

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

<b>Title/Subject Matter:</b>	Annual Management Plans for Countryside Assets.
<b>Meeting/Date:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy & Growth) – 9th February 2016 Cabinet – 17th March 2016
<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Robin Carter – Executive Councillor for Operations & the Environment
<b>Report by:</b>	Alistair Merrick – Interim Head of Service (Operations)
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All

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### **Executive Summary:**

1. The report provides the opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the draft management plan for Barford Road Pocket Park as the template for the management plans that will be developed for all other assets within the Council's portfolio of Countryside assets; before it is submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement.
2. The purpose of the management plans is to better direct the management, development and maintenance of Countryside assets over the short and medium term. This is to ensure there is a clear strategic framework for the Countryside Service going forward. The management plans will always be developed with the input of the existing voluntary groups involved with the Countryside Service because their expertise and contributions are essential in order to progress the self-management of selected assets by these groups.
3. The proposed structure of the management plan is as follows:
  - Grading of current wildlife and amenity value.
  - Clarification of current site users and key target groups for the future to extend usage.
  - An overview of the site and the zoning of the site according to wildlife and amenity value.
  - By zone the individual objectives, actions, development proposals and issues for each zone.
4. Attached as Appendix 1 of the report is the management plan that has been developed for the Barford Road Pocket Park in St Neots.
5. The management plans will be reviewed each year in December and updated with any proposed major development initiatives reported to Overview and Scrutiny and then the Cabinet.

6. Detailed in paragraph 3.4 of the report is the proposed programme for the development of management plans for all Countryside assets. The substantive outcome of the review work that will be carried out will be the zoning of all sites and the grading of the zones in respect of wildlife and amenity value to enable the assessment of the sites as Countryside assets that should be retained going forward.

**Recommendation(s):**

1. The Panel are invited to make comments that will be included in the report to Cabinet seeking the endorsement of the proposed structure for annual management plans for Countryside assets.
2. Cabinet are recommended to approve the structure of annual management plans for countryside assets and the proposed programme for the development of management plans for all Countryside assets to provide the future strategic framework for the service.

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report provides the Panel with the opportunity to scrutinise the structure of the annual management plans proposed for all the assets of the Countryside Service before the implementation of the programme to develop the management plans.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The review of the Operations Service confirmed the following:

- Currently the Countryside Service does not have a strategic framework which the service is delivered within.
- The opportunity existed to move selected sites to self-management arrangements involving voluntary groups.
- Selected maintenance activities should be delivered through the Grounds Maintenance Team to deliver better value for money.

2.2 Detailed management plans had previously been developed for some sites but there was no structured approach within the service for the development of annual management plans that are action focused and drive incremental improvements in the assets within future budget constraints.

## 3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

3.1 The purpose of management plans is to better direct the management, development and maintenance of Countryside assets over the short and medium term. This is to ensure there is a clear strategic framework for the Countryside Service going forward. The management plans will always be developed with the input of the existing voluntary groups involved with the Countryside Service because their expertise and contributions are essential in order to progress the self-management of selected assets by these groups.

3.2 The proposed structure that has been developed for the management plans is as follows:

- **Statement of current wildlife and amenity value:** This is based on the Countryside Service grading the overall wildlife value and amenity value as none, poor, fair, good or excellent. For assets to be retained long term, either directly managed or through self-management arrangements the assets must be graded as good for both values or through the incremental delivery of annual management plans over a 3 to 5 year period have the potential to achieve a good grading. Sites that do not have the potential to achieve a good grading for wildlife and amenity value will be reviewed in respect to being retained as assets for the Countryside Service.
- **Clarification of current site users and key target groups for the future to extend usage:** This clarification of users and potential users is essential to ensure that the future development proposals for sites and the annual promotional plan for the Countryside Service are tailored to existing users and potential users in order to extend the user base of the Countryside assets.
- **An overview of the site and the zoning of the site according to wildlife and amenity value:** the overview is a description of the site that covers the location and surrounding land assets; the usage profile of the site; the mixture of habitats and profile of notable species on the site; details of the structures on the site including maintenance responsibilities; any rights of way or access issues specific to the site; and finally any specific legal or legislative conditions or requirements that apply to the site. This forms the context against which the management plan for the site has been developed.

- **By zone the individual objectives, actions, development proposals and issues for each zone:** This includes the breaking down of the site into a series of management zones which again are individually graded in respect of wildlife and amenity value with a schedule of objectives, actions and development proposals to improve the grading of the zone.

3.3 Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is the management plan that has been drafted against the proposed structure for the Barford Road Pocket Park in St Neots. The park overall has been graded good for wildlife value and fair for amenity value. Consequently the recommended objectives, development proposals and schedule of actions for each zone are intended to sustain the good rating for wildlife value and improve the fair rating for amenity value.

3.4 Detailed below is the proposed programme for the development of the management plans for all other Countryside assets:

Countryside Site	Completion Date for Drafting of Management Plan
Godmanchester Nursery	12 February 2016
The Thicket	12 February 2016
Wlihorn Meadow	12 February 2016
Holt Island	12 February 2016
Ouse Valley Way	12 February 2016
Alconbury Tree Nursery	19 February 2016
Spring Common	19 February 2016
Stukeley Meadows	19 February 2016
Views Common	19 February 2016
Colne Grave Yard	26 February 2016
Hartford Wood	26 February 2016
Stukeley Railway Cutting	26 February 2016
Hill Rise	26 February 2016
Riverside Park – Huntingdon (part)	26 February 2016
Paxton Pits	10 March 2016
Sudbury Meadows	10 March 2016
Hinchingbrooke Country Park	18 March 2016

#### 4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 Comments of the Panel will be included in the future report to the Cabinet seeking endorsement of the proposed structure for the drafting of annual management plans (and grading system) for Countryside assets.

#### 5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS AND HOW THESE WILL BE ADDRESSED

5.1 The adoption of the annual management plans will bring a new direction for the Countryside Service and ensure the management, development and maintenance of assets is within a strategic framework. This will enable the Council to evidence it is delivering a value for money Countryside Service which cannot be done at present.

#### 6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The schedule of actions within the management plans have been developed to be able to be delivered within a 12 month period and the recommended annual review process will ensure the delivery of the actions and development proposals and then the formulation of future schedules of action and development proposals.

#### 7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 The policy will fundamentally contribute to the Corporate Plan as follows:

- a) Enhancing fundamentally the built and green environment of the District.
- b) Operations becoming much more business-like and efficient in the way it delivers safe services.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The initial drafting of the management plans and their subsequent annual review will include consultation with the voluntary groups that provide critical support to the Countryside Service and the feedback from the annual customer satisfaction survey that is now being progressed for the service. Bespoke consultation arrangements will also be carried out for specific development proposals.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The proposed structure of the management plans requires confirmation of the legal and legislative requirements that apply to a site and determine how it must be managed, maintained and developed.

## **10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The schedule of actions within the management plans have been developed to be able to be delivered within the existing resources of the Countryside Service. Any proposed developments requiring additional resources will be the subject of an individual business case that will be submitted to Cabinet for approval after the appropriate scrutiny.

## **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The annual management plans will seek to ensure the delivery of an appropriate and equitable balance in the provision of the Countryside Service across the District.

## **12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 12.1 The scrutinising of the proposed structure of the management plans for Countryside assets gives the Panel the opportunity to influence the final document submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement.
- 12.2 The proposed annual management plans will better direct the management, development and maintenance of Countryside assets over the short and medium term by ensuring that there is a clear strategic framework for the Countryside Service going forward.

## **13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

- 13.1 Appendix 1: the Barford Road Pocket Park – Annual Management Plan.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## Annual Management Plan Barford Road Pocket Park (October 2015)

Version	Date Issued	Review
Version 1	2 December 2015	AM
Version 2	2 December 2015	JA
Version 3	14 December 2015	MH
Version 4	18 December 2015	AM (7 January 2016)
Version 5	20 January 2016	

**Overall Wildlife Value:**      **Good**            (Good = meeting objectives)  
**Overall Amenity Value:**      **Fair**            (Fair = Some improvement required)

Grading scheme: None, Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent

**Location:**      Eynesbury, St. Neots. (Site plan attached)

**Site Size:**      Approximately 18.2 hectares (45 acres.)

**Access:**      By drop down bollards off Chapman Way or via a track which can be accessed from Barford Road, next to One Leisure, St. Neots.

### Existing Sites Users & Key Target Groups:

- Dog walkers
- Fisherman
- Families
- Retired people
- School children
- Boaters/canoists
- Local residents

The number of annual users is not known.

### Overview of the Site

The Park is located between the Eynesbury Manor and Knight's Park housing estates to the east and the River Great Ouse to the west. It is bordered to the north by open fields (privately owned). The A428 is the border in the south.

The park is heavily used by the public as a recreational site. High proportions of visitors are local and use the park to walk their dogs, exercise, fish and enjoy wildlife.

The park comprises of a mix of habitats but is predominantly meadows, some of which are included in HDC's Higher Level Stewardship agreement with Natural England. This places HDC under a legal obligation to manage these areas sensitively until 2023. The HLS agreement covers many of Countryside Service's and Greenspace's sites.

The park contains some notable species such as Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*) and Water Voles (*Arvicola terrestris*).

There are several structures on site including vehicle bridges, sluices and a canter-lever lifting bridge. The latter of these structures is owned and maintained by the Eynesbury Manor management company. The remaining structures are owned, and therefore, should be maintained by HDC.

Recent completion of Knights Park has created heavier footfall on the park and a number of “desire lines” crossing through shrub beds have developed. These desire lines will be formalised or blocked off to limit damage to shrub growth and the park’s fencing structures.

A link to a national cycle (12) route cuts north/south through the park through zones B, C, D and F. This route was installed by Sustrans in 2012. HDC is responsible for maintaining the open access (fallen trees etc.) along much of the track. Any officially designated public footpath is the responsibility of the County Council.

A gravel surface Cycle/Access track crosses east/west centrally through zone A. This track is also the route of a haul road for future dredging access to the marina.

The access track is still in the ownership of the site developer and this has public liability issues for HDC. There is an ongoing legal process (6+years) to transfer the track into public ownership, which has yet to be completed. Discussions regarding funding and maintenance implications are part of the process lead by Planning and Legal but the Countryside Service undertake periodic progress chasing on this matter.

**NOTE:** The Wildlife and Countryside Protection Act applies to this site and therefore any maintenance work done to trees or shrubs cannot be carried out earlier than the end of July and must stop by the end of the following March. This protects any species of nesting birds and mammal habitats.

Due of the sensitivity of the Common Lizards on site, any meadow maintenance should be carried out from mid-October at the earliest through until the end of February at the latest.

This document should be very much considered a basic work list and cannot be seen as a finite list of the work carried out on the park each year. This document will enable the reader to keep the park at a suitably high and safe standard for the public. It is important to remember that from year to year, unforeseen work can arise. This work is kept at a minimum by carrying out regular site checks and inspections of trees and the rest of the park’s infrastructure. However, vandalism and extreme weathers can cause unforeseen damage to the park which often needs reactive management to deal with.

For ease of reference the site has been divided into the following zones, see attached maps for details.

Zone A		
Wildlife Value:	Poor	(Poor = limited opportunities for wildlife objectives)
Amenity Value:	Fair	(Fair = Some improvement required)
This Zone A is one of the main entrances to the park. The area is sandwiched between the southern edge of Eynesbury Manor and the northern edge of Knight’s Park housing estates.		
It includes a play area, areas of amenity grassland and hedgerows. It has large shrub beds on both sides, all of which provide a valuable habitat and food source for birds. The shrub beds also screen off some of the houses from the park. This section of the park attracts the highest proportion of anti-social behaviour, most of which is minor vandalism and littering.		
The play area is fenced with ‘D-top’ picket fencing. This was installed in 2012 to prevent dogs from accessing the play park and leaving a mess for children to tread in. The play area is now a dog-free zone.		

### Objectives for the Zone

1. Maintain Zone to a high standard creating a good visual impression for visitors.
2. Obtain ownership of privately owned access track.

### Actions for this Zone

1. Empty the park's litter bins twice a week. **(Street Cleansing Service)**
2. Empty three bins outside the play area gates **(Street Cleansing service)**.
3. Ensure dog fence is intact and secure **(Countryside Services)**.
4. Mow short grass areas (as marked on maps) regularly. (Currently every 2 weeks from March to September). This can be more or less regular, dependent on the season. Grass should be cut to a height <50 mm. **(Grounds Maintenance)**.
5. Strim around all structures every time mowing occurs (benches, bins, play equipment, trees, bollards and along the bottom of the dog fence). **(Grounds Maintenance)**.
6. Ensure the play equipment is safe for use by inspecting it once a month. **(Countryside Services to carry out monthly, Street Scene's team leaders to carry out/organise annually/bi-annually)**.
7. Once a year (often August/September), but always after the end of July, cut back shrub beds around area. Some only require the sides cutting; some require sides and tops cutting (See maps) **(Countryside Services)**.
8. Maintain a visual presence in this area, especially. This will help to promote community awareness. **(Countryside Services)**.
9. Carry out site checks, twice a week as a minimum, to inspect the presence of lifebelts and 'nag' signs and the quality and safety of the rest of the park's infrastructure, including trees. These 'daily site checks' are essential tasks and are particularly important after flooding, high winds and the school holidays, the summer break, especially the summer. More thorough monthly and annual checks should also be carried out to inspect, in more detail, bridges, benches, signs, boardwalks etc. **(Countryside Services)**.
10. Ensure planning and legal teams do not accept responsibility for the access track without securing additional funding for maintenance **(Countryside Services)**

### Development Proposals

1. Undertake a needs analysis survey to determine if additional play equipment is required. Seek external funding if required **(Development Team)**.
2. Within the next year, formalise some desire line routes from the new estate, onto the play area. It would be sensible to formalise these tracks to avoid any more unnecessary damage to habitat and to decrease potential anti-social behaviour 'hotspots'. **(Countryside Services)**
3. Chase the legal process for the track transfer **(HDC Legal Team)**.

### Notes

An annual insurance play area inspection and report also flags up any maintenance requirements for the play equipment. such as loose posts and broken ropes. **(Countryside Services to coordinate remedial work)**

HDC Rangers are not ROSPA trained and cannot identify all problems with equipment. **(Street Scene Team Leaders)**



## Zone B

Wildlife Value: Good  
Amenity Value: Fair

Mostly a meadow area with a surfaced cycle path (link to National Cycle Route 12) running along the western edge, towards the A428 bridge. Some informal paths also cross through the meadow.

The meadow has been surveyed and there is evidence of a high population of Common Lizards. The adjacent Knight's Park development paid for remedial work to provide hibernacula for the relocation of any lizards caught, prior to building works beginning.

A disused pumping station beside the surfaced path that has been sealed and designated as a 'bat house'. This building is an ideal roosting habitat for bats but it has never been surveyed to see if it has succeeded.

In the past, a local graffiti artist has used this building (and other surfaces in the park) to run workshops with Ernulf Academy, the local secondary school. This project has, on several occasions provided valuable links between HDC and the local population of young adults.

The public footpath (and cycleway) that runs parallel to the river on west side of the meadow leads into an industrial estate, on the southern side of the A428 road bridge (which also acts as the county boundary between Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire).

Trees on the meadow area consist of a mix of native broadleaf, deciduous trees including Black Poplar (*Populus Nigra*).

The developers on Knight's Park currently have a fenced compound on the field which will potentially be removed within 2 years. They should re-instate the meadow to HDC's satisfaction. This will require management and supervision by Countryside Services to ensure that Taylor Wimpey (TW) reinstate the ground correctly. Any issues should be taken directly to the TW site manager. **(Countryside Services)**

### Objectives for the Zone

1. Maintain to a high standard creating a good visual impression for visitors.
2. Continue to maintain and provide a high quality habitat for the park's population of Lizards.

### Actions for this Zone

1. Litter pick and empty litter bins twice a week as a minimum **(Street Cleansing)**
2. Ensure the bat house is safe and the graffiti design is refreshed every 4-5 years **(Countryside Services)**.
3. Inspect and/or maintain all the recognised paths. Grass ones are informal and HDC responsibility, surfaced path is CCC footpath and is their responsibility to maintain the surface.
4. HDC to maintain the grass path edges. Cut once a fortnight between March and September. Grass should be cut to a height <50 mm. **(Grounds Maintenance)**
5. Inspect the trees for safety, annually **(Countryside Services)**, with cooperation of Arboriculture Team).
6. Maintain the hedgerows and fence line bordering the housing estate. Hedges are cut back to fence line once a year, from September onwards. **(Countryside Services)**.
7. Grass and hedge cuttings are stacked inside the fence line to provide valuable hibernation habitats.
8. Cut and collect the meadow area as late as possible in the year (ideally middle October) to prevent impact on Lizard populations **(Countryside Services)**.
9. Carry out site checks, twice a week as a minimum, to inspect the presence of lifebelts and 'nag' signs and the quality and safety of the rest of the park's infrastructure, including trees. These 'daily site checks' are essential tasks and are particularly important after flooding, high winds and the school holidays, the summer break, especially the summer. More thorough monthly and annual checks should also be carried out to inspect, in more detail, bridges, benches, signs, boardwalks etc. **(Countryside Services)**

Development Proposals
Subject to the completion of a needs analysis review and public consultation there may be opportunity to locate a 'MUGA' area for ball games. There is potential funding from the Knight's Park development to install some new play equipment in this area ( <b>Development Team</b> ).
Notes

Zone C
Wildlife Value: Good Amenity Value: Poor – Limited opportunity
<p>This zone primarily consists of a large section of the park's meadow area.</p> <p>The meadow area is part of HDC's HLS Agreement and is managed in accordance with it. The floral diversity of this zone is therefore gradually increasing because of this annual management.</p> <p>Survey data has displayed evidence of a high proportion of Common Lizards living in the grassland.</p> <p>Opposite the meadow is the Eynesbury Manor marina.</p> <p>A privately owned swing bridge separates this zone from zone B. This bridge is raised when users of the marina access the main river.</p> <p>HDC would permit anglers to use the site, however, there is no fishing rights vested in the Council. These remain with the marina management company.</p> <p>There are currently two disabled access fishing platforms along the edge of the marina in this zone.</p>
Objectives for the Zone
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain a florally-rich meadow area with suitable habitat for Common Lizards, as a priority (and for other species such as mice, voles, and grass snakes).</li> <li>2. To provide attractive short grass areas for recreation.</li> </ol>
Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Litter pick and empty bins twice a week as a minimum (<b>Street Cleansing</b>)</li> <li>2. Ensure safety of structures and lifebelts (<b>Countryside Services to carry out as part of weekly site checks</b>).</li> <li>3. Any problems with marina structures are to be passed to the marina's management company (contact Mike Lock: 07588272930, <a href="mailto:mlock001@btinternet.com">mlock001@btinternet.com</a>).</li> <li>4. Regularly (once a fortnight from March to the end of September) mow short-grass areas as marked on maps. Grass should be cut to a height &lt;50 mm. (<b>Grounds Maintenance</b>).</li> <li>5. Once a year, mow meadow area with flail collector leaving up to 1/3 uncut (usually 3 or 4 tractor widths headland). Leave alternating patches in meadow uncut (<b>Countryside Services</b>). This action is part of the HLS agreement, mentioned earlier in this plan.</li> <li>6. Maintain hedge line planted along marina footpath. Note: this was only planted in 2013/14 so will not require cutting for at least 5 years. However, it may require some replacement shrubs in the meantime. This was part of the HLS agreement's capital works scheme and needs to be maintained to the standard required by Natural England. (<b>Countryside Services to carry out replacement of plants and cutting of hedge, where and when appropriate</b>).</li> <li>7. Maintain fence line along western edge of meadow, bordering the conservation lake. Cut back hedge line once a year (<b>Countryside Services</b>).</li> <li>8. Liaise with the cricket bat company regarding harvesting of willows. J.S. Wright and Sons LTD will maintain the health of the trees on the proviso that the wood will be sold back to them when ready</li> </ol>

for harvest (**Countryside Services**). J. S. Wright and Sons LTD will replant willows when they come to harvest, providing a sustainable source of income (NOTE: harvest takes place about every 10 years).

9. Carry out site checks, twice a week as a minimum, to inspect the presence of lifebelts and 'nag' signs and the quality and safety of the rest of the park's infrastructure, including trees. These 'daily site checks' are essential tasks and are particularly important after flooding, high winds and the school holidays, the summer break, especially the summer. More thorough monthly and annual checks should also be carried out to inspect, in more detail, bridges, benches, signs, boardwalks etc. (**Countryside Services**).

#### Development Proposals

No current development plans.

#### Notes

Some willows are to be felled and replaced winter 2015/16. This harvest will provide in excess of £12,500. This figure cannot be guaranteed for the next harvest; it is dependent on factors such as market value and quality and quantity of timber harvested. However, this is a worthy source of income for very little HDC time and resources.

#### Zone D

Wildlife Value: Good  
Amenity Value: None – limited opportunity

Zone D primarily consists of the conservation lake area.

This lake is fenced off from public access, though some limited access is provided by a boardwalk and viewing platform on one side and a woven willow screen on the other side of the lake.

The wet grassland and reed beds surrounding the lake provide valuable habitat for large numbers of over-wintering Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). Other notable species that have been recorded include Bitterns (*Botaurus stellaris*) and Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*).

Bearded Tits (*Panurus biarmicus*) have been reported on site, but this sighting cannot be confirmed.

#### Objectives for the Zone

1. To provide and maintain a high quality wetland habitat within the confines of the fence.
2. Allow access to nature for all via boardwalk and willow viewing screen.
3. Outside the fence, maintain a tidy and high quality recreation area by cutting short grass areas and ensuring surfaced paths are clear.

<b>Actions</b>	
1.	Litter pick and empty bins twice weekly as a minimum ( <b>Street Cleansing</b> )
2.	Mow short grass areas as marked on maps (mainly path edges) once a fortnight from March to the end of September. Grass should be cut to a height <50 mm. ( <b>Grounds Maintenance</b> ).
3.	As part of weekly site checks, ensure the lake's perimeter fence is secure and boardwalk is safe (handrails and boards intact) ( <b>Countryside Services</b> ).
4.	On a 4 yearly cycle, clear willow regrowth from around the edge of the lake. Some stumps have been treated with chemical in order to stop them re-growing. Suggest this as standard practice in the future. Willow will always regrow, but if treated, will take a lot longer ( <b>Countryside Services</b> ).
5.	Ensure scrub growth around the lake does not extend past its current location ( <b>Countryside Services</b> )
6.	Ensure Lizard hibernacula are kept open and free from scrub. Refurbish and renew hibernacula as necessary ( <b>Countryside Services</b> ).
7.	Inspect and arrange maintenance for two vehicle bridges (rated to 17.5 tonnes) and brick 'humpback' bridge (vehicle weight rating unknown) annually ( <b>Countryside Services</b> to carry out as part of weekly, monthly and annual checks).
8.	Carry out site checks, twice a week as a minimum, to inspect the presence of lifebelts and 'nag' signs and the quality and safety of the rest of the park's infrastructure, including trees. These 'daily site checks' are essential tasks and are particularly important after flooding, high winds and the school holidays, the summer break, especially the summer. More thorough monthly and annual checks should also be carried out to inspect, in more detail, bridges, benches, signs, boardwalks etc. ( <b>Countryside Services</b> ).
<b>Development Proposals</b>	
No current development plans.	
<b>Notes</b>	
This is an important and interesting area for wildlife and should be preserved.	

<b>Zone E</b>	
Wildlife Value:	Good
Amenity Value:	None
<p>Zone E largely consists of willow copse and is left intentionally unmanaged to provide another sanctuary area for wildlife.</p> <p>Part of this zone is planted with Cricket Bat Willows which provides a funding stream every 10 -15 years.</p> <p>Other than the willow copse, the area has well used paths, one of which is surfaced.</p> <p>In recent years the zone has been used by Ernulf Academy for the purpose of outdoor learning. Like the bat house project, allowing the school onto site has built a valuable link with the community.</p>	

Objectives for the Zone
To provide and maintain accessible paths whilst allowing for the copse to be used as an educational tool and link to the community, alongside providing another extensive habitat.
Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Litter pick and empty bins twice weekly as a minimum. <b>(Street Cleansing)</b>.</li> <li>2. Mow short grass areas as marked on map, only path edges in this zone, regularly (from March to late September). Grass should be cut to a height &lt;50 mm. <b>(Grounds Maintenance)</b></li> <li>3. Undertake annual tree inspections along path edges. <b>(Countryside Services to carry out with cooperation of HDC's Arboriculture team)</b>.</li> <li>4. Liaise with Environment Agency in regards to any issues with moorings and Eaton Socon sluice structure <b>(Countryside Services to carry out)</b>.</li> <li>5. Inspect two wooden footbridges on OVW along river bank monthly. Ensure handrails and boards are secure <b>(Countryside Services)</b>.</li> <li>6. Inspect conservation lake outflow at least once every six months to maintain a good flow from lake <b>(Countryside Services)</b>.</li> <li>7. Inspect willow copse area at least once a month (more often in the summer time <b>(Countryside Services)</b>).</li> <li>8. Liaise with the cricket bat company regarding harvesting of willows. J.S. Wright and Sons LTD will maintain the health of the trees on the proviso that the wood will be sold back to them when ready for harvest <b>(Countryside Services)</b>.</li> <li>9. Carry out site checks, twice a week as a minimum, to inspect the presence of lifebelts and 'nag' signs and the quality and safety of the rest of the park's infrastructure, including trees. These 'daily site checks' are essential tasks and are particularly important after flooding, high winds and the school holidays, the summer break, especially the summer. More thorough monthly and annual checks should also be carried out to inspect, in more detail, bridges, benches, signs, boardwalks etc. <b>(Countryside Services)</b>.</li> </ol>
Development Proposal
No current development plans.
Notes
Some willows are to be felled and replaced winter 2015/16. This harvest will provide in excess of £12,500. This figure cannot be guaranteed for the next harvest; it is dependent on factors such as market value and quality and quantity of timber harvested. However, this is a worthy source of income for very little HDC time and resources.

Zone F
Wildlife Value: Fair – limited opportunity for improvement Amenity Value: None
<p>This zone comprises of a storm water drainage ditch that carries surface water from the surrounding housing estates and Barford Road to the river.</p> <p>Its banksides are inhabited by a sizable colony of Common Lizards and the management of this zone take this in to account.</p> <p>Water Voles (<i>Arvicola amphibious</i>) are also known to reside in this ditch.</p>

<b>Objectives for the Zone</b>
To provide and maintain a valuable habitat for water voles and Lizards. Also to provide a pleasant walk for the public and views for residents.
<b>Actions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Litter pick path edges twice weekly as a minimum (<b>Street Cleansing</b>).</li> <li>2. Mow path edges as marked on map regularly (from March to late September). Grass should be cut to a height &lt;50 mm. (<b>Grounds Maintenance</b>).</li> <li>3. Brush cut and remove grass from football field side of ditch annually (mid-winter to avoid disturbance to lizards). Remove any bankside scrub regrowth at the same time (<b>Countryside Services</b>).</li> <li>4. Once, annually, thoroughly remove litter from inside the ditch (often at the same time as cutting the bankside) (<b>Countryside Services to carry out, Street Cleansing to take refuse away</b>).</li> <li>5. Once every 5 years, thin a 50m section of ditch of old reed growth (<b>Countryside Services</b>).</li> <li>6. Carry out site checks, twice a week as a minimum, to inspect the presence of lifebelts and 'nag' signs and the quality and safety of the rest of the park's infrastructure, including trees. These 'daily site checks' are essential tasks and are particularly important after flooding, high winds and the school holidays, the summer break, especially the summer. More thorough monthly and annual checks should also be carried out to inspect, in more detail, bridges, benches, signs, boardwalks etc. (<b>Countryside Services</b>).</li> <li>7. The vehicle bridge nearest to the housing estate (leading into Flawn Way) is owned and should be inspected by HDC as part of site checks (<b>Countryside Services</b> to carry out inspection and arrangement of repairs to bridge. Funding is not included within Countryside budget for significant bridge repairs).</li> </ol>
<b>Development Proposals</b>
No current development plans.
<b>Notes</b>