elm, Ash, Field Maple, Green Alcanet (garden escape), Forget me not, Comfrey, Speedwell, Cow Parsley, Hard Rush, Gypsywort, Rosebay Willowherb, Lesser Celendine, Hedge Garlic

- Improve the entrance to the park at the Hartford end by trimming back vegetation to let more light in. Some of the Elder trees could be cut back slightly.
- Involve the Enforcement team in any fly tipping that is found next to the residential areas here.
- Remove the old Nature Trail posts.

- Mow 1 meter either side of the path and side up any overhanging branches to give a more open feel to the Woodland Pocket.
- Allow more light to the ditch and ponds at 4A by coppicing trees and removing scrub within 2 meters of the edge. This will also help to improve flow by reducing the amount of leaf litter that can fall, and will allow water plants to grow. Retain some scrub for structural diversity, landscape and as a food source for wildlife. It is important that this work isn't done all at once because it will look very drastic and it may encourage unwanted access off the path to these areas. The coppicing could be done on one side 1 year and the other side the next year. This would then be left for 5 years until it is done again.
- At point 4B, thin out some of the Elms to allow regeneration of ground flora and to allow more space for the remaining Elm's to broaden out.

ZONE 5: CARPARK AND GREEN

Main Species: Horse Chestnut, Ash, Hawthorn, Sycamore and Willow spp and species poor grassland.

- Continue to mow the green, maintain the car park and maintain the open views of the river and meadows on the opposite side.
- At the base of the 2 trees in the middle of the green, leave an unmown large circle for wildflowers. Mow once each year in September and remove the cuttings.
- Decide on the management required for the ditch which is next to the car park, if it is HDC's responsibility. There are some very large trees which are very close to the houses.
- The Weeping Willow in the northern corner of the green at point 5A needs reducing as it is too big.
- Metal plates could be secured onto the picnic benches to prevent BBQ's from burning the benches.
- Consider putting in a 48 hour mooring by the Green to encourage people to visit Huntingdon Riverside Park by boat.

FURTHER POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENTS FOR BIODIVERSITY AND PEOPLE

Other projects affecting the whole of the Huntingdon Riverside Park Eastern End which could be discussed are:

- Reinstatement of the redundant ditches through the whole of the site could improve their amenity and wildlife value.
- Create wetland areas by installing sluices etc
- Provide fishing platforms along the river bank.
- Re-seed parts of meadow to improve diversity of the flora.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Riverside Park is well used by local people for getting to town, work, school as well as to walk their dogs. The eastern end is particularly popular with people because of the varied habitats and the wide range of wildlife associated with it.

Working with the community is an extremely effective way of solving problems, encouraging people to enjoy the site and planning for its long term future. By encouraging local people to become involved in practical work and events on the park, a sense of pride and ownership will develop.

Proposals to Encourage Involvement

- Work with local schools and groups to offer activities such as: mini-beast hunting, tree activities, scavenger hunts, guided walks and countryside events.
- Develop links with secondary schools and encourage use of the park for project work for older children e.g. GCSE and A level Geography and Biology Projects.
- Encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and be involved in practical work on the park such as litter picking and conservation tasks. Pond and ditch management, scrub clearance, litter picking, tree planting and maintenance are all very suitable for volunteers, and will help to develop pride in the site and understanding of the management of Riverside Park.
- Encourage fishing along the river by formalising an agreement with a local club.
- Review the number of moorings along river bank and consider increasing the number to allow more day visitors by boat.

General Publicity

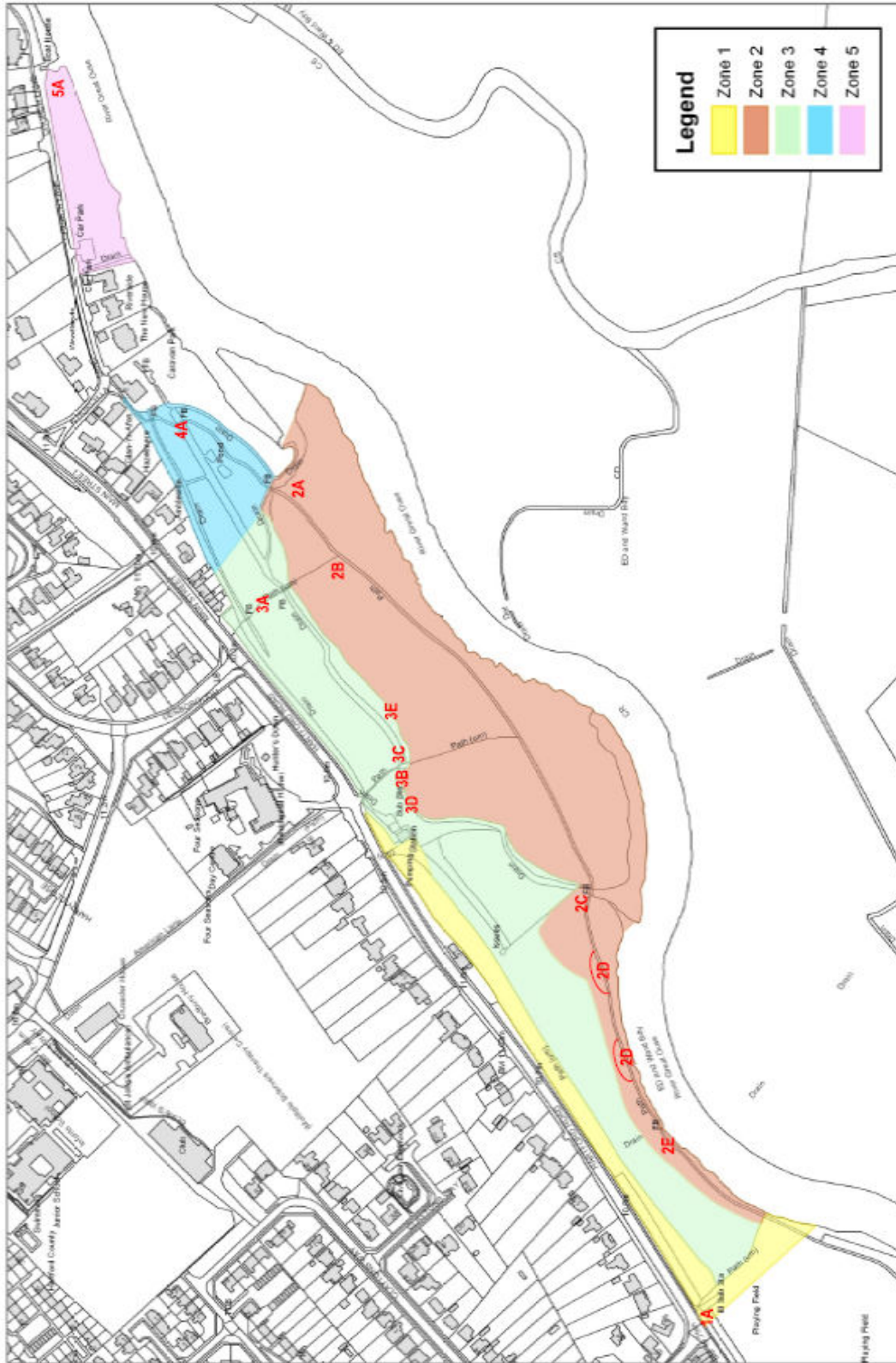
- Welcoming information boards would help to link the fragmented western and eastern ends of Riverside Park, as well as provide information on the history and wildlife value of the site. They could be placed at either end, and one in the middle could focus more specifically on the wildlife of the eastern section.
- Press releases and features would help to inform the public about management and to ensure good publicity for HDC's Parks Service.

WIDER ISSUES

- Erosion of banks by river

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

- It is anticipated that the park will continue to be managed by HDC's Parks Service with support from Countryside Services.
- There are a lot of interested people living near to the park and using the site so a Friends Group could be formed to help with day to day management, events, positive publicity and fundraising.



Scale: 1:3500

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**Huntingdon Riverside Park,
 Eastern End**





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 Eastern End**



ANNEX D

SCHEME COSTINGS

AREA 1 – THE FORMAL PARK

Greening Traffic Island	15,000
Bridge Foot Moorings	75,000
Reconstruct exist footpath	47,000
New Footpath	46,000
Decorative paved areas	14,000
Focal Point Shelter	30,000
Seating and Information Boards	32,000
Planting scheme	92,000

Total Area 1 297,000

AREA 2 – THE ACTIVITY AREA

Alterations to existing car park	6,000
New car parking	31,000
Revision to play area	5,000
Multi Activity area	34,000 (up to 66,000)
Reinforced grass area	116,000
Activity trail	10,000
Planting scheme	21,000

Total Area 2 223,000

AREA 3 – THE GREEN LUNG

Seating and Information Boards	12,000
Hartford road car park	20,000

Total Area 3 32,000

CONSTRUCTION COST ALL AREAS	£552,000
DESIGN COSTS	£ 55,000
TOTAL COSTS	£607,000