



# **Southern Country Park**

## **GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN**

2023 – 2028

Produced by:



On behalf of:



## OVERVIEW

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### Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

### Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for 6 weeks in September 2022, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement completed in February 2023 enabled stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site

### Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
0	Feb 2023	Issue for public comment	KW	AT	
1	May 2023	Final	KW	AT	
2	Mar 2026	Document reviewed and revised	AT		

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## **1.0 SUMMARY**

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### **1.1 Site Summary**

Site Name: Southern Country Park  
Site Address: Thorley, Bishops Stortford, CM23 4JT  
Grid Reference: TL 475 219  
Size: 23 hectares (56 acres)  
Designations: Green belt  
Owner: East Herts Council

### **1.2 Vision Statement**

Southern Country Park is an attractive open space on the outskirts of Bishop's Stortford; extremely popular and valued by local residents and visitors, with a distinct country park feel. The park has retained the prestigious Green Flag Award since 2008.

The vision over the next five years is to maintain and enhance the park. To ensure the same high standards that visitors have come to expect while recognising its continued importance for wildlife and continuing to protect and improve the habitats for the diverse flora and fauna found on site.

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

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### 2.1 Introduction

Southern Country Park is a 23 hectare (56 acre) public greenspace, located on the outskirts of Bishop's Stortford. The site is owned by East Herts Council (EHDC) and managed in partnership with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) and a dedicated Friends Group (Friends of Southern Country Park – FoSCP). Originally created alongside the St Michael's Mead residential development it was taken over by East Herts Council in 2001. Under this management partnership the site has been successful in achieving the prestigious Green Flag Award since 2008.

Southern Country Park has a distinct country park feel and is a popular and highly valued recreational space for the local community. The lake is the park's focal feature and there is a good-sized space suited to recreation which includes a children's play area, junior football goals, a dog agility course and free public carpark. Additionally, the park has a permanent orienteering course, a dog free wildflower meadow containing a mown maze and a picnic table, several hidden geocaches, and is host to regular Health Walks.



*View from Lake View (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

As well as a space for people it is also a haven for wildlife with a mosaic of habitats including woodland plantations, hedgerows, grassland, streams and wetlands. These natural areas support a range of flora and fauna with wildflowers, wetland birds, a variety of dragonflies and beetles and several species of butterfly which are regularly

monitored by members of the FoSCP. Annually the site exhibits a diverse display of wildflowers, including 3 different species of orchid which can be found throughout.



*Painted Lady Butterfly and Cinnabar Moth (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

The FoSCP are a group of local people who are great ambassadors for the park. They carry out a large portion of the non-routine management of the park including the woodland, reedbed and grassland areas. The activities they undertake are a valuable contribution to the maintenance and development of a fantastic local facility and the passion they have for the site is shown through their work.

In the final few years of this 5-year plan and into the future the park will become a busier and more important space for the local community as the new St James Park development is constructed to the east. The building of 750 houses will result in a greatly increased footfall in all areas of the park with new residents looking for a green and pleasant location to visit.



*Friends of Southern Country Park (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

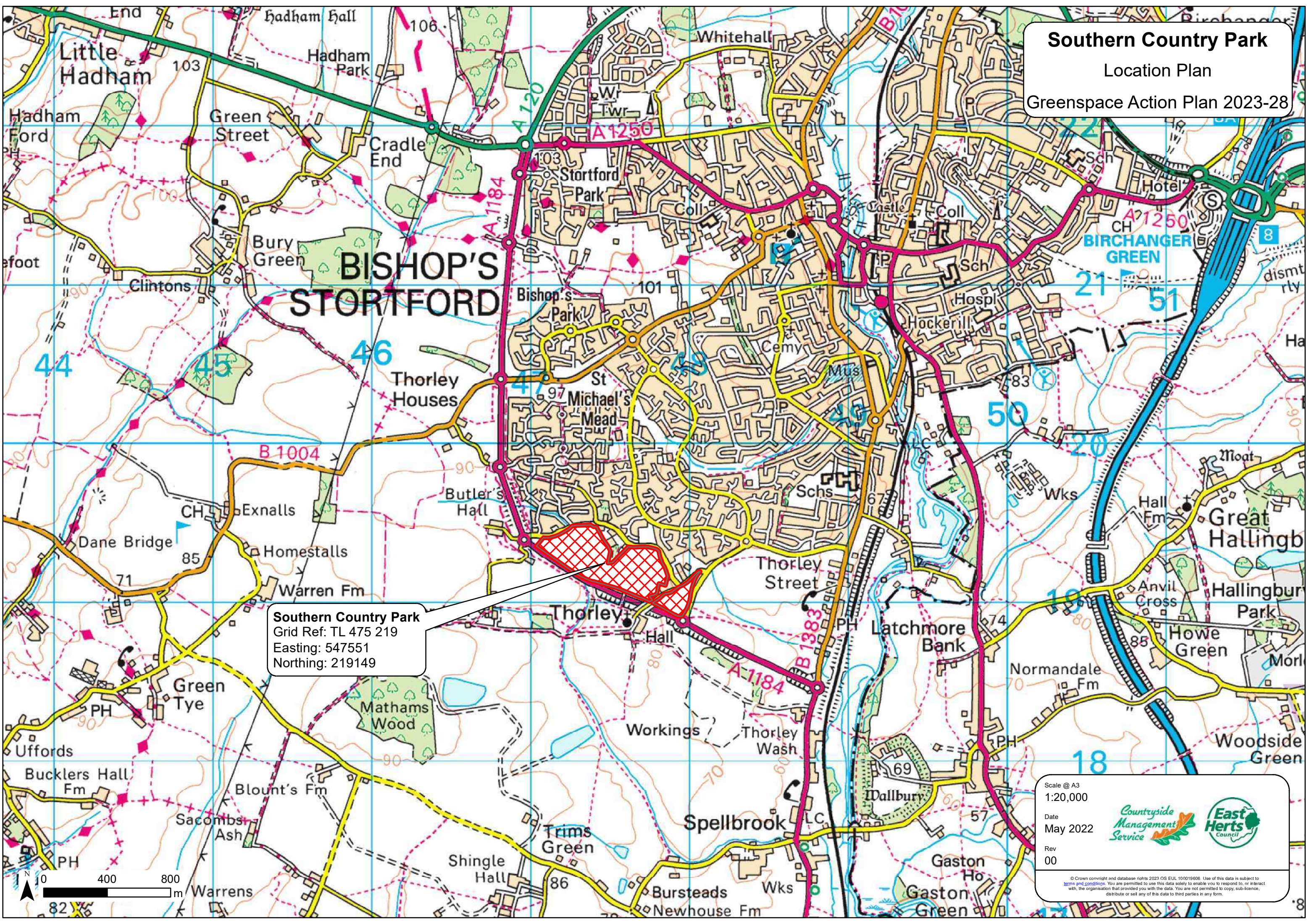
This GAP will provide a structured management framework outlining the management and maintenance of the site from 2023 – 2028 through detailed action

plans and management maps. We have used the Green Flag criteria as an initial guide to exploring the range of issues that are important to a successful park. The aims are also aligned with the [East Herts Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2027](#), which provides a policy framework for the parks and open spaces managed by East Herts Council.

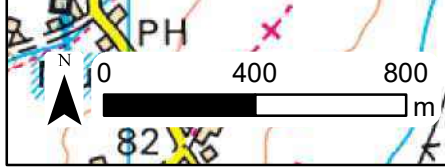
The GAP will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with the appropriate bodies to monitor its progress, ensure it remains relevant and allow outstanding tasks to be rescheduled.

This document also contains links to supporting documents and reference material, which are provided in Appendix 1, ensuring that specialist and detailed information are available without inhibiting the use of the document.

**Southern Country Park**  
Location Plan  
Greenspace Action Plan 2023-28



**Southern Country Park**  
Grid Ref: TL 475 219  
Easting: 547551  
Northing: 219149



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1:20,000  
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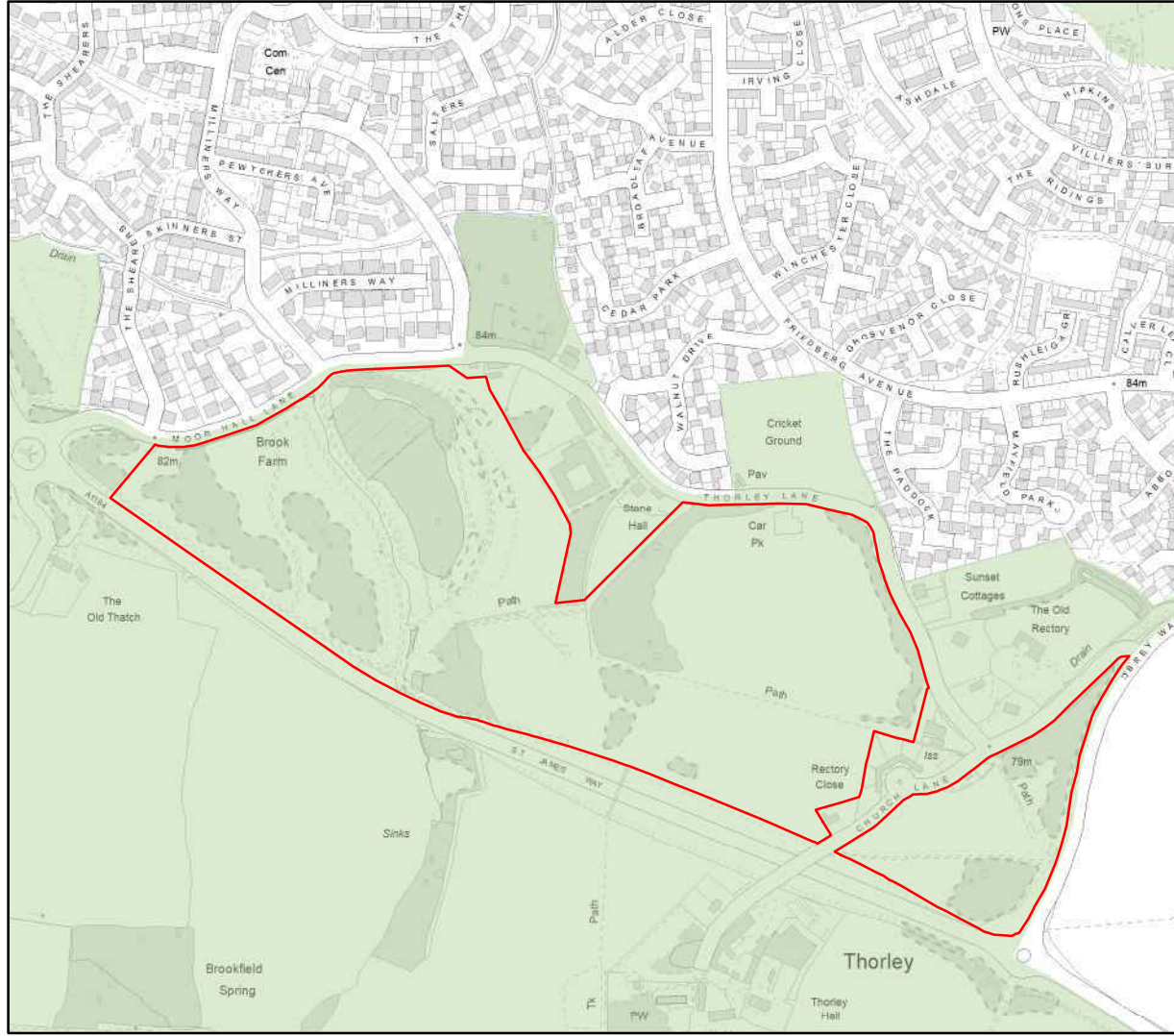
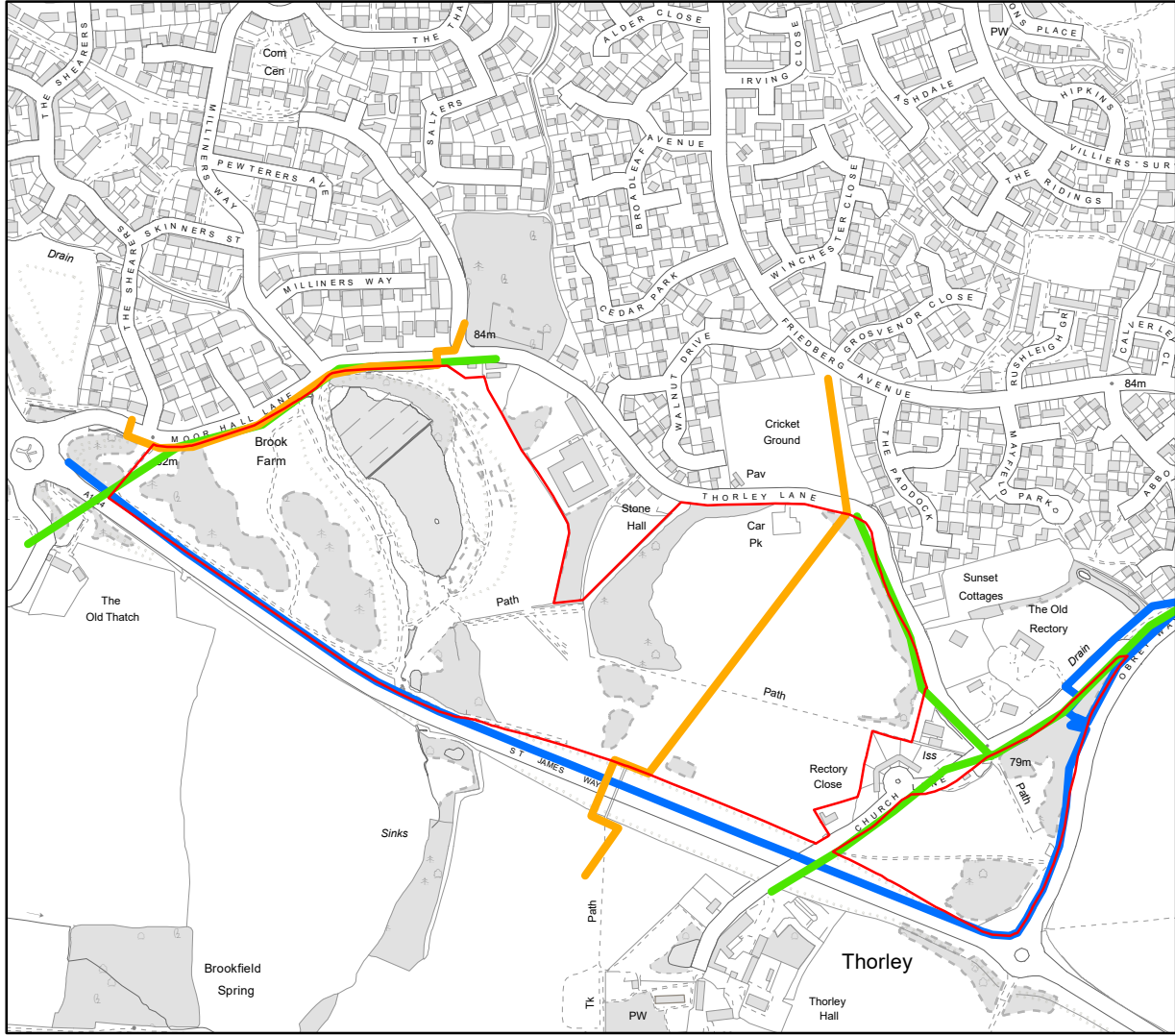
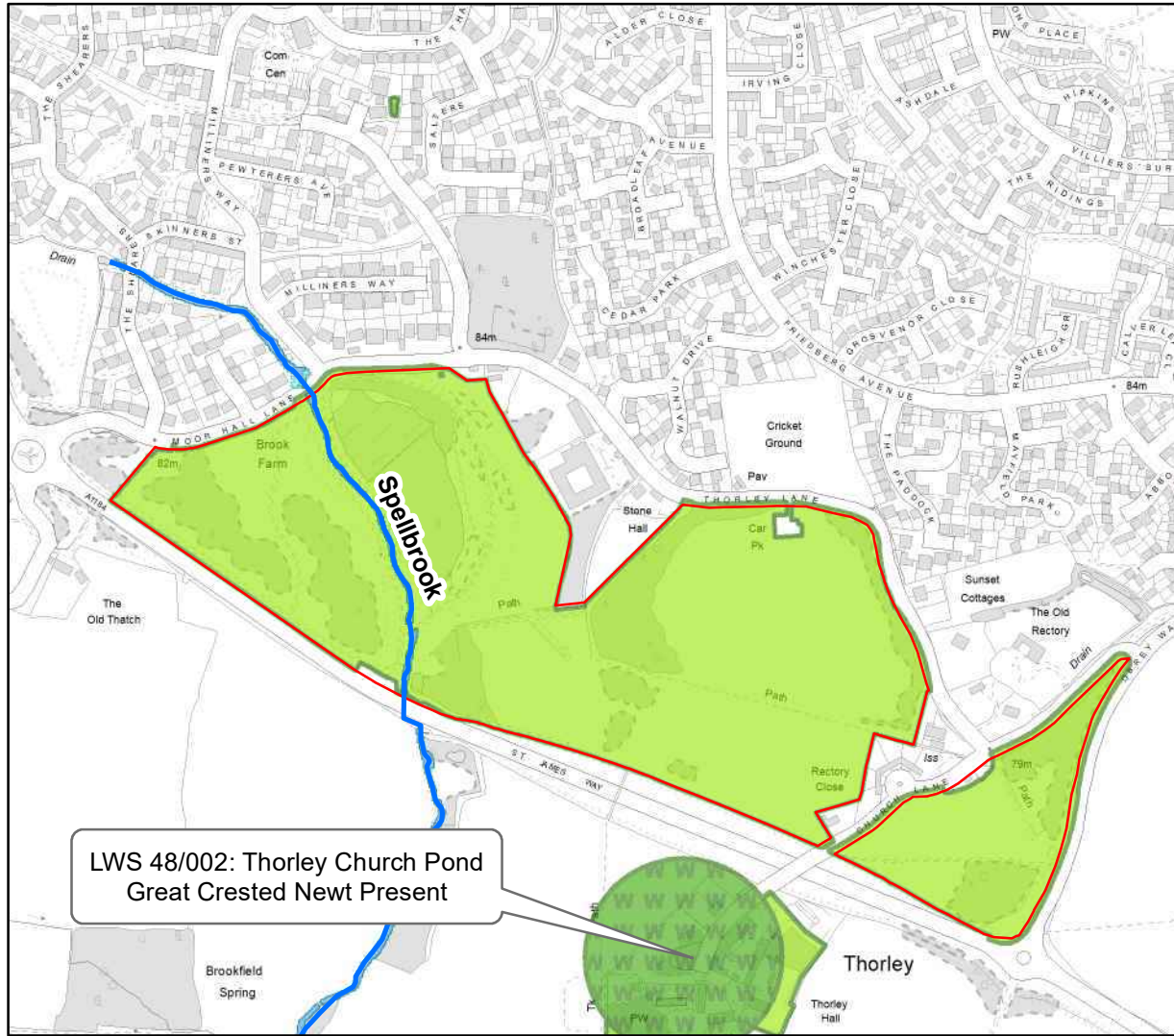
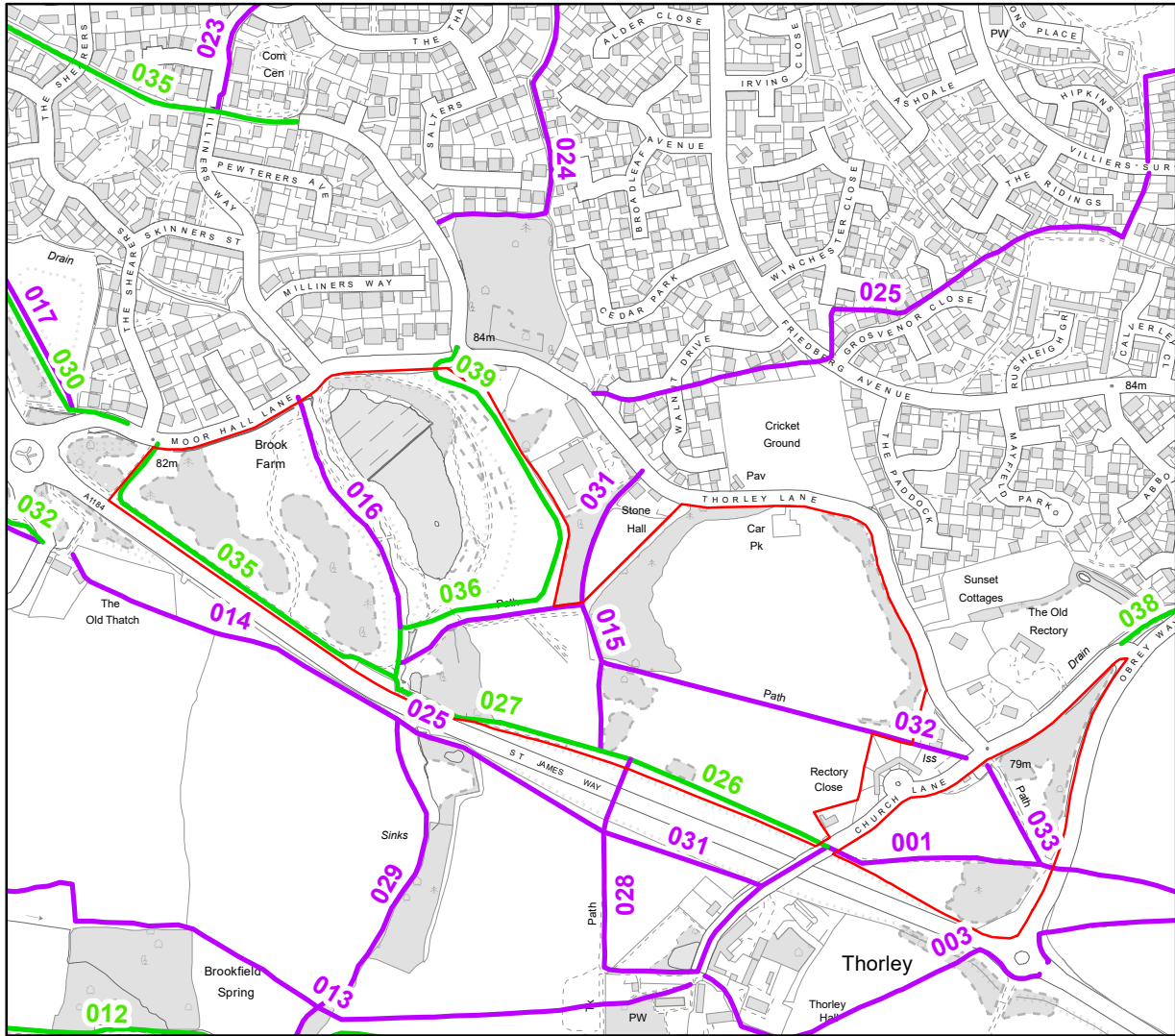
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# Southern Country Park Greenspace Action Plan 23-28 Constraints Plan

### Legend

- SCP Site Boundary
- Electric
- Gas
- Water
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Main River
- Wildlife Site
- Ecosite
- Greenbelt

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December 2022

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# Southern Country Park

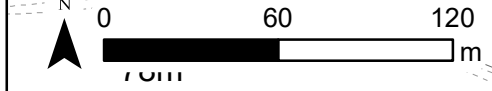
## Greenspace Action Plan 2023-2028

### Site Description



- Legend**
- Parkland Tree
  - dog bin
  - interpretation
  - life ring
  - pedestrian access
  - vehicle gate
  - bench
  - entrance sign
  - kissing gate
  - litter bin
  - picnic bench
  - welcome sign

- Habitats**
- Site Boundary
  - Car Park
  - Dog agility
  - Hedge
  - Standing Water
  - Reedbed
  - Utilities
  - Amenity cut
  - Conservation cut
  - Duck feeding area
  - Inlet/Outlet
  - Path
  - Scrub
  - Wet Grassland
  - Boardwalk
  - Ditch
  - Gabions
  - Marginal veg
  - Play area
  - Steps
  - Woodland



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1:2,600

Date  
May 2022

Rev  
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## 2.2 Geography and Landscape

The 23-hectare Southern Country Park lies between the outskirts of suburban Bishops Stortford to the north and the Landscape Character Area of the 'Thorley Uplands' an almost flat plateau of arable land. The park is on the very outer limits of this plateau, at an elevation of 85m, before the land gently slopes away to the east towards the river Stort. The soils are generally clay over chalky till but as the landscape is formed through the arisings of the lake and A1184 bypass not all areas of the park may share these characteristics.

The Spell Brook main river runs through the centre of the site before heading across the open farmland to the west. This is fed by several springs on site, some through the fishing lake, dug out in the initial creation of the park. One of these is the source of the wildlife pond south of the lake.

The park landscape is one which gently slopes down towards the central lake from the higher amenity space. There are created ridgelines along the whole western side of the park which run parallel to St James Way which have been extensively planted to create woodland blocks.



*1Lake View down to the lake*

## 2.3 History and Archaeology

Southern Country Park itself is still a new park, created in the 1990s by Countryside Properties PLC as part of a Section 106 planning obligation agreement relating to St Michael's Mead residential development. In 2001 East Herts District Council took over management of the park and the first GAP was produced in 2008.

Before its transformation into a public open space the site was historically agricultural or pastoral land, forming part of the Thorley Place estate and gardens where the lake now sits.

## 2.4 Habitats and Wildlife

An overview of the habitats and features of interest are found below. This is informed in part through a detailed National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey, undertaken to provide an updated baseline, and to aid future management decisions. The full report can be found in the appendices (Appendix 7.1).

### 2.4.1 Grassland

The park contains a significant portion of grassland throughout, divided between short-mown amenity areas and sections of taller vegetation managed by an annual cut and lift for conservation and wildlife benefit. Generally, this conservation grassland sward is dominated by False Oat Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) with some local variation in composition and variation of other abundant grass species throughout. While the composition is dominated by grass species over other wildflower species there are a few areas of note including a recently sown wildflower area in the large amenity space and a chalk enriched bank.



*Recreation Ground meadow (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

During the creation of the park this chalk was imported as part of the construction. A slope was constructed using the spoil from the lake excavation and the layer of chalk applied after. This was then seeded with a wildflower mix specific to calcareous soils. Now it shares characteristics of a grass dominated neutral grassland as nutrients have increased over time. There is a small area adjacent to Moor Hall Lane still retaining species more typical of calcareous soils in part because of the presence of yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*).

The dog free enclosure was not included in the park's initial creation and not seeded as other areas were. This area's floral composition has formed naturally from the original seeds in the soil. While sharing the grass dominance seen throughout the site this area is more characteristic of nutrient poor soils, resulting in an excellent display of orchid species in the spring.



*Picnic area in Spring Meadow*

The grazing enclosure has at times been dominated by common ragwort, with a small mosaic of other floral species in the centre where nutrient levels are reduced. There is scrub and rank vegetation along both the fence line and at the western end of the enclosure. This scrub has been managed through mechanical means in previous years where grazing has been ineffective.



*Ragwort growth in grazing compartment*

## **2.4.2 Woodland**

Woodlands on site have been created through the planting of trees in small, designed blocks at the park's inception. These contain a wide mix of native and some non-native species originating from the initial planting scheme. Now these blocks have developed a dense closed canopy. The FoSCP have helped manage these by coppicing along the edges to improve structural diversity and through the creation of informal paths throughout.



*Coppiced woodland (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

These blocks are very dense having only seen minor thinning work since planting. They are dark and close feeling with little ground flora throughout and limited signs of natural regeneration where some thinning has been carried out. Between the woodland blocks there are paths and areas of grassland which act as glades which are managed as part of the conservation cut and lift utilised throughout the park.

There are several planted standards in the park including an oak and hornbeam mix nearby to Moor Hall Lane, silver birch and alder overlooking the lake and Dutch-elm resistant elms planted by the FoSCP between the woodland blocks south of the amenity area.

### **2.4.3 Aquatic**

The park has several aquatic features. The most notable of these is the large open lake, a 'balancing pond' of approximately 7000m<sup>2</sup>. The margins of the pond have been planted with wetland species to create a biodiverse wet margin around the perimeter. These margins and the woodland pockets that border the lake also serve to limit unauthorised access to the water away from the numerous fish platforms and duck feeding area.



*View of the balancing lake and reedbed*

The 5000m<sup>2</sup> reedbed alongside the lake is notable as a unique feature in the local landscape. Created as a Sustainable Urban Drainage System, or SuDS, this secondary treatment system was intended for road run-off from the adjacent St Michael's Mead housing development. Its design included a series of stone filled surface gabions to encourage maximum water dispersion through the reedbed and ensure maximum treatment capacity. The reedbed was initially planted with *Phragmites australis* (common reed), *Typha Latfolia* (Greater Reed Mace), *Typha angustifolia* (Lesser Reed Mace) and *Scirpus lacustris* (Bulrush); to balance effective run off filtration and a valuable habitat for wildlife.

Spell Brook runs parallel to the lake, entering the park at the Moor Hall Lane entrance and exiting by the wildlife pond and under St James Way. Despite its small size it is classified a main river. It is therefore the responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA) in relation to flood risk and permitting with the riparian landowner East Herts carrying out the maintenance in and around the river. East Herts also ensures the inflow and outflow to the lake is clear of debris and will periodically manage vegetation within the ditch on behalf of the EA.

There are a number of small ponds within the park: a natural wildlife pond to the south of the lake which has seen significant safety and improvement works over the previous iterations of the GAP, a small seasonal 'dew pond' and a newly created seasonal woodland pond to hold water drainage along the path network. There is also a small pond and wetland area in the south-east corner of the site adjacent to Obrey Way and St James Way which is a rudimentary SuDS and popular with wildlife including amphibians and grass snakes.

#### 2.4.4 Hedgerows

The park is bordered by young hedgerows from the entrance at the top of Moor Hall Lane along the perimeter shared with St James way down to the south-west corner of Obrey Way. These were planted through the action of the FoSCP over several years. Currently they are managed on a 2-year rotation as part of the grounds maintenance. There are further hedgerows bordering Spell Brook which have been laid previously.



*Hedgerow and woodland along bridleway (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

#### 2.4.5 Scrub

Scrub as a habitat is widely missing from the surrounding landscape and the park has some of the few examples. While scrub in the wrong place can be a detriment, specifically to the grasslands and wetlands of the site, it is a vital habitat for nesting birds and insects with a variety of plants, food sources and cover. The small triangular copse in the northeast of the park and the mature hedgerow adjacent to the sheep paddock are the parks best examples of this important habitat type.

#### 2.4.6 Wildlife

A range of data on flora and fauna within the park is informally collected by members of FoSCP - including records of bird species, dragonflies, mammals, and wildflowers. There is a series of butterfly and moth surveys conducted by the group on an annual basis which goes back to 2004 and includes records of scarce small copper and clouded yellow butterfly. The aquatic habitats on-site support frogs, toads, and newts as well as birds and invertebrates.



*Southern Hawker dragonfly (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

## **2.5 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

### **2.5.1 Access and paths**

A network of surfaced paths throughout the park allows access for all visitors. In addition, there are further mown grass paths and a series of informal paths through the woodland blocks created by the FoSCP and managed with woodchip arisings from woodland tasks. Several Public Rights of Way including footpaths and bridleways run through the site with kissing gates and bollards at site entrances to allow pedestrian access while restricting vehicles.

There is a free public carpark on Thorley Lane with space for 18 cars which sees heavy use, especially in the summer months when the park is at its busiest.

### **2.5.2 Facilities**

There are 10 'easy access' fishing platforms around the lake including one specifically designed for disabled visitors. These are monitored and maintained by

an external contractor 'Aquamaintain' who also manage the fish stocks within the lake. This fishing is managed under a ticketing scheme which allows the public to fish in the lake providing they have a valid rod license.

The park has a well-equipped play area within the amenity field and nearby to the carpark. This equipment is monitored and maintained by EHDC with an annual safety review. Maintenance is carried out based on this report and on an ad hoc basis when issues arise.

In the 2013-2018 iteration of the GAP an easy access boardwalk was constructed between the lake and reedbed. This allowed access across the lake while resolving a safety and disturbance issue where public were walking out onto the concrete gabions within the reedbed.



*Boardwalk over the lake*

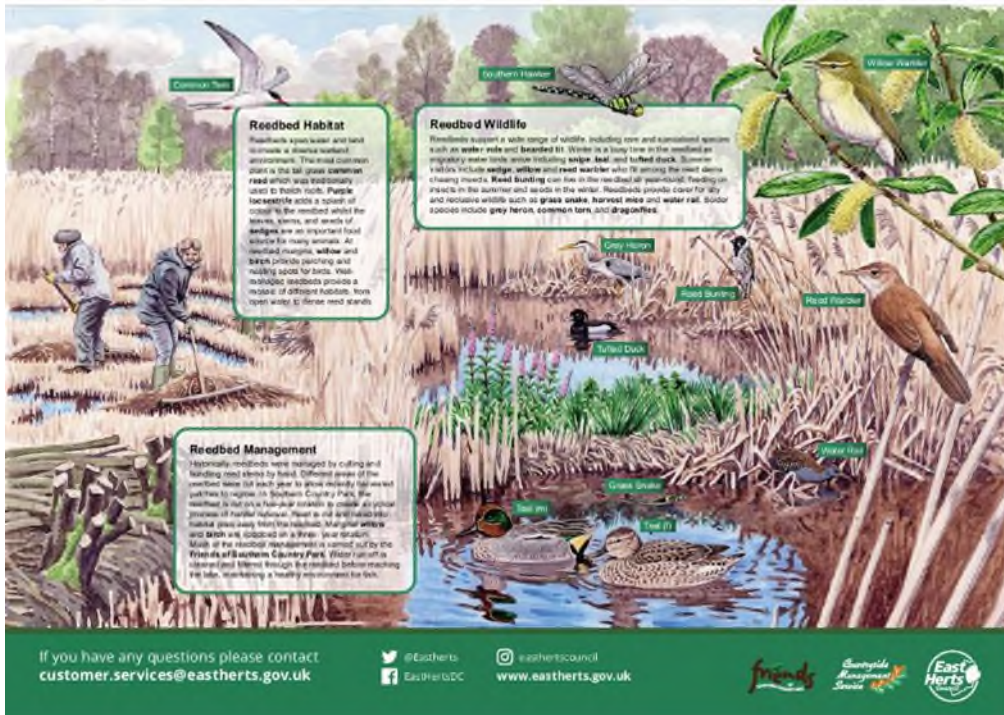
There are a number of benches and picnic tables throughout the park including within the fenced dog free Spring Meadow which has a circular maze cut into the grass each year. As well as the dog free area there is a dog exercise enclosure and dog training equipment adjacent to the carpark on Thorley Lane.

There is a permanent orienteering course with three routes, identified on the ground by posts with coloured bands. Users are able to download maps and information from the EHDC website. Alongside these routes are several hidden geocaches.

### **2.5.3 Interpretation and Signage**

There are several interpretation panels on the site highlighting the woodland work carried out by the FoSCP, the benefits of the wildlife pond and the importance of the reedbed for wildlife. There are two larger notice boards, one at the entrance from Moor Hall Lane and the other immediately adjacent to the car park on Thorley Lane.

Footpaths and bridleways are waymarked throughout the site from the entrances which also have their own carved entrance signs for the park. Further signage for fishing information and the water bailiffs are located around the lake.



Reedbed interpretation

## 2.6 Community and Events

### 2.6.1 Friends of Southern Country Park

Friends of Southern Country Park are a group of local volunteers who act as ambassadors for the park. The tasks they undertake are a valuable contribution to the maintenance and development of the park. They base their own task calendar on this action plan, with support and guidance from CMS. On top of the volunteer activity they deliver, FoSCP are able to respond to the public and provide valued feedback to the Council from park users.

### 2.6.2 Events

The park plays host to a yearly LoveParks event which is a national event but organised locally by EHDC. This is an afternoon of activities for families and children to celebrate the park.

There is also a regular health walk which crosses through the park and starts and finishes in nearby Thorley. The FoSCP have occasionally run guided walks for interested park users.

### 2.6.3 Publicity

The Council's website has a page dedicated to Southern Country Park including a map, management plans, related documents, and details of the Friends Group.

Events and activities are advertised through posters on site, and wider media coverage.

The park is listed on the ParksHerts website ([Parksherts.co.uk/parks](https://Parksherts.co.uk/parks)) - a mobile-first website application providing a single information point for over one hundred of Hertfordshire's parks and open spaces, from recreation grounds through to woodlands and award-winning flagship parks, irrespective of administrative ownership. It provides a way for people to discover and enjoy these places, supporting people to make outdoor exercise part of their everyday lives.

The FoSCP have an active Facebook page which highlights their good work through task days, shares details of the management of the site and provides information on the wildlife found in the park including accompanying photos.

(<https://www.facebook.com/foscp.bs/>). The site is a recipient of Green Flag accreditation and can be found on the list of national parks who are in the network.

## **2.7 Site Management**

### **2.7.1 Summary**

Southern Country Park is regularly visited and inspected by the council, CMS and grounds maintenance contractor staff. Regular grounds maintenance such as cleansing and grass cutting is carried out by the council's grounds maintenance contractor. This contract is currently held by Glendale Services.

East Herts Council works in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service (CMS). CMS produced this Greenspace Action Plan for the park and carry out work on the site through managing a group of local practical conservation volunteers, and support the Friends of Southern Country Park. The council pays CMS an annual contribution towards their costs as part of a larger, shared service arrangement.

### **2.7.2 Policy framework**

The council recognises that its parks and open spaces contribute to:

- The overall vision and priorities of the council
- The quality of life of local people
- The physical, social and economic regeneration of the district
- The greening, attractiveness and biodiversity of the district

Accordingly, this management plan and the people that deliver it are guided by and embrace the aims, objectives and principles of the council's overarching plans and strategies. Links to these plans and strategies can be found in Appendix 7.

### **2.7.3 Environmental standards and policy**

Southern Country Park is managed as part of a broad portfolio of sites and in line with the approach set out in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-27.

The current Grounds Maintenance Contract contains an Environmental Protection Schedule by which the contractor must abide. The council's grounds maintenance contractor Glendale Services, employed in the management of the park, is fully committed to energy conservation and the reduction of pollution in the service they provide. Progress and current actions by the grounds maintenance contractor in this area include:

- The majority of the powered equipment used on the contract is battery powered.
- They are looking to change bin collections to reduce the number of vehicles visiting a site while still providing the same level of service.
- They have a microsite linked to the EHC website to enable residents to access live work schedules.
- They use Glendale Live for maintenance schedules, using AI to make sure their time is used efficiently and fuel efficiency is maximised.

The council operates under an Environmental Policy Statement which outlines its commitment to sustainability. The following are key components of relevance to The Ridgeway Local Park.

#### *2.7.3.1 Use of pesticides*

The council recognises that chemical control is sometimes necessary but has taken a conscious decision to keep the use of chemicals to an absolute minimum, limiting the use of pesticides in the park only to problems that could not otherwise be dealt with adequately.

Under the current grounds maintenance contract, shrub beds are managed by hand weeding and the areas around trees trimmed rather than applying herbicide.

#### *2.7.3.2 Use of peat*

The council does not support the use of plants grown in peat, instead utilising locally sourced alternatives, or using bare root shrubs and trees. Careful planning of planting programmes at the appropriate time of year ensures that this approach is sustainable.

#### *2.7.3.3 Recycling*

All horticultural waste from the site is processed in a sustainable manner. Tree and shrub pruning arisings are chipped back onto site where possible, and where this is inappropriate they are taken by our contractor to a local waste recycling plant. Materials removed from site are also recycled where possible. Standard benches have recycled plastic slats in place of timber.

### **2.7.4 Environmental sustainability and climate change**

The council's operations are guided by its Climate Change Strategy (2022-26) and the related Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (2024-25). A central objective is an ambition to achieve a net-zero carbon position by 2030.

In line with the strengthened biodiversity duty introduced by the Environment Act 2021, the council has also completed a review of the actions it can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity. A list of policies and objectives arising from this review will be published following formal agreement.

### **2.7.5 Green Flag status**

Southern Country Park won the first Green Flag award in East Herts in 2008 and has retained this prestigious award since. The council aspires to maintain Green Flag status at Southern Country Park to demonstrate its continuing commitment to providing successful and well-managed parks and open spaces.

### **2.7.6 Measuring success**

An intrinsic part of the management plan is to annually review the actions set out, recording progress and any issues arising, and noting any actions to be carried forward to the following year. The action plan maps in this document show the actions planned for each year and are designed to form an easy read version of the plan.

### **2.7.7 Health and safety**

#### *2.7.7.1 Health and safety policy*

Southern Country Park is covered by East Herts Council's general Health and Safety Policy (2026).

Members of the public using the park are afforded protection by both the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Occupiers Liability Act (1957, revised 1984).

Council employees and contractors working in the park have a responsibility to take all reasonable precautions for their own health and safety and for that of others who may be affected by their actions, including the general public. Such precautions include making themselves familiar with and confirming to all applicable safety rules, correctly using safety equipment, following instructions and advice regarding the use of substances, and reporting all accidents, damage, hazards, violent incidents and/or shortcomings in the council's health and safety arrangements.

#### *2.7.7.2 Risk assessments*

The nature and use of Southern Country Park, and the operations that are carried out within it, present a variety of health and safety risks. These relate to both supervised and controlled activities, and to the unsupervised use of the site by the general public.

Operations by the grounds maintenance contractor are carried out under a broad range of risk assessments related to activities undertaken.

Any potential hazards and risks associated with the park are also identified and evaluated as part of the quarterly Open Spaces Inspections undertaken by the council's Area Environmental Inspectors, in addition to the many ad hoc visits and visual inspections undertaken by council officers and contractors.

#### *2.7.7.3 Safety of equipment and facilities*

A thorough and comprehensive system of safety and contracting monitoring inspections is in place for the park. On a quarterly basis all our main open spaces are inspected by the Area Environmental Inspection team. Hazards and defects are recorded and any work required is actioned straight away.

The council has a robust system of monitoring the grounds maintenance contract comprising 50 inspections of various operations each week across the district including random inspections, previous problem areas, and work completed the previous week. The contractor provides details of scheduled operations carried out on a weekly basis and reports any damaged or missing litter dog bins.

The contractor inspects all play areas five times a week including Saturday, and any defects are noted and actioned. Monthly inspections of the play areas are also carried out by the Area Environmental Inspection team. The inspection of play areas is supported by an electronic system to improve consistency and ensure that actionable repairs are tracked effectively.

The children's play area is also subject to an annual safety inspection carried out by our independent Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) consultant.

In addition to these routine inspections we aim to engage the local community in carrying out ad hoc inspections of the park. Any issues of concern from the local community are reported to the council through the Customer Help Desk.

#### *2.7.7.4 Tree risk management*

The council operate a Tree Risk Management Programme to inspect all council-owned trees across the district. The principles of the inspection are to systematically plot all trees and woodland onto a GIS system and to identify both the current and the potential risk of each tree or group of trees. The trees in the park have been captured in the system and undergo regular inspections based upon a zoned approach which categorises the potential risk to the public.

The ongoing inspection programme ensures that each tree is inspected by an independent arboricultural consultant. The consultant makes and necessary recommendations for work and also reviews the risk category in relation to the next inspection. This prioritises inspection to those trees that present the greatest risk to the public and ensures that resources are not wasted by inspecting more frequently than is necessary.

Where tree safety issues are identified outside of the routine inspection programme, these are dealt with on a reactive basis.

#### *2.7.7.5 Oak processionary moth (OPM)*

Oak processionary moth (OPM) was introduced into England in 2005. It has since become established in London before spreading into surrounding counties including the south of East Hertfordshire. While the moth is harmless, caterpillars pose a risk to public health through microscopic hairs which cover its body. Contact with hairs typically causes skin rashes, although symptoms can include eye irritation, sore throats and in extreme cases breathing difficulties and allergic reactions. Bishop's Stortford falls within the Forestry Commission's buffer zone for this species, meaning that OPM should be reported to the Forestry Commission, who will take responsibility for treated infested trees. OPM has not yet been identified at Southern Country Park.

#### **2.7.8 Anti-social behaviour**

East Herts Council works in close partnership with the local police in tackling anti-social behaviour in its parks and open spaces. The Community Safety Team at East Herts Council liaises with the local Police Constables (PCs) and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) about any emerging issues in an area (e.g. vandalism, vehicle nuisance, graffiti) and looks at ways to tackle these issues. Problems or concerns about an area, when reported to the council by residents, are passed to the local PC or PCSO so they can look out for issues while on patrol. Similarly the local officers will also make East Herts Council aware when they may be able to assist in tackling a problem, for example by cutting back hedges or removing graffiti.

#### **2.7.9 Dogs in the park**

Dog bins are provided in the park to help dog owners clear up after their pets. These are emptied twice a week in summer and once a week in winter. The grounds maintenance contractor will also clear dog faeces around each bin when visited and where necessary as part of the weekly play maintenance operations.

The council's Leisure and Parks Inspection and Compliance Officers inspect the park and are authorised to issue fixed penalty notice fines to dog walkers who fail to pick up after their pets. Enforcement signs reminding visitors of the law in terms of dog fouling are installed at visible locations in the park.

#### **2.7.10 Litter and waste management**

The litter and waste management regime is set out in the grounds maintenance contract. Southern Country Park is classified in the contract as a mix of high intensity of use and medium intensity of use, with cleansing proportional to this. Play areas sit in the category of three inspections per week. Cleansing visits are programmed to achieve a satisfactory standard. This is reviewed regularly through monitoring inspections.

#### **2.7.11 Environmental crime**

East Herts Council is committed to improving standards of neighbourhood management, raising awareness of and tackling environmental crime and anti-social

behaviour. It uses powers from the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (2005) to take enforcement action for non-compliance with Orders passed as part of the Environmental Crime and Enforcement Policy. The following list details the specific areas targeted by the council under the act:

- Litter
- Graffiti
- Dog control
- Distribution of free literature
- Abandoned vehicles
- Nuisance vehicles
- Fly tipping
- Abandoned shopping trolleys

Under these powers, the Area Environmental Inspectors and PCSOs are accredited to issue fixed penalty notices to individual or organisations breaching these Orders and committing environmental crime.

Area Environmental Inspectors monitor the park as part of their normal duties and have not found there to be any serious issues in this park.

## **2.7.12 General maintenance**

### *2.7.12.1 Main contractor*

The council works with a grounds maintenance contractor, Glendale Services, to keep all our parks and open spaces litter free, well maintained and available for all to enjoy.

The council has a strong proactive relationship with the contractor and will identify and resolve any issues quickly and effectively.

Glendale have recently launched a [live works tracker](#), offering real time updates on current and completed maintenance activities across the district. The tracker provides guidance on when certain features such as grass, shrub beds and dog waste bins will next be visited. On some occasions, for example where shrub beds are not encroached or weedy or where the grass does not need cutting, the teams will inspect but not necessarily carry out any work. The tracker does not cover public litter bins, which are serviced separately by our recycling, waste and street cleansing contractor, Veolia.

### *2.7.12.2 Grounds, buildings and equipment*

The maintenance of the park is carried out to a high standard by both the main grounds maintenance contractor and where necessary by specialist contractors to carry out arboricultural or conservation operations, for example. Local conservation practical volunteers will periodically be invited to participate in some of the

conservation work in the park. This is an area that CMS have considerable experience in, being long standing holders of the national “Investing In Volunteers” accreditation, which has great benefits to parks across the district.

Structural features within the park include the boardwalk, the fishing platforms and the outflow and inflow gates. These are inspected by an independent contractor.

The grounds contractor and Area Environmental Inspectors are fully committed to ensuring that any damage to infrastructure or to plants and trees is dealt with swiftly to ensure that vandalism on the site is not encouraged.

#### *2.7.12.3 Horticultural and arboricultural standards*

Our grounds maintenance contractor provides a resource that covers the full range of horticultural and grounds maintenance skills required to carry out both the contract and additional works. We also engage specialist arboricultural and management contractors to implement ongoing improvements to our parks across the district. Tree whips for planting are procured by CMS according to best practice.

#### **2.7.13 Customer enquiry database**

The council’s back office system provides a live link to the council’s contractors for all environmental issues including cleanliness, environmental crime and safety. Customer enquiries, complaints or environmental issues are logged to the system as a ‘job’ for handling appropriately. Features such as street furniture and equipped play areas are plotted on a map to ensure that call centre staff can deploy inspections accurately and quickly in response to customer enquiries. The ‘job’ is then either issued to the contractor to deal with, or to the Area Environmental Inspectors to investigate, either immediately or within agreed response times.

The system ensures that jobs are assigned and completed effectively, and the live link to contractors allows for effective recording, tracking and actioning of complaints. The system also has a built-in reporting tool, allowing for continual development of the system and improvement of service delivery.

### 3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

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The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

#### **Aim**

To continue to maintain the park as an attractive and enjoyable open space for people to visit while enhancing the habitats throughout for the benefit of wildlife and the environment.

#### **Objectives**

**A. A Welcoming Place** – To provide a welcoming place for visitors.

- A1 Expand the carpark allowing for users from further afield to utilise the park.
- A2 Maintain site entrances to form an inviting gateway and positive first impression of the park.
- A3 Implementing named areas of the park to aid navigation and create a sense of familiarity.
- A4 Installing signage to direct new users through the park to named locations.
- A5 Improve accessibility on main entrances and paths to allow all users to enjoy the park.
- A6 Provide a variety of equipment and structures for all ages of children.

**B. Healthy Safe and Secure** – To ensure that visitors to the park feel safe.

- B1 Routine safety inspections carried out with identified actions implemented.
- B2 Proactive response to antisocial use and ongoing engagement with police to tackle concerns.
- B3 Create a safer entrance and exit onto the site alongside the carpark expansion.
- B4 Identify and improve surfacing problems on the paths throughout the park.

**C. Well-Maintained and Clean** – To ensure the site is tidy and that regular maintenance is carried out.

- C1 Improve drainage on problem areas of path network.
- C2 Implement actions identified in reports on lake stocks and structures carried out by Aquamaintain.
- C3 Ensure grounds maintenance of the park is carried out to the highest standard in line with the [Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022/2027](#)
- C4 Work with FoSCP to carry out one off and regular actions to maintain the park for all users

**D. Sustainability** – Ensure all activities on site are as sustainable as possible.

- D1 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital projects.
- D2 Ensure that ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.
- D3 Management operations to meet EHDC Environmental Sustainability Action Plan ([Climate Change Strategy 2022-26](#)).
- D4 Retain material from woodland works on site where possible for use in habitat creation and path maintenance.
- D4 Include options for cyclists to safely lock bikes as part of carpark expansion.

**E. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage** – Maintain and enhance the habitats on site.

- E1 Undertake a planned programme of woodland management works to diversify the structure and age of the woodland plantations.
- E2 Carry out management of the planted hedgerows around the park including laying sections to fill gaps and prolong their life.
- E3 Review grassland management practices throughout the site to create more diverse habitats throughout all seasons.
- E4 Complete annual reedbed cut to stimulate areas of new growth and retain areas of open water.
- E5 Enhance existing ponds on site to improve their value for wildlife.

E6 Monitor and record improvements to Southern Country Park's habitats and wildlife.

E7 Review the regime within the grazing compartment and investigate alternative stocking of the area.

E8 Monitor for and manage invasive or detrimental species.

E9 Improve habitats for butterflies by creating and managing a specifically seeded bank and planting supporting standards

**F. Community Involvement** - Communicate and involve the local community with the site and the activities taking place.

F1 Work in partnership with and provide support to the ongoing efforts of the FoSCP volunteer group.

F2 Encourage community and volunteer involvement in practical conservation tasks.

F3 Engage the local community at every stage of the GAP consultation process.

F4 Promote and encourage community litter picking events to enhance the park environment.

**G. Marketing and Communication** – Raise awareness of the site and what it has to offer.

G1 Seek to maintain Green Flag accreditation for the park.

G2 Continue to develop and promote a range of events and activities with partners, key stakeholders, and the community to raise awareness of the park.

G3 Promote interest in the park and the work of FoSCP across a variety of media and events such as Love Parks.

## **4.0 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

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### **4.1 A Welcoming Place**

Southern Country Park is an open and welcoming space for users with a good network of paths throughout the site. However, navigating around the site to different areas can be difficult without prior knowledge. This leaves the lake and amenity areas feeling disconnected from each other. The FoSCP have named specific areas of the park on their working map to direct work activities for several years. Utilising these naming conventions an attractive network of simple signs and location markers would be able to direct park users while helping maintain the path network.

Currently the residents of Bupa Premier Court care home have access into the site via a gate onto the lake view field, but this access is unsuitable for those with limited mobility. Working with the care home to raise funding a surfaced path will be installed with a seating area for residents to make use of the park and the views across the lake.

The large development adjacent to the park of approximately 700 homes will see a significant increase of visitors to the park putting pressure on the current infrastructure. Section 106 funding from the development has been provided to EHDC to carry out infrastructure improvements to the park to help facilitate this expected increase in footfall. This will contribute towards the expansion of the carpark from its current 15 spaces, allow for more disabled parking and improve access from the carpark into the park. The managed hedgerow around the carpark will be expanded to encompass this expansion on completion.

All entrances and exits into the park to be maintained with any infrastructure and gates kept in good condition to provide a welcoming and easy entrance to the park. The footbridge on bridleway 27 needs repair and is under investigation by the appropriate HCC access officer.

### **4.2 Healthy Safe and Secure**

The park regularly receives safety and risk assessment surveys undertaken by EHDC Parks and Open spaces team on an annual basis. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated annually and monitored through regular site inspections. Additional formal safety audits are carried out by contractors including the children's play park and tree safety audits. These are then reviewed with any findings actioned to ensure the park remains a safe and enjoyable place to visit. The grounds maintenance contractors conduct their own risk assessment for their staff and equipment, which are also monitored through contract inspection processes. Further information of how elements of the park are cleaned, maintained and kept safe and secure can be found on East Herts [Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2022/2027 \(onwebcurl.com\)](#) and the accompanying FAQ [Operating Policies FAQs Leisure Parks - April 23.pdf \(onwebcurl.com\)](#).

Currently the entrance to the carpark is a narrow one-way entrance and exit with a height barrier to prevent unauthorised larger vehicles accessing the carpark and park. As part of the potential carpark improvements several options to create a safer junction which allows two-way traffic into and out of the park are being investigated. The final option will aim to be affordable, effective and remain sensitive to the mature treeline that borders that section of the park.

Some surfaced paths deteriorated over the previous GAP with areas of flooding resulting in erosion and uneven surfaces. These have been proactively improved to both rectify the problem and solve the causing issue. Some areas have been regraded as part of these works to improve access for users with mobility issues. The condition of these paths will be routinely monitored to ensure that problems are resolved quickly.



*Example of flooding path cleared of mud by volunteers (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

### **4.3 Well-Maintained and Clean**

The park is maintained by the grounds maintenance team Glendale who are regularly on site carrying out regular operations and the FoSCP who have a winter and summer task programme for the park. As well as the regular actions such as grass cutting, cleaning of equipment and emptying bins by Glendale the FoSCP will monitor Rights of Way markers, repair fencing and gates which may be damaged and help maintain the informal woodland path network.

The lake is surveyed by a specialist contractor Aquamaintain on a biennial basis to monitor the health, abundance, and diversity of fish stocks. This report (Appendix 7.3) provides management recommendations based on the assessment which are

then actioned to ensure the lake is an excellent resource for recreational fishing. They also audit the fishing platforms and boardwalk for signs of damage for EHDC to undertake repairs.

#### **4.4 Sustainability**

Materials arising from woodland works and FoSCP tasks are to be used on site where possible. This can be the creation of further habitat such as dead hedging and hibernacula near to water sources or chipped onto pathways within woodlands and allowed to rot down for future use as mulch to protect new tree planting through their establishment.

Investigation of external funding for large scale projects such as path maintenance or surfacing works and to improve aquatic features will be investigated over the course of this GAP. Applying for a Forestry Commission approved small woodland management plan will allow all work to be carried out under one single felling license streamlining the process.

All timber will come from FSC certified sources, producing products that can be recycled at the end of their life.

East Herts has set out its own climate change initiative and all operations around the park will aim to fit within these guidelines and commitments found here, [Climate Change Strategy 2022-2026 | East Herts District Council](#) with the accompanying yearly plan [Environmental Sustainability Action Plan | East Herts District Council](#).

#### **4.5 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage**

East Herts is committed to the [HCCSP Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity 2023](#), a plan to address the continued loss of biodiversity at a countywide scale. As such Southern Country Park offers an oasis for people and nature on the outskirts of a built up and busy environment and works to improve and expand on its natural value are vital. To support and inform this throughout the 2023 – 2028 GAP a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) botanical survey and Bat survey were carried out to gather base line data and support management objectives (See appendix 7.1 & 7.2).

The NVC survey focused on the grasslands at the time and provided a snapshot of the flora there during the survey period. The findings summarised that grass dominance was hindering the diversity on site and limiting nectar sources for invertebrates. This supports management intentions to reduce nutrients and grass abundance across the site.

The Bat survey found that the main locations for emergence and navigation came from the mature woodland block adjacent to the wildlife pond and the lake edges were used for foraging. Species recorded were almost entirely both commonly

occurring UK pipistrelle species with individual recordings of Noctule and Myotis species. However, a total of 7 species were found to utilise the site for foraging. Management advice to support these populations are in line with planned work on the young woodland plantations, improvement of meadows and installation of bat boxes where appropriate.

#### 4.5.1 Woodlands

The previous GAP noted that the young blocks planted at the inception of the park were at an age where a programme of thinning would help them mature into healthy, well structured, and dynamic woodlands. This has in the past been selective thinning of poor form, damaged or suppressed individual trees alongside the FoSCP carrying out a program of coppicing for the woodland edges. The systematic approach outlined in the last iteration of the GAP however, was not carried out and so this selective thinning has been unable to encourage the establishment natural regeneration. Consequently, there is a lack of ground flora and the crowding of the canopy noted in the previous GAP is ongoing.



*Woodland showing a high density of stems and limited space (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

The focus for the woodlands in this GAP will be to undertake this outstanding work with a Forestry Commission small woodland management plan in place. This work will mix the systematic approach, where a percentage of trees are removed to allow improved light and space, with some selective thinning to aid those trees in best health and remove poor form individuals. The coppicing of the woodland edges

during this period will be reduced and carried out where opportunities are identified on an adhoc basis. This will avoid impacting the woodland both internally and externally and reduce disturbance. Where work can be carried out by hand tools this can be supported by the friends of group. The area of mature woodland adjacent to the wildlife pond will continue to have low intervention management to provide undisturbed habitat for roosting bats.

This work will be carried out in phased sections as outlined in the previous plan to limit the impact on the park. A different section of woodland will be targeted each season as shown on the action plan maps. During this time the opportunity to broaden the woodland paths by targeting trees either side will be undertaken. This will improve the enclosed and dark feeling these paths currently have while helping achieve the aims of the thinning work.

The hedgerows are currently managed on a 2-year rotation, cutting top and sides on alternate years. This was best practice guidance from Natural England when the last GAP was produced but advice based on a Natural England partnered study now shows that a 3-year rotation with an A frame shaped cut, carried out early in the year, is best practice to retain fruit into winter. This may not be possible in all areas of the park and so a tapered cut on one side where access allows will suffice.

Alongside this approach a programme of hedge laying will be undertaken by the FoSCP in small sections each year. Hedge laying involves the cutting of each plant  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the base and then laying the hedge on its side creating a thick barrier that regrows quickly. Under this management a hedgerow can be laid time and time again for hundreds of years greatly increasing its lifespan as a hedge and preventing it forming a line of irregularly spaced trees which no longer act as a barrier or dense habitat.



*Example of a laid hedgerow*

Some additional hedgerow management at other parts of the site will be required to ensure RoW and path access is maintained but overall costs will be reduced.

#### 4.5.2 Grassland

Grasslands on site are managed as a combination of amenity and conservation cut and lift with mown paths throughout. This was expanded in the previous GAP to include the seeding of the lower recreation area creating an attractive meadow and a valuable nectar source. Uncut areas around the woodland edges on a two-year rotation to provide over wintering habitat for invertebrates were also suggested.

Until recently the conservation cut and lift was only undertaken in September when grass will have set seed. This timing allows for summer flowers to also set seed but has in part contributed to the dominance of false oat grass and other grass species over a more diverse array of wildflowers. Ongoing management for this GAP period will look to reduce this grass dominance by carrying out a second cut and lift in July. This time allows for the spring flowering species and many of the summer flowering species to set seed but is before the grasses seed. The removal of this cut material will reduce the nutrient content that grasses prefer and create areas which better support wildflowers. The autumn cut and lift will still be carried out to further reduce the nutrient levels. Some areas where yellow rattle, a species which parasitizes grasses, is present will be encouraged to expand unless false oat grass dominance is found to be high.



*Grass dominated conservation meadow*

The retained over wintering habitat will be continued around the woodland edges with this buffer of longer vegetation providing a gradient from woodland to grassland. This will be around 50% of the woodland blocks each year to have a two-year rotation of uncut and cut areas to prevent the woods expanding onto paths. The vegetation alongside Spell Brook will also be included in this two-year rotation with half cut annually to retain vegetation year-round for an emerging population of water voles. The dog free meadow will also have a fifth retained as over winter habitat but on a three-year rotation as shown on the map.



*Long grass buffer alongside woodland edge*

The park has a large area of amenity grassland managed as part of the ground's maintenance contract. The current contract aims to keep this at a maximum height of 80mm throughout the year but typically the height is cut before it gets to this point. Southern Country Park sees limited formal recreation use outside of the small football pitches and fitness classes which provides an opportunity to change the close-cut amenity grassland to an 'enhanced amenity cut' which is becoming more common in open spaces. This relaxed cut retains the sward between 50 and 150mm, providing an opportunity for low growing wildflower species to both flower and seed. This is achieved by raising the mower height and increasing the length of time between cuts. This can be applied to most amenity grass within the park aside from areas around the play area and high usage mown paths which may require more frequent cuts.

Finally, the seeding of the lower recreation ground in the previous GAP was a success and is now included in the conservation grassland for the site. The bank immediately adjacent to this meadow shows some signs of the meadow species expanding. Moving this it into the same conservation management will expand the

meadow without impacting on the amenity space with little intervention required. At the same time there is the opportunity to seed the higher bank as a strip of wildflowers with mown paths. This provides more meadow areas on site, does not impact the view from the carpark and play area as trees would and retains the flat amenity spaces for use.

#### 4.5.3 *Scrub*

Scrub is limited on site and restricted to a few locations. Scrub forming can be detrimental to some areas such as grassland areas such as the chalky bank, the wetlands, or meadows, but increasingly its presence is viewed as an important habitat in its own right. Vitally it provides an important gradient between woodland and grassland and supports more species which may not be found in either habitat.

The simplest way to increase the abundance of scrub in the park is to allow some areas to naturally regenerate. This encourages colonising woody species to grow, being managed by a program of coppicing in future action plans. One area highlighted in the NVC botanical survey for regeneration is the grassland between the woodland blocks around Elm Way. This is strongly dominated by grasses with little diversity and supports a limited number of other species. Mown paths can be retained, and management of the regenerating species carried out through volunteer activities.

#### 4.5.4 *Wetlands and open water*

The reedbed is managed by an annual rotation of cutting and raking, the core aim being to limit accumulation of plant matter and maintain areas of open water. The zoning was revised in the previous plan and is unchanged in this one (appendix 7.5). This design ensures some vegetation within the core area is always left uncut, providing continuity of habitat for nesting birds. This task will be undertaken by CMS volunteers alongside the FoSCP.



*View across reedbed (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

Aquamaintain removed a large amount of the self-set willow and birch scrub from within the reedbed when they undertook this work during lockdown. This natural succession is inevitable and of benefit in small numbers as perching areas for migratory warblers but if left unchecked will be a detriment to the preservation of the reedbed. The current 3-year rotation to pull emergent self-set trees with an annual cut and treatment of willow growing from the gabions is appropriate.

The marginal vegetation around the fishing lake is best managed in a similar way. An annual operation to cut or pull developing scrub will help to maintain areas of open water within the margins. These margins are both beneficial to wildlife and retained to control access to sensitive parts of the water's edge as well as preventing erosion of adjacent footpaths. The duck feeding area on the western edge of the lake has had issues with unauthorised fishing and encouraging reed cover to expand here will allow the feeding area to be used while limiting fishing opportunities here.



*Duck feeding area*

Management of fish stocks in the lake follows recommendations from a fish population survey carried out in 2021 (see Appendix 7.3). The primary objective is to reduce the number of roach to reduce negative pressure on other fish species, creating a more positive environment for anglers and the lake itself.

The spring fed wildlife pond south of the lake has undergone work previously to improve safety and protect wildlife but sees regular issues from fish being added from the main lake. This limits its effectiveness as a wildlife pond due to this high number of large fish in a relatively small area negatively impacting invertebrate and amphibian populations. Signage, fencing and working further with the water bailiffs will look to solve this issue. If resolved, then external funding can be sought to further improve the wildlife potential of the pond. This involves increasing the wetland area adjacent to the pond, graduating the deep and steeply sided bottom where able and reducing shading and nutrient input from adjacent trees.

The dew pond within the recreation ground holds little water outside of the wettest seasons. While seasonal ponds are extremely valuable for wildlife in both wet and dry periods, able to provide breeding and feeding areas for many species, this pond is not holding water long enough throughout the year. Work to improve this pond's ability to hold water by applying a clay bottom as well as expanding its size or creating a further adjacent pond will allow it to be of greater wildlife benefit.



*Dew pond when holding water*

#### *4.5.5 Pennington Field*

The grazing regime for Pennington field has not produced the desired outcome over several years and required further mechanical intervention at times. Past issues have arisen from the timing, length of grazing period, lack of grazing by contractor, requirement of scrub clearance and an abundance of potentially harmful ragwort. The conditions experienced through the summer and winter of 2022 appear to have caused a significant reduction in ragwort abundance. This provides an opportunity to limit the regrowth through hand pulling and change the grazing regime.

We will look to carry out two phases of grazing throughout the year with an early spring period falling between March and May and a late summer into autumn period. As sheep are selective graziers this allows them to target the early grasses and scrub coming through in the spring and provide space for flowering plants throughout the summer. As they will avoid scrub once it matures there may be some potential for further management of scrub through volunteer activity to prevent the spread of this throughout the compartment.

The adjacent short sward bank shows characteristic species with dry sandy soils which is a unique feature in the local area. Management here will look to retain this short sward populated by rabbits and prevent excessive colonisation from other ruderal species which would add nutrients to the soil.



*Bank top at Pennington Field with sandy soil and a short sward*

The dense area of hemlock and other ruderal species adjacent to the grazing compartment offers an opportunity to utilise funds raised by the FOSCP to improve habitats for butterflies. Management aims to limit the dense regrowth of hemlock in this area through regular cutting and utilise some of the space as a butterfly bank. This is created by mounding the soil into a raised 'C' shape and seeding with specifically selected larval food species. Allowing a good woodland edge to develop and planting a small number of specimen trees would further support this. Interpretation and simple seating to enjoy this area offers the opportunity to allow people to reconnect peacefully with nature in a less busy area of the park.

#### **4.6 Community Involvement**

The local community should be informed of and involved in the management of the park via on-site interpretation panels, the activity of FoSCP, additional volunteer activities and guided walks. The creation of a new Greenspace Action Plan provides the ideal platform to work in partnership with FoSCP and other interested parties to discuss, programme and deliver a variety of projects that contribute towards the achievement of the overall aims and objectives for the park.

Many of the volunteer tasks on site are carried out by the FoSCP through their own work programmes which are based on the 5-year GAP and in collaboration with CMS and EHDC. The FoSCP are amazing ambassadors for the park and encourage volunteering and involvement from local park users. The CMS volunteer teams support on some activities to bring members of the public to the site from further around the county.

The FoSCP have regular meetings, advertise their task days through both flyers and social media and carry out walk and talks to showcase the park and their work.



*Friends of Southern Country Park at work (Courtesy of FoSCP)*

#### **4.7 Marketing and Communication**

Southern Country Park is part of the Green Flag accreditation scheme to promote excellent parks nationally. EHDC will seek to retain this by continuing to meet grounds maintenance requirements and keep the management the park to the highest standards. The new GAP is included as part of the application process.

The LoveParks annual event hosted in Southern Country Park and nearby Pishobury Park provides an opportunity to showcase the park as well as providing an opportunity to highlight the management work of EHDC, CMS and the FoSCP.

Pieces of important work and activity on site will be highlighted through the CMS newsletter, on the EHDC and HCC websites as well as the FoSCP Facebook page where they also showcase their volunteer activities and wildlife photography.

## 5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

### 5.1 Annual Actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.01	Deliver Grounds Maintenance Contract	C3	All Year	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.02	Carry out audit review of pathways	B4	April	EHDC	EHDC	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.03	Review of Water Bailiff scheme and signage	B1	April	EHDC	EHDC	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.04	Review fish survey and action accordingly	C2	April	EHDC	EHDC	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.05	Meet with FoSCP to discuss summer works programme	F1	April	CMS	EHDC/ CMS/ FoSCP	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.06	Check maze fencing and carry out required maintenance	C4	April	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.07	Aftercare of planted trees: remove weeds, apply mulch and water if necessary	D3	April – Sep	CMS	FoSCP/ EHDC	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.08	Review of way markers and discs	C4	April	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.09	Monitor for invasive or potentially detrimental species	D3	All year	CMS	CMS/ FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.10	Cut grass maze (first annual cut)	C3	April	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.11	Himalayan Balsam pulling from reedbed, outflow and brook	E8	July - Sept	CMS	CMS/FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.12	Play area safety inspection by RPII Inspector	B1	July	EHDC	EHDC	Internal	-		Ongoing

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.13	Spread woodchip on identified paths	D4	Winter	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.14	Get Park Active/ Love Parks event	G3	July	EHDC	EHDC	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.15	Cut and lift 75% of conservation grassland areas	E3	July and Sept	EHDC	EHDC	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.16	Cut grass maze (second annual cut)	E3	Sept	EHDC	EHDC	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.17	FoSCP meeting to agree winter work programme	F1	Oct	CMS	EHDC/ CMS/ FoSCP	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.18	Clear ditches, culverts, inlets & outlets	C2	Monthly	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.19	Cut scrub from west bank of reedbed to maintain views across lake	C4	Nov - Feb	EHDC	Glendale/ FoSCP	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.20	Clear portion of reedbed and remove willow encroachment	E4	Dec - Feb	CMS	CMS	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.21	Clear vegetation from dog free meadow fence line	C4	Oct	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.22	Strimming of vegetation around Obrey way pond if required	C3	Oct	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.23	Tree Safety Audit	B1	Nov	EHDC	EHDC	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.24	Annual risk assessment and hazard review, action accordingly	B1	Jan	EHDC	EHDC	Internal	-		Ongoing
0.25	Lifebelt inspections	C3	Weekly	EHDC	EHDC	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.26	Empty dog bins	C3	Weekly	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing

<b>Ref no.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Obj. Ref</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>	<b>Spec. Ref.</b>	<b>Status</b>
0.27	Amenity mowing and strimming	C3	Monthly	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.28	Clear ditches, culverts, inlets & outlets	C3	Monthly	EHDC	EHDC	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.29	Monitor litter picking requirements	C3	Monthly	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.30	Cut footpath edges	C3	Ongoing	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Ongoing
0.31	Manage areas of scrub succession	E8	Biannual	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing
0.32	Get sheep into grazing compartment	E7	March/ Sept	CMS/ EHDC	Grazier	GM Budget	-		Ongoing
0.33	Cut and lift parts of butterfly bank	E9	Oct	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Ongoing

## Year 1 Actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.01	Carry out additional cut in conservation grassland areas to enhance diversity	E3	July	CMS/ EHDC	Glendale	External	Contract Rates		Completed in years 1 and 2
1.02	Carry out a 30% thin of woodland blocks adjacent to the chalky bank and Moor Hall Lane.	E1	Nov	CMS	Contractor	External	£4000		Complete
1.03	Install safety signage on church lane road crossing between the main park and Pennington Field	A2	June	EHDC	Contractor	GM Budget	£250		Not yet actioned
1.04	Install clay liner in seasonal pond to improve water retention	E5	Dec	CMS/ EHDC	Contractor	External	£2500		Not yet actioned, investigations planned in 26/27
1.05	Move fencing around seasonal pond and create additional pond area	E5	Dec	CMS /EHDC	Contractor	External	£150		Not yet actioned, subject to 1.04
1.06	Sow further wildflower seed along banks of rec ground	E3	Dec	EHDC	Glendale	External	£400		Not yet actioned
1.07	Undertake the second of a series of Bat surveys	E6	May – Sept	EHDC	Contractor	External			Not yet actioned
1.08	Start hedge laying the boundary line with St James Way	E2	Nov - Feb	CMS	FoSCP	-	-		Complete
1.09	Arrange grazing contract	E7	May	EHDC/ CMS	Contactor	GM Budget	Contract Rates		Completed in year 1, grazing

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
									subsequently paused
1.10	Tree planting scrub type tree species along mature tree border of former grazing compartment	E7	Nov	CMS	Volunteers	-	-		Completed in alternative area
1.11	Plan and install directional signage across site in conjunction with FoSCP	A4	Aug	CMS	EHDC/ CMS/ FoSCP	External	£3000		Planned but budget not available
1.12	Creation of new entrance to site from Premier Care Home with wheelchair friendly path and seating area.	A5	May	EHDC	Contractor	External	-		Complete
1.13	Installation of new picnic table funded by the FoSCP	C4	May	EHDC	Contractor	FoSCP	£1000		Complete
1.14	Carry out expansion of carpark and new entrance construction	A1/B3	Nov	EHDC/CMS	Contractor	External	-		In development – delivery in 26/27
1.15	Creation of butterfly bank and bench install	E9	Dec	CMS	Contractor	FoSCP	£1000		In development – delivery in 26/27

# Southern Country Park Greenspace Action Plan Year 1 Action Plan (2023/ 24)

**Task Responsibility**

- District led } Officer/Contractor delivered
- CMS led } Officer/Contractor delivered
- District led } Volunteer delivered
- CMS led } Volunteer delivered

**Non-targetted actions**

- Carry out second bat survey
- Produce a small woodland management plan
- Plan and install directional signage

**Management**

- ▨ Hedgelaying
- ▨ Seeding
- ▨ Thinning



**Legend**

<span style="color: green;">●</span> Parkland Tree	<span style="color: red;">●</span> dog bin	<span style="color: blue;">i</span> interpretation	<span style="color: red;">○</span> life ring	<span style="color: red;">X</span> pedestrian access	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> vehicle gate
<span style="color: pink;">■</span> bench	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> entrance sign	<span style="color: red;">○</span> kissing gate	<span style="color: green;">●</span> litter bin	<span style="color: pink;">■</span> picnic bench	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> welcome sign

<span style="border: 1px solid red;">□</span> Site Boundary	<span style="color: green;">▨</span> Conifer	<span style="color: brown;">▨</span> Duck feeding area	<span style="color: teal;">▨</span> Marginal veg	<span style="color: orange;">▨</span> Reedbed	<span style="color: red;">▨</span> Wet Grassland
<span style="color: lightgreen;">▨</span> Amenity cut	<span style="color: olivegreen;">▨</span> Conservation cut	<span style="color: grey;">▨</span> Gabions	<span style="color: blue;">▨</span> Standing Water	<span style="color: green;">▨</span> Scrub	<span style="color: darkgreen;">▨</span> Woodland
<span style="color: brown;">▨</span> Boardwalk	<span style="color: blue;">▨</span> Ditch	<span style="color: olivegreen;">▨</span> Hedge	<span style="color: brown;">▨</span> Path	<span style="color: grey;">▨</span> Steps	<span style="color: green;">▨</span> Young trees
<span style="color: grey;">▨</span> Car Park	<span style="color: red;">▨</span> Dog agility	<span style="color: yellow;">▨</span> Inlet/Outlet	<span style="color: pink;">▨</span> Play area	<span style="color: black;">▨</span> Utilities	

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Date  
December 2022

Rev  
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## 5.2 Year 2 Actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks around Elms Way	E1	Nov	CMS	Contractor	External	£3000		Budget not available
2.2	Lay second section of hedgerow along St James Way	E2	Jan/Feb	CMS	FoSCP	Volunteer	-		Complete
2.3	Expand play area to include equipment for younger children	A6	April	EHDC	Contractor	External			Minor expansion completed
2.4	Relax management on grassland around elms way to promote natural regeneration of habitat after thinning.	E3	Ongoing	EHDC	Glendale	-	-		Complete
2.5	Sow Yellow Rattle Patches	E3	November	EHDC	CMS/ EHDC/ FoSCP	-	-		Complete
2.6	Carry out final bat survey	E6	May-Sept	EHDC	Contractor	External			Not yet actioned

# Southern Country Park Greenspace Action Plan Year 2 Action Plan (2024-25)

**Task Responsibility**

□ District led	} Officer/Contractor delivered
□ CMS led	
□ District led	} Volunteer delivered
□ CMS led	

**Non-targetted actions**

- Undertake final Bat survey of 3
- Leave over wintering habitat according to mowing plan

**Management**

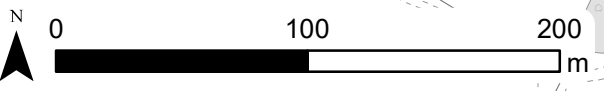
- ▨ Natural Regen
- Hedgelaying
- ▨ Thinning



**Legend**

● Parkland Tree	● dog bin	ⓘ interpretation	⊙ life ring	✕ pedestrian access	⊠ vehicle gate
■ bench	▲ entrance sign	⊙ kissing gate	● litter bin	■ picnic bench	▲ welcome sign

▭ Site Boundary	▨ Conifer	▭ Duck feeding area	▨ Marginal veg	▭ Play area	▭ Utilities
▨ Amenity cut	▨ Conservation cut	▭ Gabions	▨ Standing Water	▭ Reedbed	▨ Wet Grassland
▭ Boardwalk	▨ Ditch	▨ Hedge	▭ Path	▨ Scrub	▭ Wildflower
▭ Car Park	▨ Dog agility	▨ Inlet/Outlet	▨ Planting	▭ Steps	▨ Woodland



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### 5.3 Year 3-5 Actions

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	<b>Yr 3-5:</b> Thinning of woodland blocks as directed in the year 3-5 action plan map	E1	Oct-Feb	CMS	Contractor	External	£10000		
3.2	<b>Yr 3:</b> Undertake hedge cutting on areas of park which is not being layed.	E2	Jan/Feb	EHDC	Glendale	GM Budget	Contract Rates		
3.3	<b>Yr 3-5:</b> Hedgelaying along St James way according to year 3-5 action plan map	E2	Jan/Feb	CMS	FoSCP	-	-		
3.4	<b>Yr 5:</b> Start producing new 5 year action plan	F3	April	CMS	CMS/ EHDC/FoSCP	Internal	-		

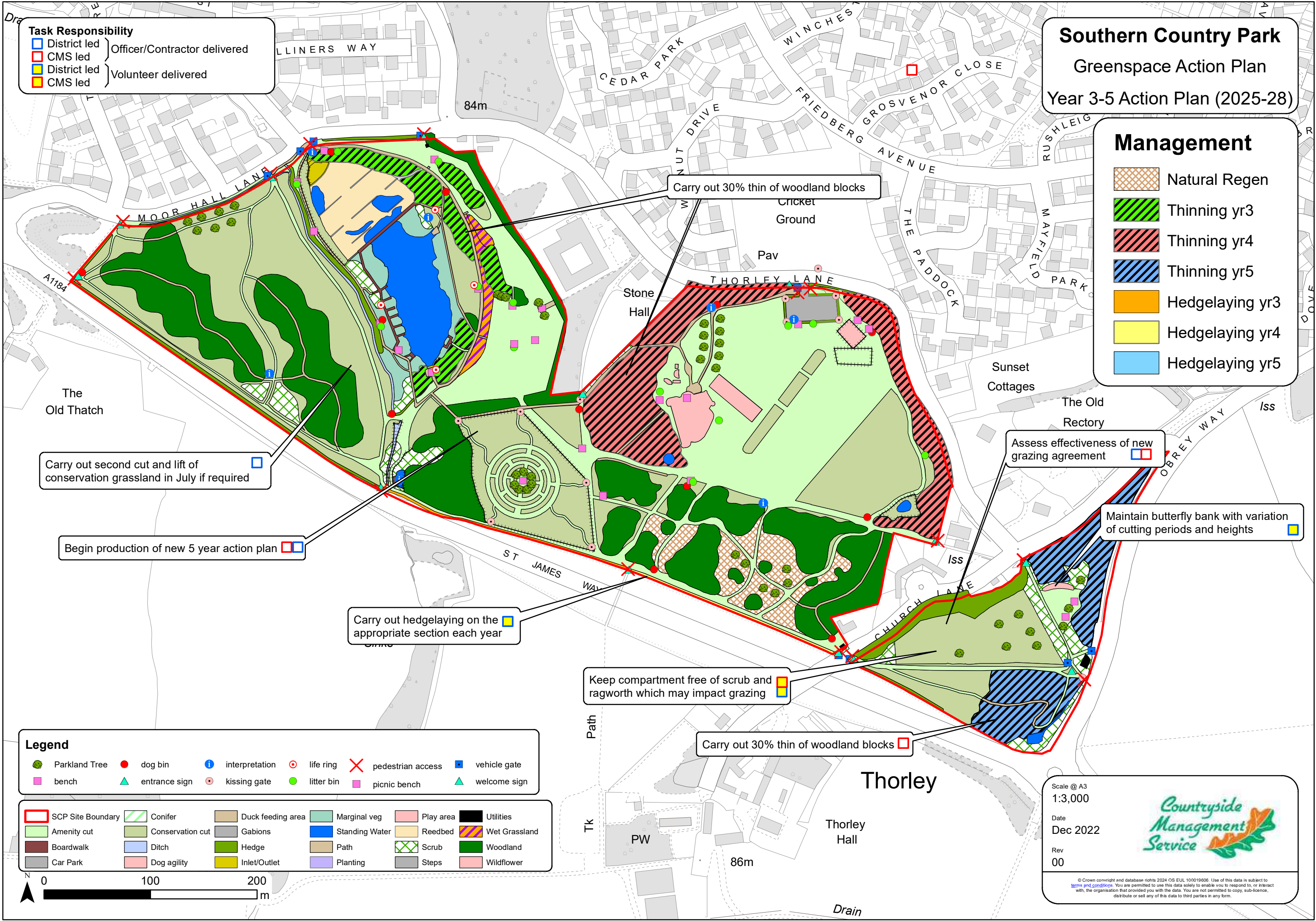
# Southern Country Park Greenspace Action Plan Year 3-5 Action Plan (2025-28)

**Task Responsibility**

□ District led	} Officer/Contractor delivered
□ CMS led	
□ District led	} Volunteer delivered
□ CMS led	

**Management**

	Natural Regen
	Thinning yr3
	Thinning yr4
	Thinning yr5
	Hedgelaying yr3
	Hedgelaying yr4
	Hedgelaying yr5



Carry out second cut and lift of conservation grassland in July if required

Begin production of new 5 year action plan

Carry out hedgelaying on the appropriate section each year

Keep compartment free of scrub and ragwort which may impact grazing

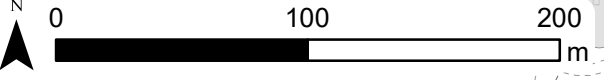
Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks

Assess effectiveness of new grazing agreement

Maintain butterfly bank with variation of cutting periods and heights

Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks

**Legend**

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## 6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

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### Tree procurement

- 'Tree stock for native woodland planting must be UK grown from seed, of British provenance, and must conform to BS 3936 (where applicable)
- As far as possible, trees should be from the local UK Provenance Zone 402 and from an Elevation Zone below 300m (Zones 405 & 406 are acceptable alternatives)
- As part of the procurement process, nurseries must be required to:
  - Provide a current FC 'Certificate of Local Provenance';
  - Provide documented confirmation of seed source;
  - Provide assurance of UK propagation through accreditation under the Woodland Trust's 'UK Sourced and Grown Scheme' (UKSG) or equivalent demonstrable evidence;
  - Demonstrate, as far as possible, that trees are pest and disease free.
  - Permit inspection of growing area, and tree stock, prior to purchase;
- Following procurement, an audit trail of trees must be maintained by the purchaser, allowing planted trees to be traced back to the nursery source and tree batch'.

### Woodland management activity

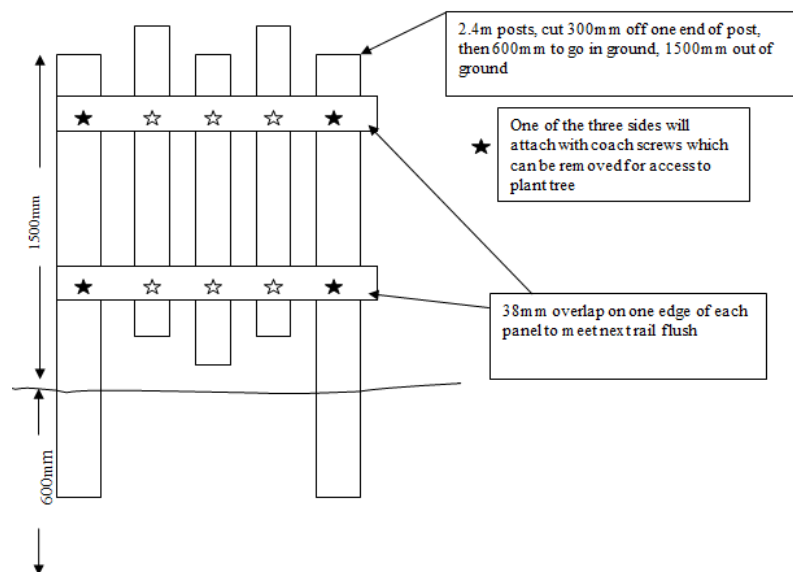
- Thinning works:
  - Systematic - Remove majority of poorly formed/supressed, breaking up uniformed grid structure
  - Sequence (years 1 – 5) has been based on intensity/timing of previous interventions and consideration of growth rates within stands
  - FoSCP to do initial hit, removing all (poorly formed and supressed stems) with hand tools: cut into short lengths and stack in habitat piles
  - CMS then identify and mark any larger stems for removal by chainsaw > suitable for Glendale to implement (external contractor if not)
  - Timber products:
    - Extract any decent logs, if possible market to local merchants. Retain 30% of this as deadwood habitat.
    - Smaller material to be chipped and used as required to top-up woodland or to chip pile to rot down to use as mulch.
    - Brash – stack as habitat piles under woodland canopy where appropriate.

- Focus on encouraging good form and growth in canopy trees – this will still encourage development of understorey – but at a steadier pace.
- Slightly heavier thinning adjacent to footpath routes, to let more light in reduce “corridor effect”
- Coppice management of woodland edge sections
  - Brash arisings used to create small piles in woodland interior – increase deadwood volumes, soil conditions, ground cover. Chip if too much
  - 8-10 year rotation, but monitor, adjust to suit growth rates and material requirements
  - Coppice product – stakes & binders for future hedge laying, dead hedges, hurdles as appropriate.
  - Monitor for browsing; consider hurdle fences, rabbit netting, deer baskets
- Remove mulch mats and tree guards in areas being worked. EHDC/Glendale to dispose of.
- Where possible, deadwood should be allowed to remain as it provides valuable habitat. Deadwood can be removed from trees and overhanging paths but ideally left on the woodland floor.

## Tree Planting

- General:
  - Dig a hole larger than the tree’s root ball, lifting out turf and putting to one side
  - Loosen soil in sides and bottom of hole to improve rooting
  - Hold tree vertically in centre of hole, root collar at ground level. Replace good topsoil and additional composted material as appropriate, and shake tree gently to disperse soil around roots, preventing air pockets
  - Firm the soil once roots are uncovered, backfill remaining soil and replace square of turf by first cutting in two, then placing upside down around tree.
  - Apply layer of mulch (well composted wood chip or similar), 10cm deep, radius 50cm, ensuring mulch is not piled up around stem of tree.
- Planting Whips in Pennington Field
  - Whips are young trees with no lateral branches and either a fibrous bare root system or cell grown in soil. These are the cheapest, easiest and quickest trees to plant making them great for larger planting schemes.
  - Planting is done using a notch cut. Pushing the spade into the ground to the depth of the spade then moving it back and forth to widen the cut.

- Holding the stem of the tree push the roots of the whip into the notch and lift the whip up slightly to allow the roots to spread.
- Holding whip upright push the earth back down on either side to firm the soil and hold it in place.
- Species composition to match that of mature tree lined hedgerow and to include other scrub type species able to coppice well.
- Planting density to be 2m spacing, wider than traditional 50cm spacing for hedge planting.
- Parkland tree guards (for trees planted in recreational areas) – suggested design
  - 38mm x 88mm 3.6m length treated rails
  - Horizontals for the guards are 900mm – 8 per guard
  - Verticals are 1200mm – 12 per guard
  - Have to fit this out of the 3.6m lengths
  - 100mm x 100mm sawn treated 2.1m posts
  - Suggested fixings for panels
    - Turbofast 8mm x 80mm stainless steel, 36 per guard.



## Conservation Grassland

- Two year rotation on strips of grass at woodland edges:
  - All areas mapped as on action plan maps and mowing plan.
  - Leave uncut during the first September cut and lift.
  - Cut and lift during the following July.
- Wildflower seeding of amenity grassland area on the bank of rec area:
  - Best carried out in the autumn
  - Approx. area to be seeded 1200m<sup>2</sup>:

- Prepare suitable seed bed by scarification to create approx. 60-70% bare soil
- Sow pure wildflower seed mixture at approx. 1g/m<sup>2</sup>
  - Seed to be a native perennial wildflower mix (for example Emorsgate Seeds EM2F <https://wildseed.co.uk/mixtures/view/24>)
  - Damp sand can be mixed with the seed to act as a carrier
- Roll the ground with a heavy roller immediately after sowing to ensure seed is fully in contact with soil.
- Follow up management:
  - Following year – mow regularly as per amenity grass
  - Second year – Include in cut & lift management

### **Reedbed and surrounds**

- Zoning, cut & rake.
  - Cut vegetation each year on rotation – as per map on following page.
  - Material to be raked up and stacked outside the fenced area as habitat piles
  - Work areas to be marked out prior to tasks, including location of habitat piles
- Fishing lake margins
  - To prevent unwanted access through margins for fishing (encouraging people to use designated platforms) - each operation should avoid cutting all the way through to the lake, leaving an outer edge uncut, then cut that edge later along with another section.
- Contractors implementing this need to have appropriate licences for chemical treatment by water

### **Channel clearance**

- The removal of vegetation and silt from the confluence of the lake outlet and brook
- Regular removal from outlet area – deposit onto top of bank to allow invertebrates to return to the water and for it to dry out.
- Move dried material to gabion area or elsewhere (should be minimal)
- No planting in this area to maintain capacity of outflow / not impede flow
- Vegetation will naturally colonise
- Need to register this work with EA, using exemption form U11 (spreading waste on non-agricultural land to confer benefit)

## **Hedgerow spec (NE&Hedgeline)**

- Cut hedgerows on a 3-year rotation, during Jan & Feb when ground conditions are suitable to avoid causing ground damage and when berries have been consumed.
- Slightly tapered, at least 2m tall and up to 3m tall along St James Way with a wide base in an A frame shape.
- For growing hedges, when trimmed, cut above the previous knuckle by 10-20cm to allow continued growth and increased density of stems.

## **Oak Processionary Moth Measures**

If a potential OPM sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, the following actions will be taken within the first 48 hours:

1. The exact location will be recorded and photographs of observable caterpillars, nests and webbing will be obtained and [sent to the Forestry Commission \(FC\)](#) for official identification.
2. [Notices](#) will be posted at prominent access points and close to the location of the sighting to alert people accessing the site to the possible presence of OPM.
3. Relevant partners will be informed to ensure that activities are conducted safely or cancelled where necessary.
4. The specific location of the sighting will be assessed with consideration to the typical use of the site. If OPM is identified within close proximity to areas assessed as posing a high risk of public contact then additional precautions such as additional signage or temporary fencing will be taken to reduce the risk of public contact with OPM caterpillars and nests.

If OPM is confirmed on site by the FC – either a) following submission of photos from a suspected sighting to the FC or b) through the FC issuing a statutory plant health notice following OPM identification as part of the FC’s monitoring programme – then appropriate control measures will be determined within five working days of the FC’s confirmed identification.

While this document outlines the intended process for OPM control this may be adjusted in line with additional instructions included in the statutory plant health notice issued by the FC.

The OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable and is discovered in time to complete spraying before caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying represents the best control to limit further advancement of the population.
- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable but is discovered after caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying in the current season does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. In this case nest removal should be conducted if a) the infestation is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August), or b) if nests are in close proximity to high risk areas. Insecticide spraying should then be conducted within acceptable areas the following season.

Following assessment, if spraying in the current season or nest removal is appropriate then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be instructed to take appropriate action as soon as possible (typically within five working days). Arborists will be required to conduct insecticide spraying, nest removals and waste disposal in line with FC guidance as set out in [chapter 6](#) and [chapter 7](#) of the OPM Manual.

Based on current FC policy and practice, sites of OPM infestations within the 'control zone' (encompassing the entire county of Hertfordshire) are typically included in the FC's inspection and insecticide spraying programme for two seasons following the initial discovery. The FC informs landowners that are to be included in this programme by February of each year. The FC will be contacted (if no communication has been received) by late-February in the two seasons following the initial discovery to confirm whether the site is to be included in the programme. If the site is not included in the FC's programme then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be engaged to conduct insecticide spraying following caterpillar emergence.

Whether insecticide spraying is conducted by the FC or by an appointed arborist the contractors will be required to operate in accordance with FC guidance (outlined above).

Once insecticide spraying has occurred, a suitably qualified and experienced arborist can be instructed to carry out nest removal. This will be conducted only when nests are in close proximity to high risk areas.

Following two seasons of spraying the FC will be consulted to confirm whether OPM has been successfully eradicated from the site. If OPM is still present the FC will be consulted on appropriate future action.

## 7.0 APPENDICES

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## **7.1 NVC Botanical Survey**

**SOUTHERN COUNTRY PARK  
THORLEY  
BISHOP'S STORTFORD  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

**BOTANICAL SURVEY 2022**

December 2022

for:

East Hertfordshire Council  
&  
Hertfordshire County Council Countryside Management Service

Report number: 1597/1

Green Environmental Consultants Ltd

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**This report is formatted for double-sided printing and, as a result, has blank pages.**

**SOUTHERN COUNTRY PARK, THORLEY, BISHOP'S STORTFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE  
BOTANICAL SURVEY 2022**

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## **LIMITATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS**

### **Limitations of Surveys**

This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of some species. Access, seasonality and weather conditions may affect survey results. It does not record any animals or plants that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time(s) of the visit(s). Habitats outside the site boundary were only visited where considered appropriate and where access was available.

The behaviour of animals can be unpredictable and may not conform to standard patterns recorded in current scientific literature. Many species are highly mobile and can occupy a site which has previously held no potential for them and factors such as increasing habitat pressure can cause animals to occupy areas that were previously unoccupied, or which might be considered far from suitable. This report therefore cannot predict with absolute certainty that animal species will occur in apparently suitable locations or that they will not occur in locations or habitats which appear to be unsuitable.

### **Limitations of Report**

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

The Executive Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations sections of the report provide an overview and guidance only and should not be specifically relied upon until considered in the context of the whole report. Interpretations and recommendations contained in the report represent our professional opinions, which were arrived at in accordance with currently accepted industry practices at the time of reporting and based on current legislation in force at that time.

Where the data available from previous reports, or for other subject matter supplied by the Client, have been used, it has been assumed that the information is correct. No responsibility can be accepted by us for inaccuracies within the data supplied.

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This report is prepared and written in the context of the proposals stated in the introduction to this report and should not be used in a differing context. Furthermore, new information, improved practices and legislation may necessitate an alteration to the report in whole or in part after its submission. Therefore, with any change in circumstances or after the expiry of one year from the date of the report, the report should be referred to us for re-assessment and, if necessary, reappraisal. Scientific survey data will be shared with local biological records centre in accordance with the CIEEM professional code of conduct.

Please note that Green Environmental Consultants Ltd does not purport to provide specialist legal advice.

The data, advice and opinion which we have prepared and provided is true, and have been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional *bona fide* opinions.



Jacqui Green BSc(Hons), MSc, CEcol, FCIEEM

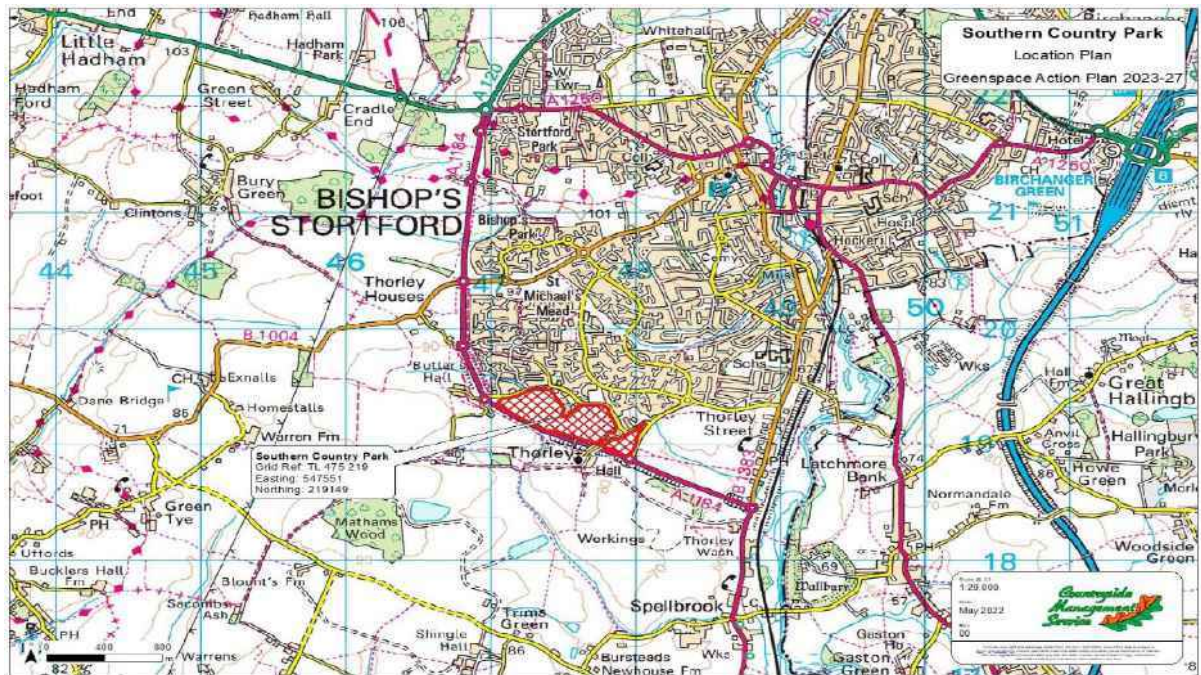
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Green Environmental Consultants Ltd has prepared this report on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council.

Botanical surveys were undertaken in July 2022 to support the development of the Management Plan for Southern Country Park (SCP).

SCP is a 22.8-hectare site located on the southern edge of Bishop's Stortford, as shown in Plan 1:

### Plan 1: Southern Country Park Location.



Southern Country Park was created in the early 1990s, with East Hertfordshire District Council taking ownership and management responsibility in 2001. Arisings dug from the lake, and A1184 bypass construction was used to model the Park's topography. The Park was then landscaped with tree blocks, hedgerows, amenity grass, and wildflower seed mixtures.

The Park balances the needs of the local community and the wildlife. An active Friend's Group is involved in park management along with HCC staff.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Survey Methodology:

The survey objectives were to assess the condition of the park and provide data for a new management plan by way of a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) botanical survey:

- a) Provide an updated list of flora species and their relative abundance (DAFOR)
- b) Identification of dominant and indicator species to inform an assessment of habitat condition
- c) Provide a detailed map of habitats
- d) Provide a table of the total area of each habitat type

The survey was commissioned on 22 June 2021.

The survey comprised three site visits undertaken on 5, 7 and 14 July 2022. Weather conditions were suitable, but as Britain was experiencing a heat wave and drought, the botanical season was advanced, and some species were already desiccated. Mowing of long grassland swards in the western compartment occurred between the 7 and 14 July, so recording here was prioritised to ensure data collection before management operations.

Each habitat was visited during the survey, although grassland habitats received the most attention as these held the broadest range of species. However, no attempt to survey within reedbeds or aquatic habitats on account of the presence of nesting birds.

The relative abundance DAFOR scale was used to determine the relative proportion of each species within the habitat. The scale is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: DAFOR Scale**

Abbrev.	Category	Percentage cover	Comments
<b>D</b>	Dominant	76 – 100 %	Rare Used
<b>A</b>	Abundant	51 – 75 %	Very common over most of the site
<b>F</b>	Frequent	26 – 50 %	Quarter to half
<b>O</b>	Occasional	11 – 25 %	One-tenth to a quarter
<b>R</b>	Rare	1-10%	Less and a one-tenth

Most species, in most habitats (unless monocultures), usually fall within the R category and do not exceed 10%. It is rare within a balanced community that species exceed 25% cover.

The results of the survey are primarily provided on the **accompanying spreadsheet**. They are, however, also summarised within the report.

The boundary of habitats was distinct, with very little gradation. As a result, detailed measurements were not taken during the surveys. Instead, a combination of Ordnance Survey Landline mapping and Google Earth (and overlays using both) were used to determine the area and length of habitat blocks. Habitat locations and extents have been shown by combining the aerial views in Section 4 and the descriptions provided in the accompanying spreadsheet.

While the survey effort was organised around Compartments, the evaluation has been focused on habitats. The selection of compartments was a helpful way of subdividing the survey (as is often done for botanical surveys). Still, the habitat types determine the management strategy (largely regardless of where they occur). Consequently, as it may be helpful, the report summarises the Compartments (Section 3) and the Habitats (Section 4 and accompanying spreadsheet).

## 2.2 Naming Convention:

A simple compartment naming convention has been used for reporting purposes based on geographical location and dominant habitats. The alphanumeric system convention uses the prefix 'C' followed by a numeral from 1 in the west to 8 in the east (Plan 2).

### Plan 2: SCP Compartments



## 2.3 Surveyor:

The surveyor and report author were Andrew Palmer (AP), BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEM, an experienced ecologist and a full member of CIEEM. The reporting process and evaluation (of the final version) has been overseen by Jacqui Green BSc (Hons), MSc, CEcol, FCIEEM.

## 2.4 Limitations

An extended heatwave in the summer of 2022 resulted in some species desiccating to the point that they were not visible. While the survey commenced at the beginning of this period, some plants already showed signs of stress, and early-season plants, which might typically have been visible, may not have been recorded.

Although two survey days were allocated, these proved insufficient for the most detailed botanical survey. While a third day was added, some areas and habitats were visited rather briefly to ensure that characteristic species were noticed.

### 3. COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

The Total area of all compartments (i.e., the site) is 22.78 hectares. The total external perimeter is 3.175 km. The breakdown between individual compartments is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Area of Compartments**

Comp	Area ha	Area m <sup>2</sup>
C1	4.51	45,100
C2	2.66	26,600
C3	1.83	18,300
C4	0.78	7,800
C5	1.40	14,000
C6	2.99	29,850
C7	5.71	57,100
C8	2.90	29,000
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>22.78</b>	<b>227,750</b>

#### 3.1 Compartment C1:

Area: 4.51 hectares (45,100 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 930 m

The site comprises introduced grasslands on both neutral soils and introduced chalk substrate. The two chalky areas are Moor Hall Bank and Chalky Bank (Plan 3). In addition, there are two blocks of introduced woodland, West Wood and Middle Wood, with an area of scrub between them known as the Wedge. The northern boundary borders Moor Hall Lane with a residential area beyond. A ditch and an introduced hedgerow mark this boundary. The western boundary abuts St James Way (A1184), part of the Bishop's Stortford bypass – here, an introduced hedge screen the bypass. An existing ditch and hedgerow with trees mark the eastern boundary. The ditch line runs from farmland west of the town to the River Stort at Spellbrook to the southeast. It is one of the few features before the country park was created.

**Plan 3: Compartment C1 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.**





Photo 1.1 (left): Calcareous sward on Moor Hall Bank. Photo 1.2 (right): Close view.



Photo 1.3 (left): Chalky Bank looking south. Photo 1.4 (right): Chalky Bank looking north.



Photo 1.5 (left): Arrentharum-dominated grasslands near Copses. Photo 1.6 (right): Grass path between copses.



Photo 1.7 (left): Grass path near St Jame's Way. Photo 1.8 (right): The Wedge.



Photo 1.9 (left): Moor Hall Lane frontage. Photo 1.10 (right): Ditch at Moor Hall Lane.



Photo 1.11 (left): Interior of copses. Photo 1.12 (right): Canopy within Copses.

### 3.2 Compartment C2:

Area: 2.66 hectares (26,600 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 700 m

The site comprises a significant lake (0.73 ha) and a reed bed (0.53 ha). Footpaths, boardwalks and fishing platforms serve the site's recreational needs. As a result, the area immediately surrounding the lake is a mix of naturalised wetland and lake-edge habitats with more formal grasslands and hedgerows. In addition, areas of planted and naturalised woody vegetation are present, including self-sown willows along the lake edge.

#### Plan 4: Compartment C2 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.

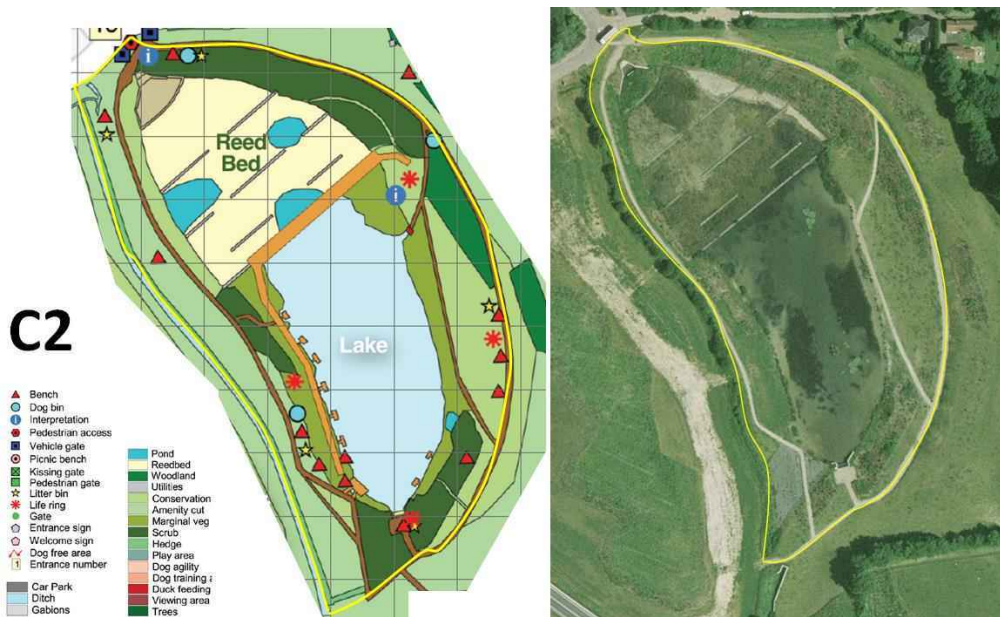




Photo 2.1 (left): Lake. Photo 2.2 (right): Reed bed pool.



Photo 2.3 (left): Phragmites reed bed. Photo 2.4 (right): Lake edge sedges and willows.



Photo 2.5 (left): Lake edge and boardwalk. Photo 2.6 (right): Lake perimeter paths.



Photo 2.7 (left): Lake southern perimeter path. Photo 2.8 (right): Moor Hall Lane entrance.

### 3.3 Compartment C3:

Area: 1.83 hectares (18,300 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 1,015 m

The site comprises a grassland slope east of the lake. The grasslands are based primarily on amenity seed mixes with areas of planted trees in blocks. The eastern boundary is a mature tree line with a mixture of native and ornamental shrubs. The tree line pre-dates the country park, as shown in Plan 5.

#### Plan 5: Compartment C3 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.



Photo 3.1 (left): Lake View grassland slope. Photo 3.2 (right): Slope looking south.



Photo 3.3 (left): Paths at the lake's southern end. Photo 3.4 (right):



Photo 3.5 (left): Photo 3.6 (right):



Photo 3.7 (left): Grassland at the northern end of amenity grassland. Photo 3.8 (right): Path through Lime Copse.

### 3.4 Compartment C4:

Area: 0.78 hectares (7,800 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 650 m

The area contains features that pre-date the country park, including a woodland copse ('Ancient Wood'), hedgerow, pond ('Old Pond') and ditch. The woody habitats have been supplemented by planting undertaken when the park was created.

**Plan 6: Compartment C4 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.**

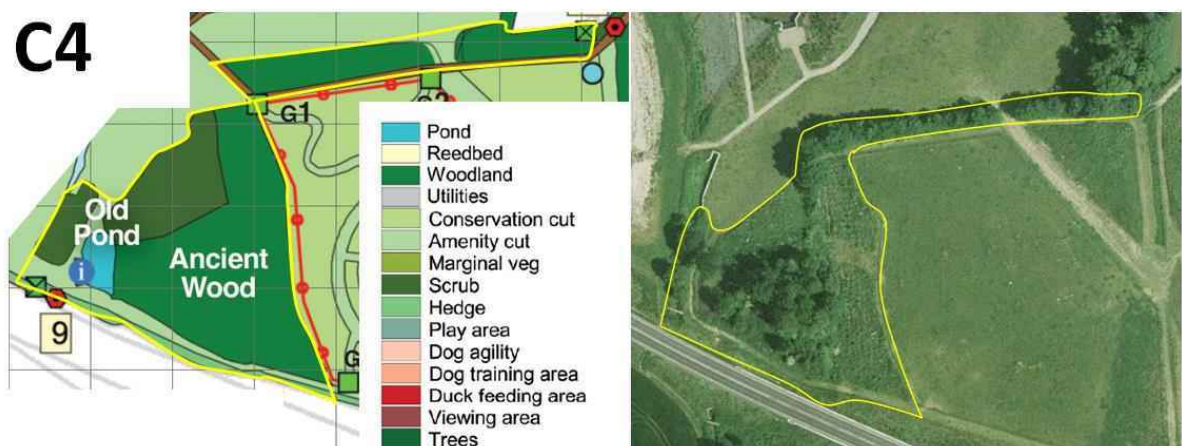




Photo 4.1 (left): Towards Old Pond (centre background). Photo 4.2 (right): Ditch and old hedgerow near St Jame's Way.



Photo 4.3 (left): Old Pond raft planting. Photo 4.4 (right): Old Pond.



Photo 4.5 (left): Older copse. Photo 4.6 (right): Newer plantation.

### 3.5 Compartment C5:

Area: 1.4 hectares (14,000 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 500 m

The area primarily comprises a fenced (dog-proof) meadow with internal grass paths in concentric circles with a central tree ring and seating area. In addition, an unfenced meadow is present in the northeast corner.

Plan 7: Compartment C5 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.

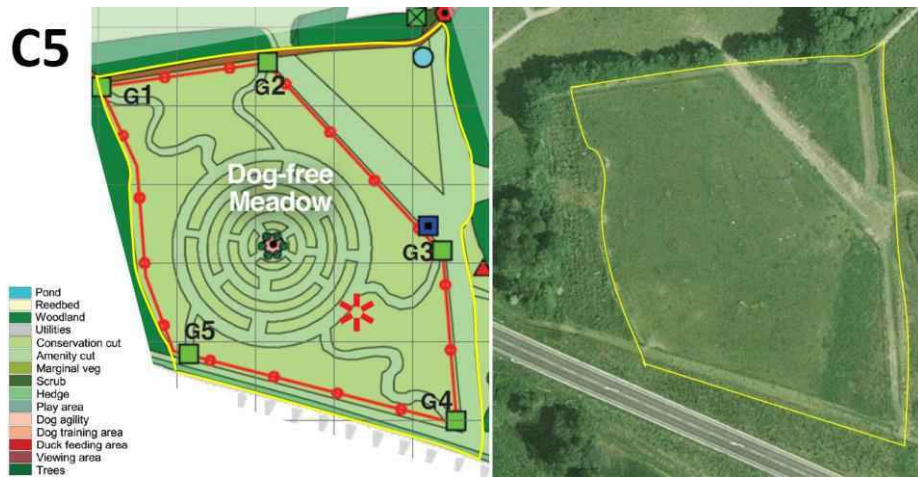


Photo 5.1 (left): Dog-free area with concentric mown paths. Photo 5.2 (right): Variability of the sward.



Photo 5.3 (left): Close view of enclosure sward. Photo 5.4 (right): Lolium-dominated sward outside of the enclosure.



Photo 5.5 (left): Grass path east of enclosure. Photo 5.6 (right): Grass path northeast of enclosure.

### 3.6 Compartment C6:

Area: 2.99 hectares (29,850 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 800 m

The site comprises a mosaic of grassland and tree-planting blocks. The latter holds a 'landscape mix' with some non-native species. The southern boundary consists of a hedgerow with the bypass beyond.

**Plan 8: Compartment C6 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.**



Photo 6.1 (left): Elms Way new planting in mosaic of planted blocks and grassland, viewing northeast.  
Photo 6.2 (right): Viewing northwest.



Photo 6.3 (left): Corridor along St Jame's Way. Photo 6.4 (right): Path between wooded copses.



Photo 6.5 (left): Paths through copses. Photo 6.6 (right): Edge scalloping management works

### 3.7 Compartment C7:

Area: 5.71 hectares (57,100 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 975 m

The primary amenity grassland lies within this compartment, along with formal play areas, including a dog training and obstacle course. There is a small macadam car park off Thorley Lane East and sizeable planted woodland belts (Play, Stone Hall and Recreation Copses). A wildflower meadow has been sown at the eastern end.

**Plan 9: Compartment C7 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.**



Photo 7.1 (left): Huge amenity grassland space. Photo 7.2 (right): Dog agility area.



Photo 7.3 (left): Mowing relaxed on the slope near play equipment. Photo 7.4 (right): Dew Pond.



Photo 7.5 (left): Wildflower Meadow. Photo 7.6 (right): Sparse herb community near the car park.



Photo 7.7 (left): Interior path within woodland copse. Photo 7.8 (right): Dense understorey within the copse.

### 3.8 Compartment C8:

Area: 2.9 hectares (29,000 m<sup>2</sup>), Perimeter 860 m

The site contains a neglected grazing paddock, an area of dry slope and two blocks of woodland planting (Obrey and Thorley Lane Copses).

**Plan 10: Compartment C8 – (Left) Main features; (Right); As 2000 after seeding/planting.**

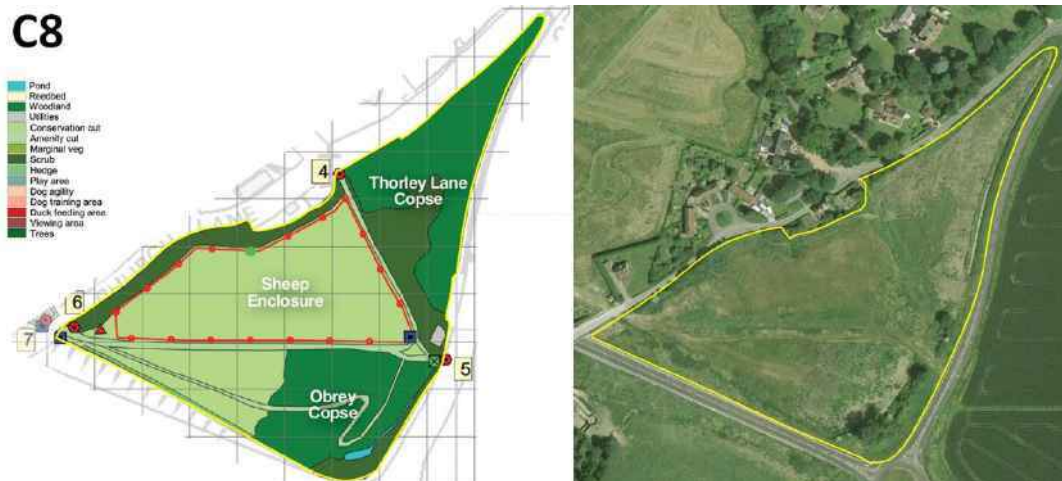


Photo 8.1 (left): Southern entrance off Church Lane. Photo 8.2 (right): Dry bank near St. Jame's Way.



Photo 8.3 (left): Neglected sheep enclosure. Photo 8.4 (right): More varied composition in the central part of the enclosure.



Photo 8.5 (left): Grass path east of the enclosure. Photo 8.6 (right): Hemlock northeast of the enclosure.



Photo 8.7 (left): Interior of Obrey Copse. Photo 8.8 (right): Nettles in Obrey Copse.

#### 4. HABITAT DESCRIPTIONS

The habitats across the site have been classified into eight groups (Table 3). Each is summarised in detail below, although the complete species list is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Where applicable, the National Vegetation Classification category and the UK Habitat Classification are provided. Management suggestions have also been made, but mostly only where these differ from the 2018 Green Space Plan.

Habitats created as part of the Park's construction have been referred to as 'Recent', i.e., less than 30 years old. Those that pre-date the park are referred to as 'Original'.

**Table 3: Area of Habitats**

No.	Habitat	Area ha
1	Amenity Grasslands	4.90
2	Dry Neutral Grasslands	4.48
3	Dry Calcareous Grasslands	0.84
4	Miscellaneous Grassland Habitats	1.56
5	Recent Woodland	6.10

6	Recent Hedgerow and Scrub	0.14
7	Original Woodland and Hedgerow	0.11
8	Wetland Habitats	1.33
	Total Area	19.46

Note: The difference in measured habitats and compartment areas arises from linear measurements as these also have an area that is not measured, grass paths not being included, and other small features less than 0.1 hectares.

#### 4.1 Amenity Grasslands

NVC: these grasslands do not comprise an assemblage recognisable within the NVC classification.

UKHab: g4 66 212 - Modified Grassland (frequently mown - neighbourhood park).

Area: 4.90 hectares concentrated in two significant areas within Compartments C3 and C7. In addition, grass footpaths around the Park conform to this classification.

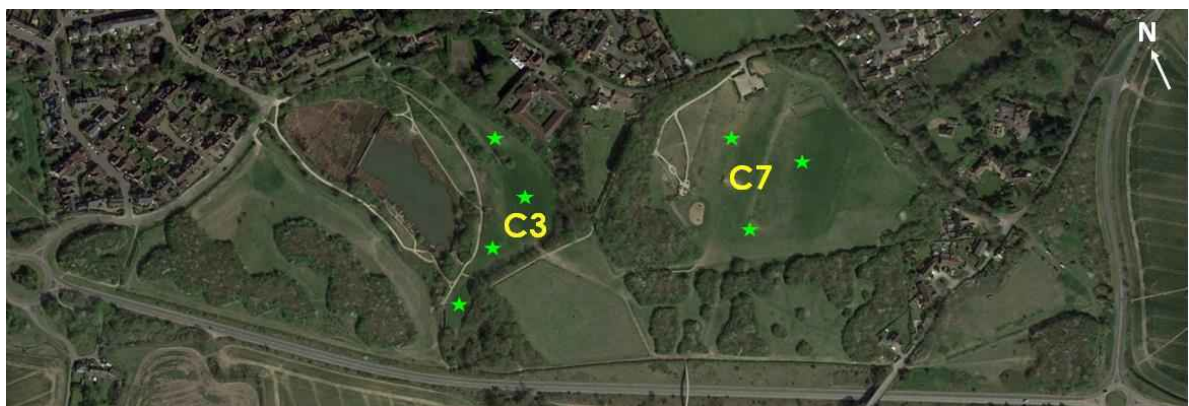
Description: Amenity and recreational grasslands dominated by productive grass varieties and prostrate or rosette form forbs. Perennial Rye-Grass *Lolium perenne* was the most abundant grass with forbs represented by Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Daisy *Bellis perennis* and White Clover *Trifolium repens*. Overall, the swards were of low-species diversity and little conservation value.

Management Suggestions: The grasslands often form an abrupt junction with hedgerows and woodland blocks. There is significant scope to provide ecotone gradation by converting recreational grassland margins into meadows and scrub. This will provide habitat but also potentially windthrow protection over the long term.

At the southern end of C3 near the lake, mowing could be relaxed to provide continuity of longer swards bridging C1 and C4/C5. It is unlikely that this area needs to be regularly cut for recreational purposes.

A bank separates the Wildflower area in C7 from the recreational grasslands. While the bank has relaxed mowing and a higher component of forbs, the junction between the amenity areas and wildflower meadow could be softened further by reducing mowing on the bank and integrating it into the wildflower area.

#### Plan 11: Location of Amenity Grasslands (Year 2020).



## 4.2 Dry Neutral Grasslands

*NVC*: MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland

*UKHab*: g3c 64 – Other Neutral Grassland (Mown).

*Area*: 4.48 hectares with areas throughout the park (the largest block in C1 (c.1.6 ha) and C5 (the dog-free meadow, c. 1 ha).

*Description*: False Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* dominated swards extend across the site with some minor variation in composition that may be attributable to local conditions. The Dog-free enclosure in C5 is described separately, as its origins and composition vary somewhat.

For most areas, False Oat-grass is joined by locally abundant Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and, to a lesser extent, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Perennial Rye-Grass is an abundant component outside of the enclosure in C5 and may originate from a more amenity-based seed mixture. Several forb species are consistently present in most compartments, including Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* agg., Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Meadow and Creeping Buttercups *Ranunculus acris* and *R. repens*, Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Ribwort and Greater Plantains *Plantago lanceolata* and *P. major*, Cowslip *Primula veris* and Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus* and Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* var. *pratense*.

The HMWT Wildlife Site Survey Report (2019) describes the Dog-free enclosure as not being part of the restoration scheme and not sown with a wildflower mix. It suggests that it may represent a combination of the original floral composition of the area and remnants of the influence of disturbance on the flora. It refers to the sward height being unusually low, given the presence of a ruderal floral component. Therefore, nutrient levels are likely lower than across much of the remainder of the site's grassland areas.

While it is recognised that this area differs from other MG1 grasslands, the species composition is similar enough to be classified with them. Again False Oat-grass is present in significant quantities with some Common Bent, Cock's-foot and Yorkshire Fog. Black Medick and Ribwort Plantain are regular, with more minor elements of Lady's Bedstraw, Meadow Buttercup, Common Knapweed and Red Clover.

MG1 *Arrhenatherum* grasslands growing on fertile soils often accumulate a significant amount of litter and thatch, making them susceptible to fire. In addition, during the surveys, there was a notable absence of butterfly populations which may suggest a lack of larval food species and structures suitable to support more robust populations.

MG1 grasslands arise through the irregularity of management and eventually succeed to scrub and woodland. It is typically maintained by regular but infrequent mowing, which is the method within the Park.

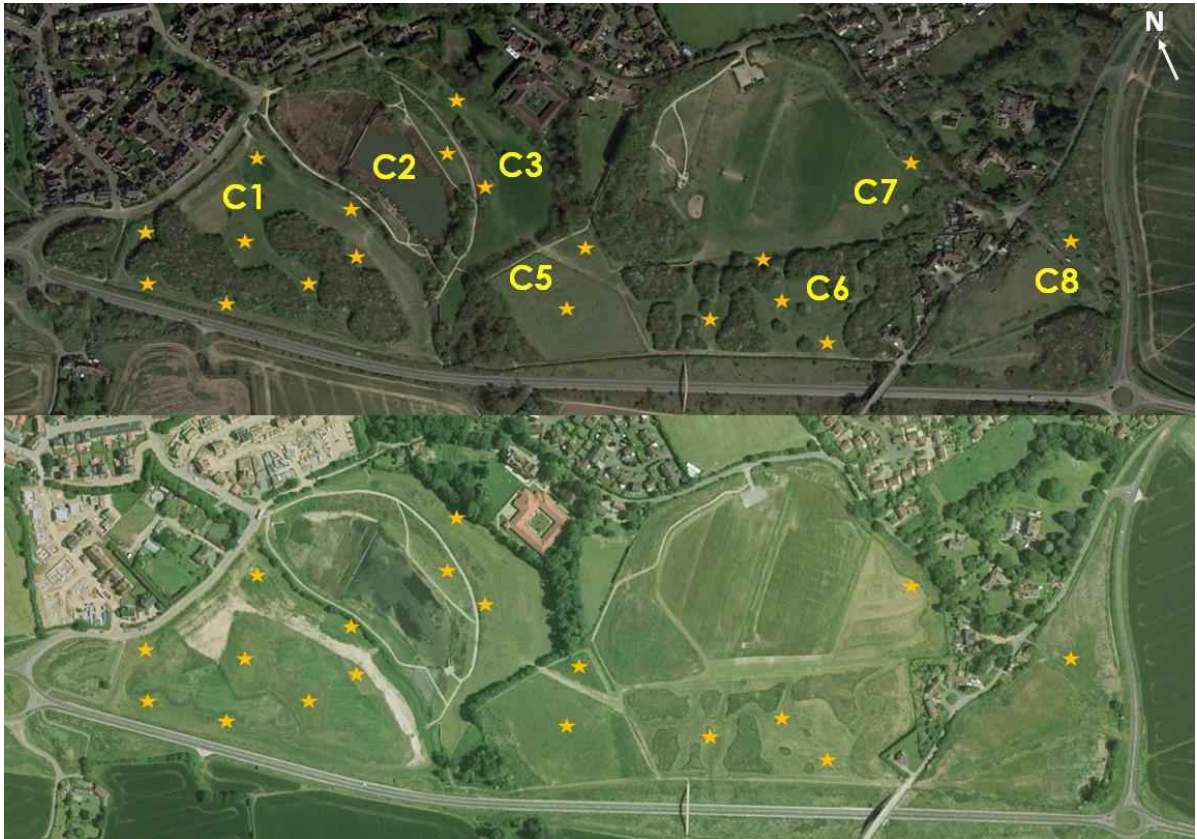
*Management Suggestions*: Improving species diversity by decreasing the prevalence of False Oat-grass (rank grass) and ruderal forbs should be the primary target, i.e., converting MG1 to something akin to MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus*-*Centaurea nigra* grassland, in simplistic terms. This would reduce the nutrient status currently driving the sward towards rankness while providing more beneficial assemblages and structures for invertebrate populations.

The recommendations of HMWT are endorsed – A spring (April) cut-and-collect followed by a cut-and-collect in early July (before the ranker grasses set seed) to remove bulk and nutrients. It also reduces the significance of autumn nutrient absorption. Some areas should be left uncut within a rotation to provide a small mammal/invertebrate refuge (the extent should be locally determined, moving between years to ensure scrub does not establish where grassland communities are favoured).

For areas being cut (not including the refuges), an October cut will be beneficial in further reducing nutrient build-up. However, in the absence of good invertebrate populations leaving the cuttings for a period before collection is probably not necessary, and collection is often better done at the time of cutting on account of the weather.

Where Yellow Rattle is present (in areas not dominated by False Oat-grass), its colonies should be encouraged and managed to ensure it is not trimmed in spring, nor cut in July before seeding. Where both Rattle and Oat-grass are present, management should focus on reducing Oat-grass in preference to Rattle survival.

**Plan 12: Location of Dry Neutral Grasslands (Years 2020 above, 2000 below).**



### 4.3 Dry Calcareous Grasslands

**NVC:** The assemblage does not conform to NVC grassland communities (being contrived from seed mixes). It bears little relationship to recognisable calcicolous communities but, for this report, is described as a calcareous grassland based on the soils in which it grows. A significant quantity of neutral and calcareous indicators occur. Unlike naturally occurring chalk/limestone, the assemblage is not clearly defined and has characteristics of mesotrophic communities, especially MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland. This is reflected in the UKHab classification.

**UKHab:** g3c 123 – Other Neutral Grassland with calcicoles.

**Total Area:** 0.84 hectares entirely limited to C1, where the chalk was imported during the park's construction. The slope was constructed using spoil, with a layer of chalk applied afterwards in a band spreading from Moor Hall Lane south. This was then sown with a wildflower mixture

**Description:** It is assumed that the sward has 'degraded' from presumably a highly calcicolous species (seed) mixture to a neutral community with calcicoles as the chalk overlying more neutral soils has broken down, in addition to the development of an organic litter. Thus, the area has a high ruderal component with large amounts of False Oat-grass. This is particularly evident along the Chalky Bank (probably also due to nutrient run-off from Middle Wood above).

An area of c. 0.14 ha of Moor Hall Bank retains a more open sward with little ruderal component. This area is dominated by forbs, particularly Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, along with less frequent

Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*, Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, Cowslip *Primula veris*, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album*, Ox-eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Cultivated Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* var. *sativum* and with a small colony of Pyramidal Orchids *Anacamptis pyramidalis*.

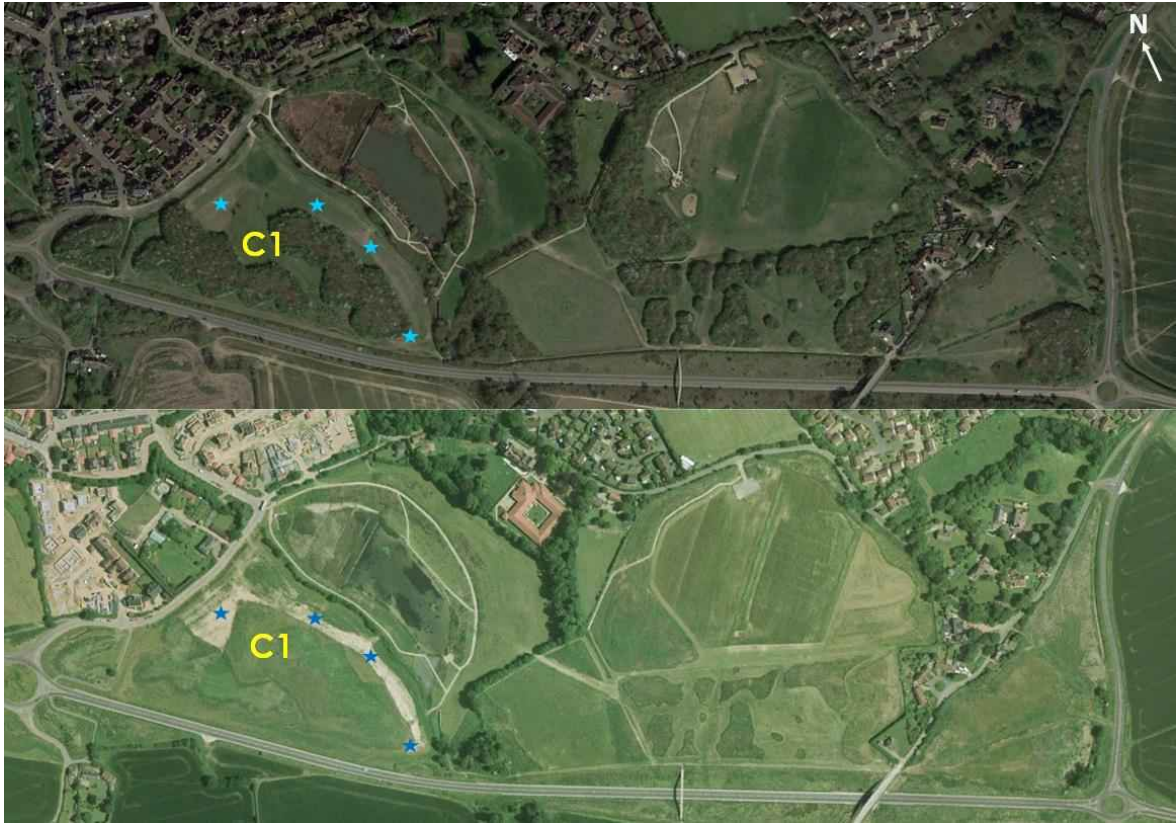
This area is perhaps the best expression of calcareous grassland. However, its origins from a seed mixture are apparent, and False Oat-grass is colonising, so its long-term distinctiveness may disappear. Nevertheless, Yellow Rattle has effectively subdued the other grasses and retained an attractive open sward.

Away from the sparser community near Moor Hall Lane, swards become more dominated by vigorous grasses, including False Oat-grass, Yorkshire Fog and Cock's-foot and with Soft Brome *Bromus hordeaceus* and Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*. Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides* and Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* are present. There are patches with a strong presence of Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosaurus cristatus*, Common Knapweed, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* and Hedge Bedstraw

Wild Chicory *Chicorium intybus* is present throughout this area, particularly near the entrance at Moor Hall Lane and along the flatter route going south. It appears to have spread over recent years and since the 2019 survey (based on HMWT's description).

*Management Suggestions:* Targets will be similar to the neutral grasslands, i.e., reducing the increasing ruderal and rank grassland component and encouraging the spread of a diverse forb assemblage, even if it never truly reflects a more typical calcareous community. Care should be taken concerning the Kidney Vetch-Yellow Rattle area to ensure that mowing timing does not eradicate the Rattle or reduce the availability of flower heads for insects. Cutting before late July should therefore be avoided.

This community may likely require interventions to re-expose chalky soils occasionally and for small areas at a time. Without a certain level of disturbance from turf stripping or scarification, species such as Kidney Vetch may eventually disappear. This area and the Dog-free enclosure (C5) and the area next to the Thorley Lane East car park (C7), being more open, on nutrient poorer soils, provide the most interesting and visually attractive communities.

**Plan 13: Location of Dry Calcareous Grasslands (Years 2020 above, 2000 below).****4.4 Miscellaneous Grassland Habitats**

NVC – these areas do not represent NVC communities.

UKHab –

Wildflower Area (C7): g3c 43 148 - Other neutral grassland Recreated habitat with Flower forage abundant.

Thorley Lane Car Park Patch (C7): g3c 17 - Other neutral grassland ruderal/ephemeral.

Sheep Enclosure (C8): g4 60 > g3C 77 148 160 – Previously g4 Modified Grassland sheep grazed, now Other neutral grassland, Neglected, Flower forage abundant, Sward type mosaic

Dry Bank (C8): gc3 17 160 - Other neutral grassland ruderal/ephemeral, sward type mosaic.

Area: See Table 4 - 1.56 hectares within Compartments C7 and C8.

**Table 4: Area of Miscellaneous Grassland Habitats**

Comp	Areas	Area ha	Area m2
<b>C7</b>	Wildflower Area	0.50	5,000
	Thorley Lane Car Park Patch	0.03	300
<b>C8</b>	Sheep Enclosure	0.78	7,800
	Dry Bank	0.25	2,500
	<b>Total Area</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>15,600</b>

*Description:* A varied collection of spaces with habitats not associated with MG1 or influenced by chalk substrates.

The Wildflower area (C7) is dominated by sown Ox-eye Daisy and Common Knapweed with False Oat-grass in addition to a variety of grasses, including Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* and Timothy *Phleum pratense*. Forbs include Yarrow, Wild Carrot, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, Common Ragwort and Red Clover.

Thorley Lane Car Park Patch (C7) is a small area of ruderals next to the car park. It contains a diverse assemblage of forbs and grasses in an open mosaic sward with a brownfield character. Again, False Oat-grass dominated but with a significant component of open low-growing forbs. Black medick is the most numerous, but they include Colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara*, Red and White Campions *Silene dioica* and *S. latifolia*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Field Scabious, Hedge Bedstraw, White Clover, and Common Knapweed. The complete species list is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Common Ragwort now dominates the fenced Sheep Enclosure (C8). It is particularly dense and tall at the western and eastern ends, with smaller plants more thinly distributed in the centre of the paddock, possibly indicating less nutrient-rich soils away from the influence of leaf fall from the surrounding taller vegetation. A low-growing mosaic of Creeping Cinquefoil and Black Medick dominates the central area.

The adjacent Dry Bank (C8) comprised an open prostrate sward on cracked soils and significant evidence of severe rabbit grazing (although few fresh droppings were recorded). The assemblage was ruderal with False Oat-grass and Yorkshire Fog, the dominant grasses and good numbers of Creeping and Spear Thistles and Common Nettle and Bramble bordering the area. Within the heavily grazed area, Creeping Cinquefoil, Ribwort Plantain, Black Medick and White Clover were present with smaller numbers of Common Centaury, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Lady's Bedstraw, Square-stalked St. John's Wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*, Fairy Flax and Eyebright. Several of the species are characteristic of dry sandy heaths, which is somewhat consistent with the character of this part of the site

*Management Suggestions:* In all cases, the development of rank nutrient-driven succession should be checked.

Wildflower area (C7) – Provides a nectar-rich source, and the priority should be to retain this by timing cut-and-collect after the flowering period. While some pernicious species which as Thistles, contribute to nectar, their components should be kept in check. The assemblages will change over time, and management towards a more sustainable MG5 Crested Dog's-tail - Common Knapweed community is desirable.

Thorley Lane Car Park Patch (C7) - This should be cut and collected to retard nutrient-driven succession (although being at an entrance to a well-used dog-walking area may render this a challenge). An occasional ground disturbance may reintroduce early-successional areas. This small area should be easily managed.

Sheep Enclosure (C8) – Control of Ragwort will be the primary objective. Adjacent trees, scrub and hedgerows may require management to reduce the source of nutrient input, but ultimately more systematic management, such as a resumption of grazing, would be beneficial. However, grazing intensity should be conducive to producing a more biodiverse community.

Dry Bank (C8) – With interesting small plants such as Centaury, Eyebright and Fairy Flax characteristic of dry sandy heaths, there is merit in retaining a short sward for rabbits and preventing excessively vigorous ruderal colonisation. Occasional, localised ground disturbance may be beneficial.

**Plan 14: Location of Other Miscellaneous Habitats (Year 2020)****4.5 Recent Woodland**

**NVC:** the woodlands do not comprise an assemblage recognisable within the NVC classification.

**UKHab:** w1g7 36 77: Other broadleaved woodland types, plantation, neglected (unmanaged in the last 3-10 years)

Area: 6.10 hectares - through most compartments (Table 5):

**Table 5: Location of Recently Planted Woodlands**

Comp	Areas	Area ha
C1	West Wood	0.79
	Middle Wood	0.77
C2	Woodland Blocks	0.38
C3	Internal Woodland Blocks	0.09
C4	Plantation (nr Ancient Wood)	0.26
C6	East Wood	0.45
	Woodland Blocks 1-7	1.22
C7	Recreation Copse	0.37
	Stone Hill Copse/Play Copse	0.90
C8	Obrey Copse	0.33
	Thorley Lane Copse	0.54
	Total Area	6.10

**Description:** These woodland blocks arise from landscape planting undertaken at the creation of the Park. They comprised a somewhat unusual assemblage with a high proportion of non-native species. These included Italian Alder *Alnus cordata*, Norway Maple *Acer platanoides*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Swedish Whitebeam Sorbus, and Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanus*. Native species included Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, Small-leaved Lime *Tilia cordata*, and Yew *Taxus baccata* with Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, Apple *Malus domestica* and Geulder Rose *Viburnum opulus*. In addition, several other native shrubs were present, although Goat Willow *Salix caprea* is likely to have self-sown. While the composition of each woodland varied, there was sufficient consistency to treat all together concerning potential management options.

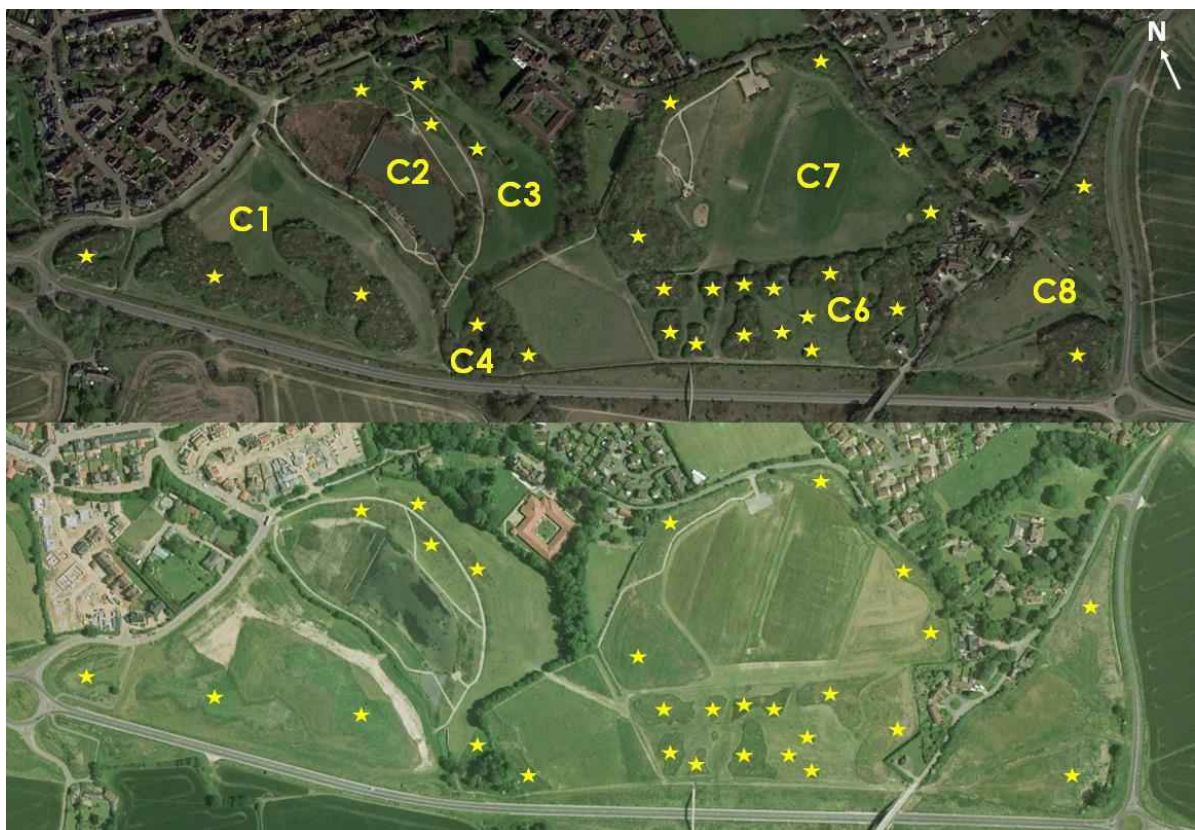
Ground flora varied throughout the blocks depending upon the amount of light present. Many parts were so heavily shaded as to hold little ground flora, while others, especially near the edge or footpaths. The principal species included False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Common Ivy *Hedera helix*, Traveller's-Joy *Clematis vitalba*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, and Creeping buttercup with Black Horehound *Ballota nigra*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* and False Oat-grass at the margins.

In many blocks, there were signs of regrowth and nowhere was significant browsing damage seen. However, Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi* are likely to be present despite the high disturbance from people and dogs.

*Management Suggestions:* The woodlands have not been thinned and would benefit in places from the opening of the canopy. Thinning should target non-native species to benefit biodiversity. Edge coppicing has been carried out in some areas, which has provided more structural diversity.

As the woodlands are small, there may be merit in allowing the blocks in C6 to coalesce through natural scrub succession through Elms Way and the Grove, retaining these as glades. The grassland communities here are not ecologically important, and scrub could provide a habitat not well represented within the Park.

**Plan 15: Location of Recently Planted Woodlands (Years 2020 above, 2000 below).**



**4.6 Recent Hedgerows and Scrub**

*NVC:* – the hedgerows do not comprise an assemblage recognisable within the NVC classification.

*UKHab:* h2a – Hedgerow (Priority Habitat)

*Linear distance:* Approximately 1.5 km.

*Description:* These hedgerows date from the inception of the Park and essentially comprise a simple mixture of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel and Field Maple, with other species occasionally present. A species list, including associate ground flora, is provided in the accompanying spreadsheet.

The Wedge (C1), an area of scrub developing between West Wood and Middle Wood, comprised several small tree and shrub species in the adjacent wood, including Hawthorn. It was not surveyed in detail.

*Management Suggestions:* The strategy in the 2018-2023 plan appears reasonable to continue.

**Plan 16: Location of Hedgerows & scrub less than 25 years old (Year 2020).**



**4.7 Original Woodlands and Hedgerows (pre-dating the Park's establishment)**

*NVC:* – the woodlands do not comprise an assemblage recognisable within the NVC classification.

*UKHab:*

Woodland: w1f – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Hedgerows: h2a – Hedgerow (Priority Habitat)

*Area:* Ancient wood 0.11 ha, Hedgerows c. 1 km.

*Description:* These areas were not examined in detail, and management suggestions have, therefore, not been provided. The non-intervention policy (unless required) is reasonable. A species list is provided within the accompanying spreadsheet.

**Plan 17: Location of Older Woodlands and Hedgerows (Year 2000).**



#### 4.8 Wetland Habitats (Lakes, Ponds, Reedbeds and Ditches)

Wetland habitats were primarily excluded from the brief. However, species lists have been provided within the accompanying spreadsheet where access was possible. This includes ditches in C1, lake margins in C2, the ditch and pond in C4 and the Dew Pond in C7.

##### Plan 18: Location of Wetland Habitats (Year 2020).



#### 5. References:

CMS (2018). *Southern Country Park Green Space Action Plan 2018 - 2023*.

HMWT (2019). *Wildlife Site Survey Report for Southern Country Park*.

Rodwell, J.S (Ed.) (1992). *British Plant Communities Volume 3 -Grasslands and Montaine Communities*. Cambridge University Press.

UKHAB (2018). *The UK Habitat Classification- Habitat Definitions Version 1.0*. The UK Habitat Classification Working Group.

## **7.2 Bat Survey**



# Bat Activity Surveys

**Automated Bat Detector Surveys  
Walked Transect Bat Surveys**

**Southern Country Park  
Moor Hall Lane  
Bishops Stortford**

**November 2022**

**220541-ED-01**

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Tim Moya Associates standard Limitations of Service apply to this report and all associated work relating to this site. A copy has been supplied with our original quotation and further copies are available on request.

Project	Southern Country Park
Report Type	Bat Activity Survey Report
Date	11/11/2022
Author	Brooke Waites, ACIEEM, Senior Ecologist
Review	Simon Thomas, MCIEEM, Director of Ecology
Bat licence and survey coordinator	Brooke Waites WML-CL18- Level 2 (Class Licence) Registration number 2019-39448-CLS-CLS
Revisions	

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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report assesses the value of the Southern Country Park for foraging and commuting bats. This report identifies the assemblage of bats using the site, the relative frequency with which the site is used by the species present and the spatial and temporal distribution of bat activity.

The bat activity surveys included walked transect surveys and automated bat detector deployments during 2022

Survey findings are used to assess the conservation value of the park for the bat species present and determine appropriate methods for ongoing management works and identify potential enhancements.

### **Findings and Mitigation Recommendations:**

The site was used as a commuting and foraging resource by at least eight bat species. Bat activity was recorded broadly throughout the transect route. However, bat activity was more prevalent within the following areas:

- The lake edge with regular foraging recorded on the lake itself
- The pond in the woodland block south of the lake (adjacent to St James Way)

Ongoing management practices should ensure bats and their roosts are not harmed during ongoing management and enhancements to the site be designed in such a way as to increase the areas of optimal commuting and foraging habitat for bats such as:

- Retention of deadwood where safe to do so
- Increase areas of meadow habitat
- Installation of bat boxes
- Veteranisation of trees
- Retention and enhancement of tree belts
- Prevention of light spill from adjacent street lighting as required
- Waterbody creation

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Background

- 1.1 This report has been instructed by East Herts District Council.
- 1.2 This report aims to inform ongoing management of the park to enhance its suitability for use by bats.

## Purpose of Report

- 1.3 Bat activity surveys aim to identify important foraging or commuting habitats, particularly if used by rare or notable species. This report details the methodology, findings, discussion and recommendations based on bat activity within the site.
- 1.4 The bat activity surveys aim to collect sufficient data to draw conclusions about the assemblage of bats using the site, the relative frequency with which the site is used by the species present and the spatial and temporal distribution of bat activity.
- 1.5 Survey findings will be used to assess the conservation value of the site for the bat species present and identify potential opportunities for enhancement. Recommendations will be given to retain and enhance any valuable features identified.

## Site Description

- 1.6 The site is known as Southern Country Park, located in Bishops Stortford. The park is approximately 23 hectares and includes a fishing lake, recreational space and areas of meadow and woodland habitat.

## Legislation

- 1.7 All species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence for anyone intentionally to kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (whether live or dead), disturb a roosting bat, or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.

## Limitations

- 1.8 The lower amplitude of calls of species such as brown long-eared or barbastelle are more difficult to detect, and calls may not have been received by the directional microphone at the time of recording. Therefore, it was possible that a proportion of calls from these species may have been missed by the automated bat detector.
- 1.9 It was not always possible to identify a series of echolocation calls down to species level. However, in the majority of cases it was possible to identify species to genus level which was suitable to inform ongoing management.
- 1.10 The passive recording units do not discern between individual bats or a single bat passing the microphone several times and therefore the data recorded can only provide an indication of bat activity as bat passes per unit time.
- 1.11 It is considered that the overall dataset obtained is representative of the level of bat activity within the site. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the above constraints have resulted in a significant detrimental impact on the quality of the data and will have minimal effect on the subsequent conclusions and recommendations provided within this assessment

## 2 METHODS

### Bat Activity Transect Surveys

- 2.1 The primary objective of the activity surveys was to identify key foraging areas, commuting routes and general bat species utilisation of the site by direct observation.
- 2.2 In order to assess the sites value for bats across the active season (broadly April to October), three transect surveys were undertaken through the active period.
- 2.3 Transect surveys were conducted during suitable weather conditions (avoiding heavy rain, strong winds, mist and sunset temperatures below 10°C) in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016). Dusk transects commenced at sunset and continued for 2 hours.
- 2.4 Survey dates and weather information are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 – Transect Survey Timings and Weather Conditions**

Date	Start time	Sunset time	Finish time	Minimum Temp °C	Cloud Cover %	wind 0-5	rain
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022	21:08	21:08	23:08	18	30	1	0
26 <sup>th</sup> July 2022	20:58	20:58	22:58	14	60	2	0
8 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	19:31	19:31	21:31	15	100	1	Light rain occurred at the end of the survey.

- 2.5 Transect surveys involved surveyors on foot carrying bat detectors along a linear route through the site. The data gathered provide a general view of the bat activity present on site and identify the key foraging and commuting routes. The transect route (shown in Appendix 2) was predetermined prior to the survey in order to sample all areas of the site and included point count stops to identify activity levels around the features of potential value to bats (i.e. tree lines / water bodies / dense

scrub habitats etc). Each transect was walked at a steady pace and when a bat passed by, the species, time and behaviour was recorded on a site plan.

- 2.6 Following each survey, recorded bat calls were analysed to identify the species using a combination of Bat Explorer and Wildlife Acoustics Kaleidoscope, by taking measurements of the peak frequency, characteristic slope of calls and time between calls. Analysis was undertaken by experienced bat ecologists from Tim Moya Associates. From this, the levels of bat activity across the site were assessed.

## Automated Bat Detectors

- 2.7 Passive monitoring of bat activity within the site was undertaken using automated bat detectors. Automated surveys are used to supplement walked transect surveys with increased sampling time.
- 2.8 A total of six automated bat detectors were deployed throughout the active bat period, across three locations within the site. The locations were selected to provide coverage of the two key habitat types present within the park; Woodland edge habitat and adjacent to the lake.
- Location 1 was surveyed one two occasions (adjacent to the lake)
  - Location 2 was surveyed on three occasions (centre of the site on a woodland edge)
  - Location 3 was surveyed on one occasion (southern corner of the site within a woodland block)
- 2.9 Automated bat detectors were left out for a minimum of 5 nights with the exception of locations 1 and 2 in September which due to SD card failure only recorded a period of three nights.
- 2.10 A combination of Anabat Scout, Anabat Chorus and Wildlife Acoustics Song Meter MINI Bat detectors were used, programmed to activate at least 30 minutes before sunset and record continuously until 30 minutes following sunrise.

### 3 RESULTS OF BAT ACTIVITY SURVEYS

#### Bat Activity Transect Surveys

- 3.1 This section summarises the results of the walked transect surveys which were undertaken at the site.
- 3.2 Bat activity was broadly recorded throughout the survey route, but higher levels of activity were recorded around the lake edge and in the south-eastern part of the site. Maps below show the locations of each recording throughout the site. Each recording is represented by a coloured dot. The colour indicates the species recorded. See key below.



\*Note due to the software used, colour coding cannot be altered. Descriptions of the locations of recordings are below

#### Survey 1

- 3.3 During the first survey a total of 47 bat passes were recorded. These comprised 43 common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) passes and 2 Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) bat passes and two *Myotis* species passes. The map below shows the locations of each recording in relation to the site (see key above).
- 3.4 Common pipistrelle activity was concentrated to the west of the site, around the lake and the pond. The two *Myotis* species passes were recorded in the centre of the site in an area of open grassland. The noctule bat passes were both recorded in the south-eastern corner of the site, adjacent to Obrey Way.



### Survey 2

- 3.5 During the survey a total of 131 bat passes were recorded. These comprised 122 common pipistrelle bat passes, 8 soprano pipistrelle passes and 1 *Myotis* species. pass. The map below shows the locations of each recording in relation to the site.
- 3.6 Activity was generally highest around the edge of the lake and around the pond located south of the lake, where regular common pipistrelle passes and foraging were recorded. Occasional soprano pipistrelle passes were also recorded. A single *Myotis* species was also recorded around the pond, south of the lake. Notably no bat passes were recorded in the eastern half of the site during the survey.



### Survey 3

- 3.7 During the final survey a total of 137 bat calls were recorded. Comprising 125 common pipistrelle passes, 8 soprano bat passes, 2 *Myotis* species. passes and 2

noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) passes. The map below shows the location of each recording in relation to the site.

- 3.8 Common pipistrelle activity was highest around the edge of the lake and around the pond as per previous surveys. Occasional soprano pipistrelle foraging and commuting passes were also recorded in these areas. Two noctule bat passes were recorded, one to the west of the lake and another to the south-east of the site on the edge of a woodland block. Both *Myotis* species passes were recorded to the south-east of the site.



- 3.9 Key areas were identified as follows:

- The lake edge with regular foraging recorded on the lake itself
- The pond in the woodland block south of the lake (adjacent to St James Way)

## Automated Bat Detector surveys

- 3.10 This section summarises the results of the automated bat detector surveys which were undertaken at the site. Appendix 2 includes a plan showing the locations of the automated bat detectors. Appendix 3 shows graphs summarising the data for each detector location and month.
- 3.11 A total of 5812 bat passes were recorded, across 6 automated detector deployment periods. The majority of bat passes recorded were common pipistrelles (85% of all bat passes). Soprano pipistrelle passes comprised 14% of passes.
- 3.12 Brown long-eared bats, Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), Noctule, Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) and *Myotis* passes comprised less than 1% each.

- 3.13 Location 1 adjacent to the lake had the highest level of activity. Although the automated bat detectors were deployed by the lake on two occasions (higher than location 3) the detector adjacent to the lake recorded 94 % of all calls – considerably higher than the proportionate 32% expected if activity was equal throughout all automated bat detector locations per deployment.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### Foraging and commuting bat activity

- 4.1 Automated bat detector surveys and transect surveys have shown that the site is used as a foraging or commuting resource by at least eight bat species – common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle, serotine, Leisler's bat, noctule, brown long-eared bat and unknown *Myotis* species. However, the vast majority of activity within the site is from common pipistrelle bats and soprano pipistrelle bats. Other species were recorded infrequently.
- 4.2 As noted in Section 3, above, key areas of bat activity identified through both survey methods are as follows:
- The lake edge with regular foraging recorded on the lake itself
  - The pond in the woodland block south of the lake (adjacent to St James Way)
- 4.3 These areas are likely to form part of a wider complex of suitable habitats used by bats in the local landscape. Particularly around the lake and pond which provides optimal bat foraging habitat for bats in the local area due to the abundance of invertebrates for prey.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING MANAGEMENT

### **Appropriate Management of existing tree stock**

5.1 Staff undertaking tree works within the site should be made aware of the legal protection afforded to bats and their roosts. Where necessary tree work is required that has the potential to disturb bats or damage/destroy their roosts, advice should be sought from an experienced ecologist. See separate guidance document for Managing Risks to Bats in trees for more details.

5.2 Recommendation: Where safe to do so, trees with deadwood and other suitable roosting features should be retained within the park. Where standing deadwood is not safe to be retained within the tree, it should be left within the park at ground level to provide habitat for invertebrate species.

### **Veteranisation of trees**

5.3 Veteranisation of trees is the process undertaken to increase the amount of habitats available for wildlife such as dead wood, hollows, and crevices within a tree, to mimic the features present on veteran trees, thus creating roosting features for bats.

5.4 Veteranisation should be undertaken by a suitability qualified arborist, who will use chainsaws to carve out features which replicates damage which would occur naturally.

5.5 Trees selected to be subject to veteranisation should meet the following requirements:

- Should be a native species
- The tree should not already be considered a veteran tree
- The tree is mature enough that it can be cut at a height which will not be subject to damage through grazing

5.6 Examples of veteranisation features include the following;

#### Nest boxes in living trees

5.7 This is created by cutting a long rectangular wedge from the centre of the tree trunk (vertically) and removing a strip from the inside of the wedge, and a piece from the top. This will create a cavity behind and an access point at the top.

5.8 The wedge is then replaced in the hole, leaving a gap at the top. Nails can be used to secure it in place.

### Woodpecker Holes

- 5.9 Saw a slightly oval-shaped hole into the tree. The hole should be at least 4m above the ground and measure approximately 8cm wide and 12cm long, and into the centre of the trunk.

### Broken branches

This involves removing a low live branch approximately 20cm away from where the branch joins the trunk. To create a natural looking fracture, the branch should be cut halfway through from the top and then pull/push the branch to rip the rest of the branch. The removed part of the branch should be left on the ground where possible to provide deadwood.

### **Bat Box Installation**

- 5.10 Bat boxes are artificial roosts designed to provide bats with alternative resting places or to encourage bats into areas where there are few existing suitable roost sites.
- 5.11 In order to create additional roosting features within the park, bat boxes should be installed. The recommended models are shown below.



**2F Schwegler Bat Box (General Purpose) Available from NHBS**



**2FN Schwegler Bat Box Available from NHBS**



**General Purpose Bat Box Available from NHBS**



**Large Multi Chamber Woodstone Bat Box Available from NHBS**

5.12 Boxes should be orientated south when possible but can be placed in a variety of orientations in order to avoid artificial lighting. The boxes will be placed at least 3 m above the ground. To maximise uptake of bat boxes, they should be situated in areas of high levels of activity, particularly along the edge of the lake and around the pond. The map below shows suitable locations for bat boxes within key areas of activity (red circles).



### Linear Features

5.13 The park currently includes a number of linear landscape features such as tree belts, woodland edges. These are often used by bats for navigation, forming commuting routes between roosting and foraging areas.

5.14 Recommendation: Tree belts within the site should be retained and enhanced where possible to maximise their value for commuting and foraging bats. Where tree work is required, replacement planting should be considered to ensure a continuous canopy.

### Lighting

5.15 The foraging and commuting behaviour of bats is known to be altered by artificial lighting and bats may avoid illuminated areas (ILP, 2018).

5.16 Recommendation: The park is currently unlit and subject to a limited amount of light spill from street lighting. No additional lighting should be introduced to the park. Where additional street lighting is implemented (outside the control of the parks management team) screening planting should be considered to minimise any light spill into the park.

### Additional Planting - Grassland

5.17 The site currently comprises large areas of meadow habitat, offering suitable foraging habitat for a range of bat species. Where possible additional bat friendly planting should be included across the site to maximise the foraging suitability of the site.

5.18 Recommendation: The planting scheme should include native planting to attract insects and increase the food resource for bats in the area. The following species are recommended (Additional information can be found in *Encouraging Bats; A guide for bat-friendly gardening and living*, 2015).

- Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*)
- Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
- Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)
- Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*)
- Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)
- Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*)

- Yellow-Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
- Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*)

### **Waterbody Creation**

5.19 Waterbodies provide ideal foraging habitat for bats by increase prey availability within the local area. Activity levels within the site were considerably higher in areas adjacent to waterbodies.

5.20 Recommendation: Where possible a pond could be created within the park to provide additional foraging habitat. The pond should include planting of native, locally indigenous aquatic and marginal plant species including Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagitifolia*) and water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*).

5.21 Due to the recreational nature of the park, the pond should be protected from disturbance by dogs entering the water, by having fencing around the whole pond. Information boards will be provided to explain to users why disturbance must be prevented.

5.22 Additionally, the following measures should be followed to maximise the ecological value of the pond for other native species:

- Fish will not be added to the pond at any stage.
- A high density of wildfowl will not be encouraged.
- Occasional drying out is acceptable as long as it holds water one summer in every three.

## 6 REFERENCES

- Bat Conservation Trust (2015). Encouraging Bats; A guide for bat-friendly gardening and living.
- Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Engineers (2018). Bats and Lighting in the UK.
- Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

## 7 APPENDICES

Appendix 1– Lead Surveyor Details

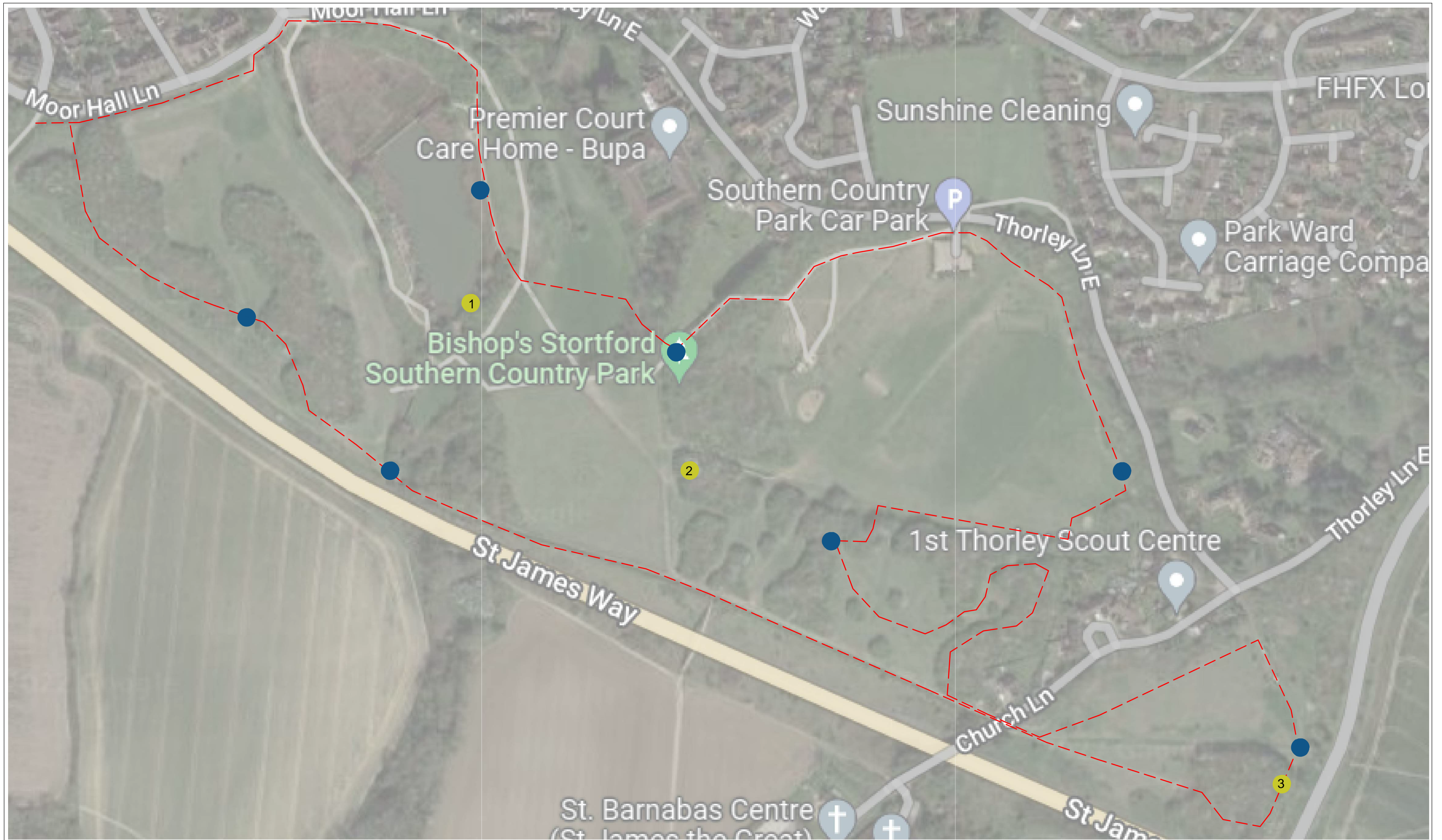
Appendix 2- Bat Activity Survey Plan

Appendix 3 – Automated Bat Detector Results  
Summaries

## Appendix 1– Lead Surveyor Details

<b>Surveyor</b>	<b>Bat Survey Licence Holder?</b>	<b>Experience levels</b>
Leigh-Ann Barran BSc Consultant Ecologist	No	Over 5 years of experience undertaking bat surveys.
Brooke Waites, BSc Senior Ecologist	Yes	Over 6 years of experience undertaking bat surveys.
Thomas Haley MSc Freelance Ecologist	Yes	Over 7 years of experience undertaking bat surveys.

## Appendix 2- Bat Activity Survey Plan



- Automated Bat Detector locations
- Stopping points (min 2 minutes)
- Survey route

Title Bat Activity Survey Route		
Client East Herts District Council		
Project Southern Country Park, Moor Hall Lane, Bishops Stortford, Herts, CM23 4GZ		
Date May 2022	Drawn by HR	Checked by -
Drawing No 220541-E-01	Rev -	Scale NTS@A3

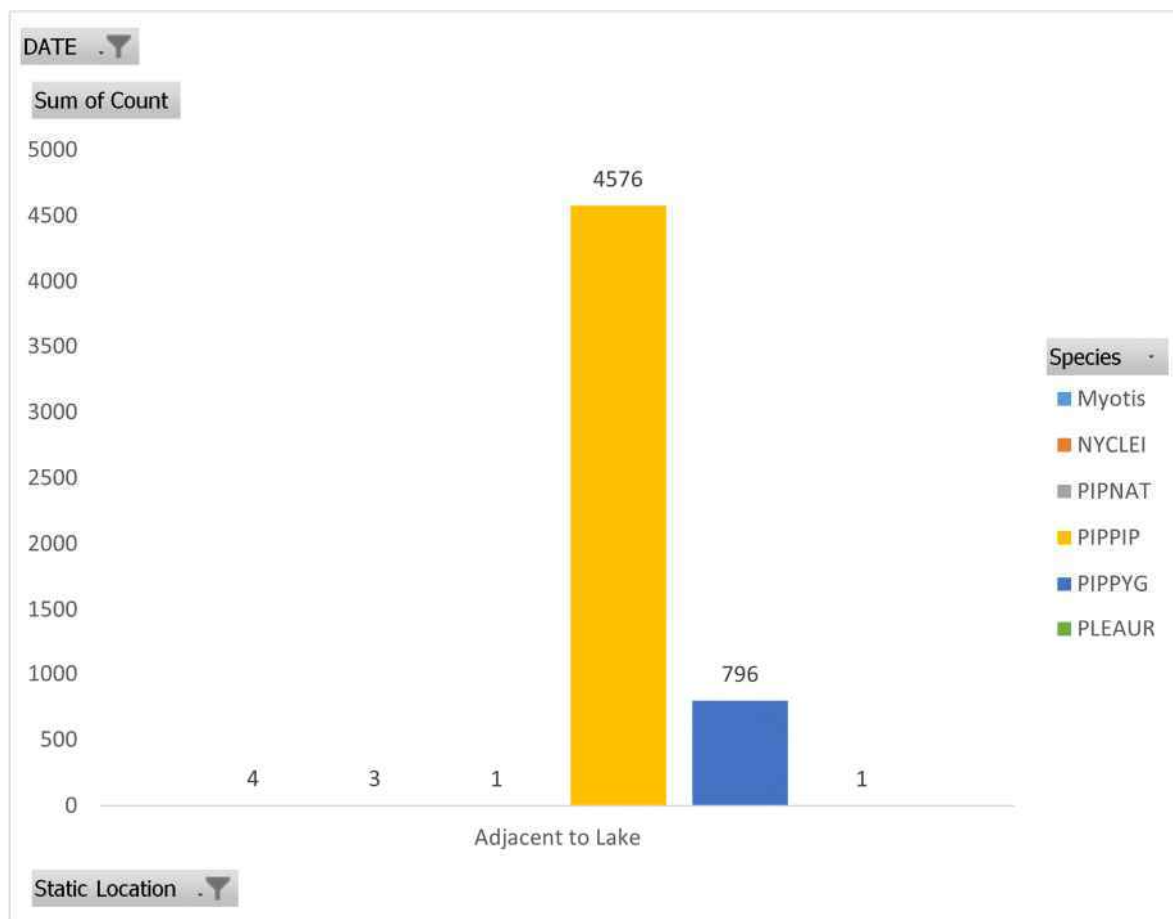


TIM MOYA ASSOCIATES

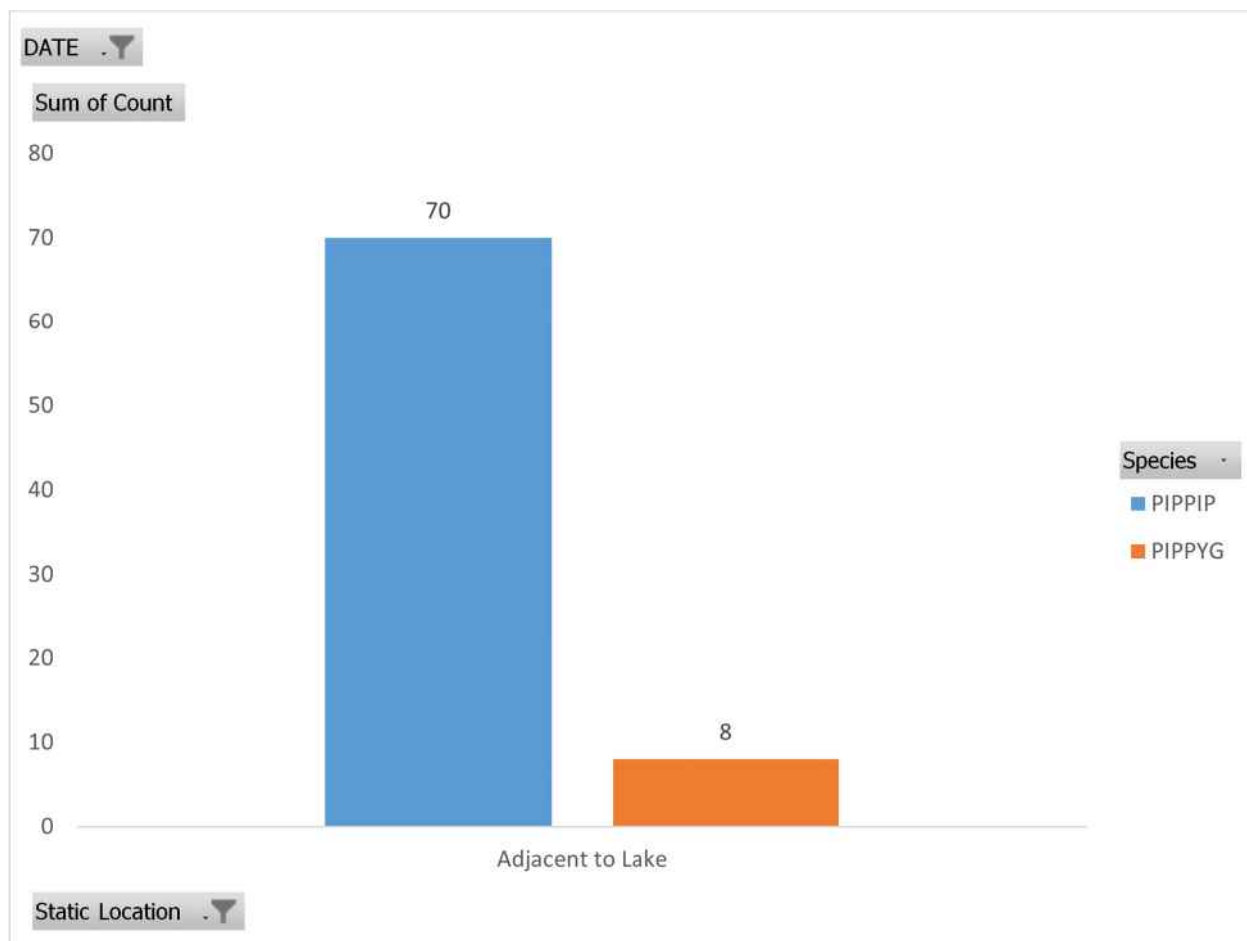
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 www.timmoayaassociates.co.uk

arboriculture ecology landscape innovation

## Appendix 3 – Automated Bat Detector Results Summaries

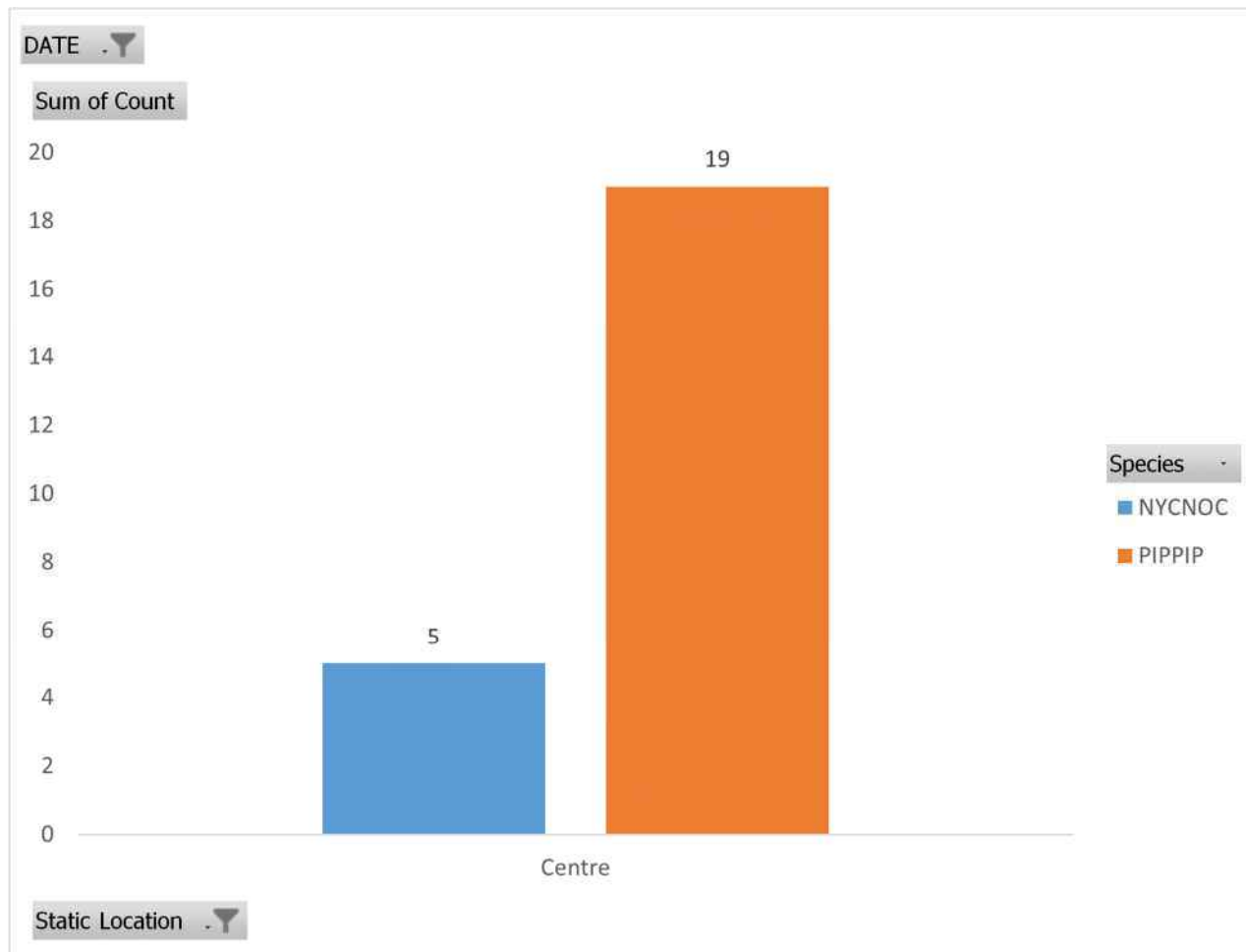


Graph 1 - Total number of bat passes recorded between 26<sup>th</sup> July – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 at Location 1.

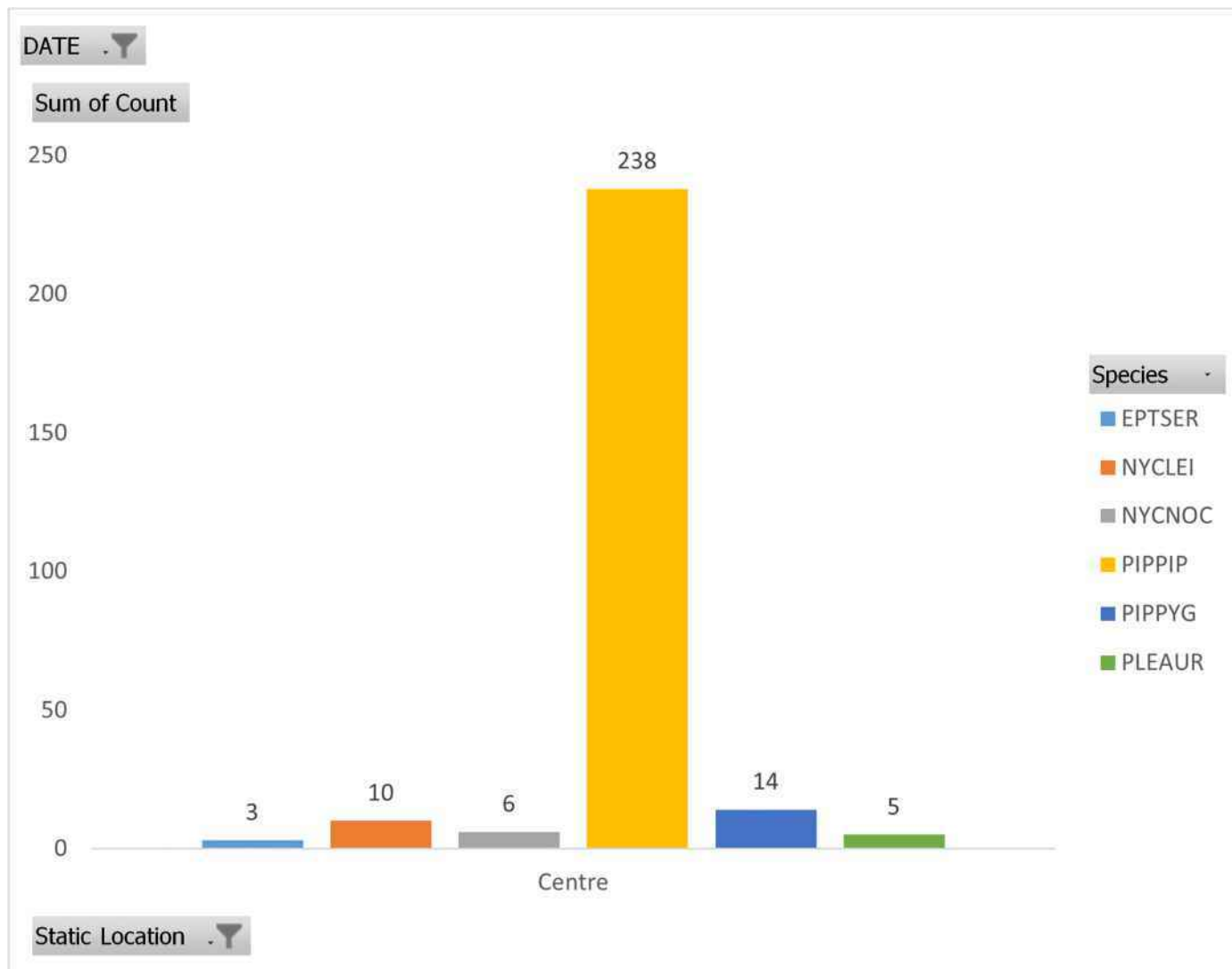


Graph 2 – Total number of bat passes recorded between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at Location 1.

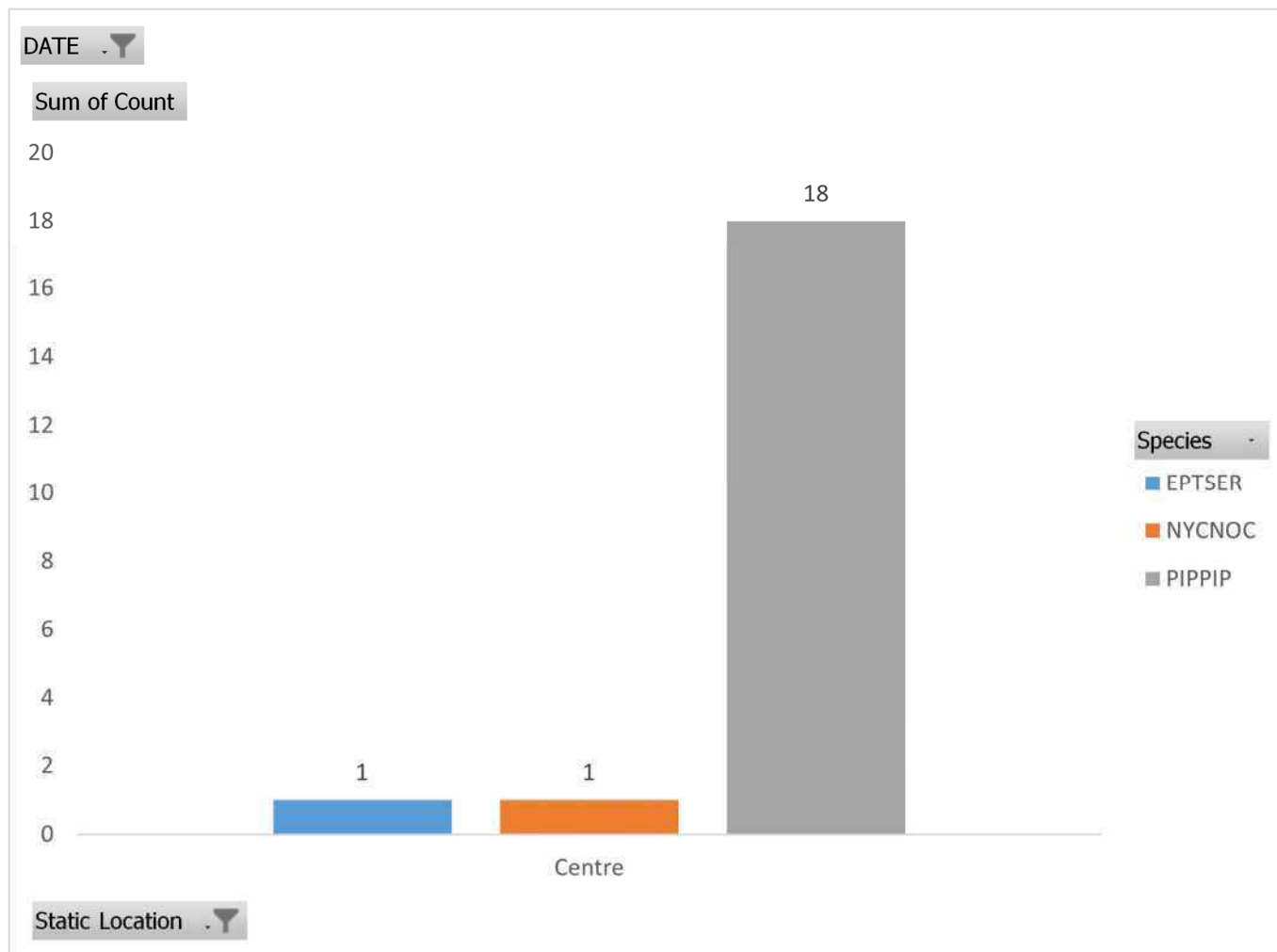
Note due to SD card error the detector only recorded for three nights, rather than the minimum 5 nights.



Graph 3 – Total number of bat passes recorded between 31<sup>st</sup> May and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at Location 2.

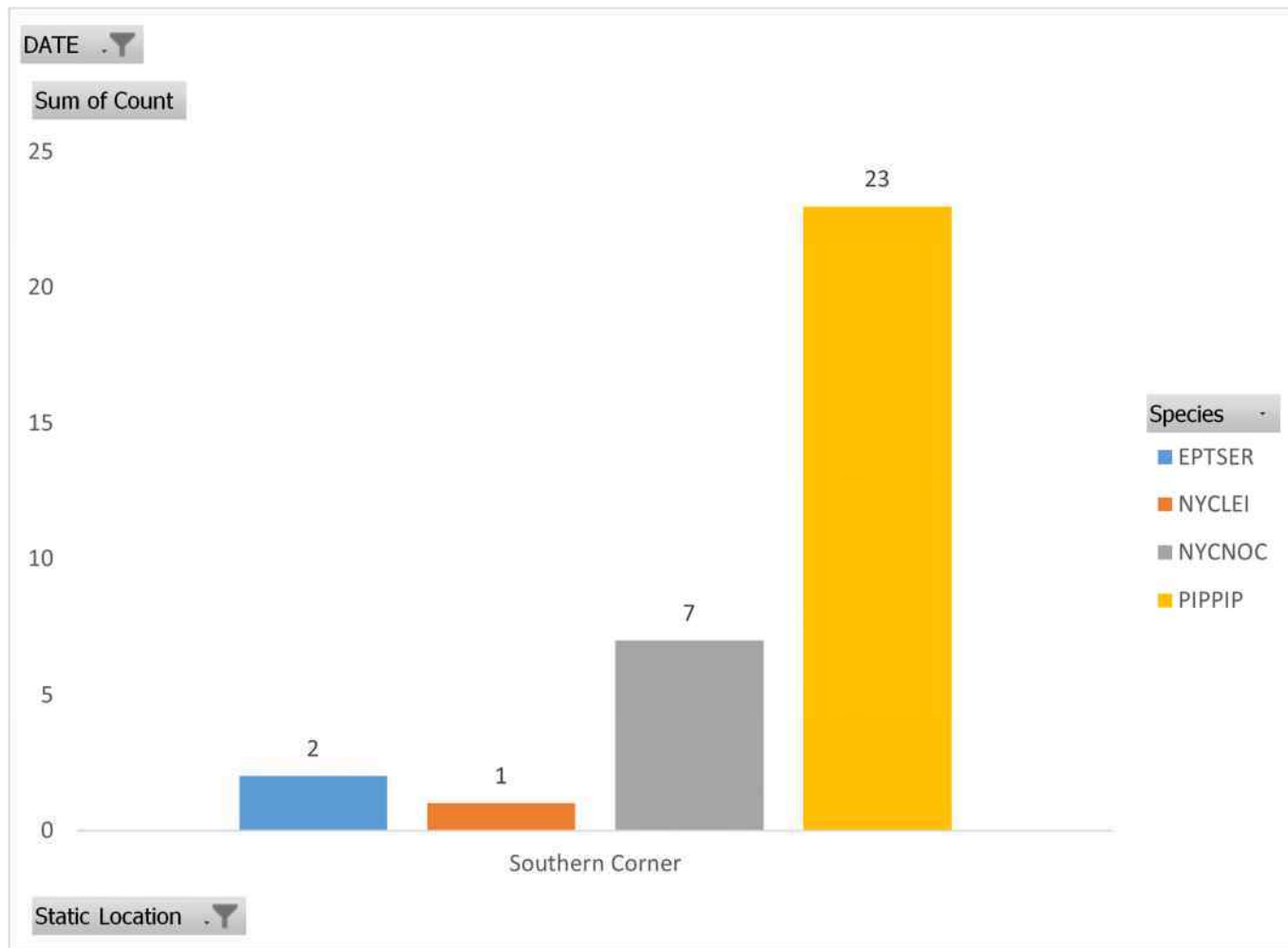


Graph 4 – Total number of bat passes recorded between 26<sup>th</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 at Location 2.



Graph 5 – Total number of bat passes recorded between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at Location 2.

Note due to SD card error the detector only recorded for three nights, rather than the minimum 5 nights.



Graph 6 – Total number of bat passes recorded between 31<sup>st</sup> May and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at Location 3.



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Tim Moya Associates is a trading name of Tim Moya Tree Services Ltd. Company Reg No. 3028475

### **7.3 Fish Stock Survey**

## Fish Survey Report – Southern Country Report

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

A fish survey was carried out on Thursday 4th March at Southern Country Park with use of a seine net and electric fishing gear. The survey produced a good range of fish species including carp, roach, bream, crucian carp, rudd and goldfish.



The crucian carp that were previously stocked were doing well and showed up in good numbers all around the lake. Tench were absent from the survey but this is typical due their behaviour and the amount of cover present in the fishery in the form of reedbeds.

A range of carp sizes were present indicating successful recruitment of this species. Size of carp ranged from 6 inch up to around 12lb. There were clearly a lot of fish held up in the reedbeds at the northern end of the lake making them very hard to capture during surveying.



The predominant species were roach which are successfully recruiting. These could begin to out compete other species in future if left unmanaged. Bream were also present in limited numbers.



### **Fish Health**

All fish caught appeared to be in good health with no signs of clinical disease of any note. No physical damaged was observed with all species in good physical condition. Evidence of different year classes were present indicating good recruitment and a healthy environment.

### **Future Management**

It would be recommended to crop the roach population next winter to give other species such as crucian carp and bream room to grow. This will also avoid the biomass of the fishery becoming unsustainable.

It was noted the marginal vegetation was beginning to encroach into the fishery. Marginal vegetation is essential for a balanced ecosystem but can become problematic when excessive encroachment occurs, reducing water area available for angling. It is recommended this is cut back before too much more encroachment occurs.



## 7.4 Mowing Plan Map

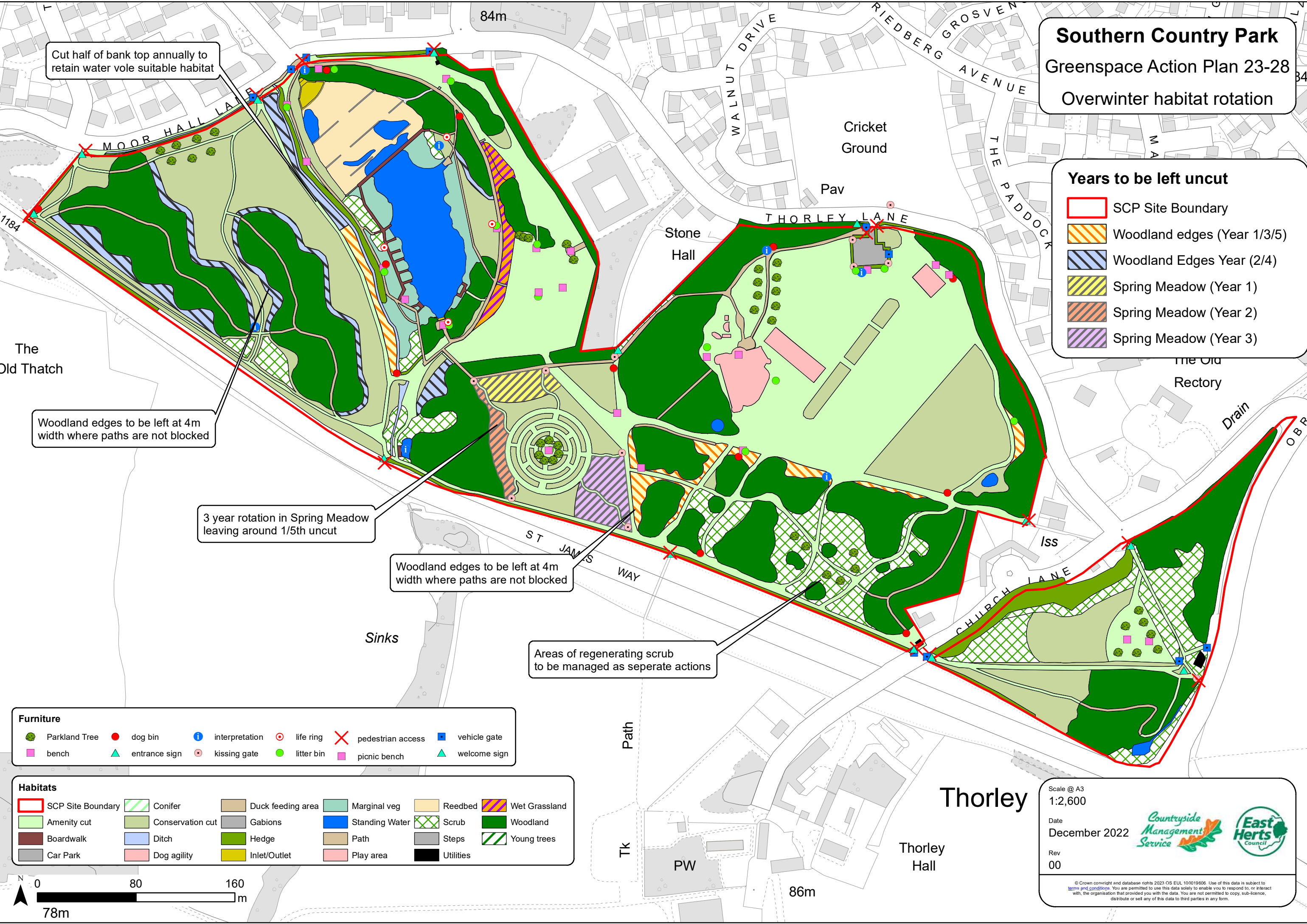
# Southern Country Park

## Greenspace Action Plan 23-28

### Overwinter habitat rotation

**Years to be left uncut**

- SCP Site Boundary
- Woodland edges (Year 1/3/5)
- Woodland Edges Year (2/4)
- Spring Meadow (Year 1)
- Spring Meadow (Year 2)
- Spring Meadow (Year 3)



Cut half of bank top annually to retain water vole suitable habitat

Woodland edges to be left at 4m width where paths are not blocked

3 year rotation in Spring Meadow leaving around 1/5th uncut

Woodland edges to be left at 4m width where paths are not blocked

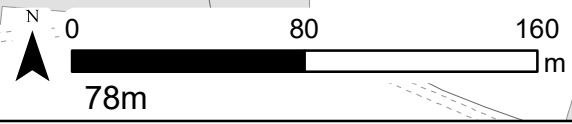
Areas of regenerating scrub to be managed as separate actions

**Furniture**

<span style="color: green;">●</span> Parkland Tree	<span style="color: red;">●</span> dog bin	<span style="color: blue;">i</span> interpretation	<span style="color: red;">⊙</span> life ring	<span style="color: red;">X</span> pedestrian access	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> vehicle gate
<span style="color: pink;">■</span> bench	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> entrance sign	<span style="color: red;">⊙</span> kissing gate	<span style="color: green;">●</span> litter bin	<span style="color: pink;">■</span> picnic bench	<span style="color: green;">▲</span> welcome sign

**Habitats**

<span style="border: 1px solid red; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> SCP Site Boundary	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, green 2px, green 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Conifer	<span style="background-color: #d2b48c; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Duck feeding area	<span style="background-color: #c8e6c9; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Marginal veg	<span style="background-color: #fff9c4; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Reedbed	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, orange 2px, orange 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Wet Grassland
<span style="background-color: #e8f5e9; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Amenity cut	<span style="background-color: #c8e6c9; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Conservation cut	<span style="background-color: #bdbdbd; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Gabions	<span style="background-color: #00bcd4; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Standing Water	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, green 2px, green 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Scrub	<span style="background-color: #4caf50; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Woodland
<span style="background-color: #795548; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Boardwalk	<span style="background-color: #bbdefb; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Ditch	<span style="background-color: #8bc34a; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Hedge	<span style="background-color: #d7ccc8; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Path	<span style="background-color: #bdbdbd; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Steps	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, green 2px, green 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Young trees
<span style="background-color: #bdbdbd; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Car Park	<span style="background-color: #ffcdd2; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Dog agility	<span style="background-color: #fff176; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Inlet/Outlet	<span style="background-color: #ffcdd2; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Play area	<span style="background-color: #212121; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Utilities	



Scale @ A3  
1:2,600

Date  
December 2022

Rev  
00

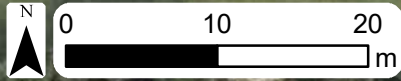
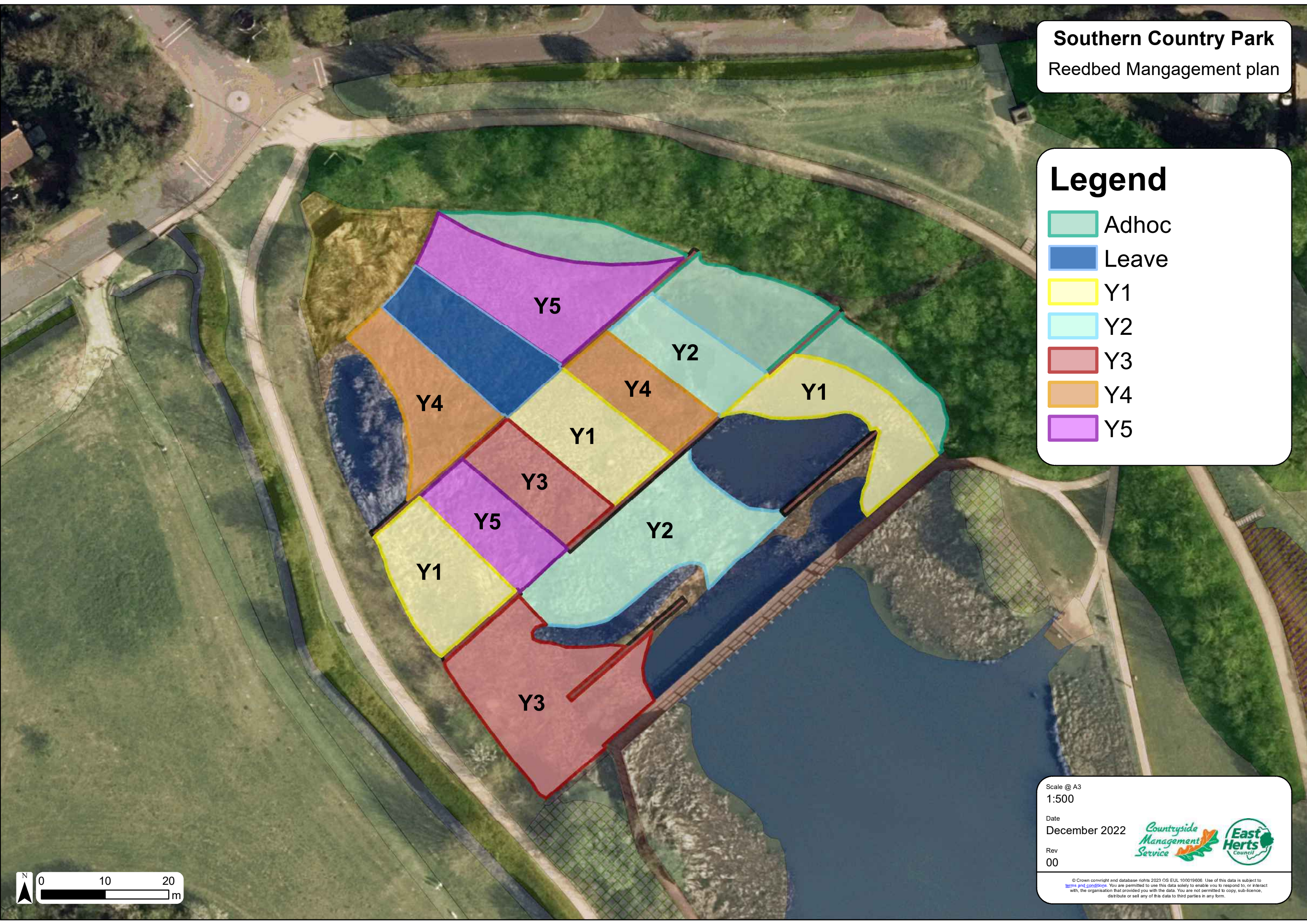
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**7.5 Reedbed Zoning Map**

# Southern Country Park Reedbed Management plan

## Legend

- Adhoc
- Leave
- Y1
- Y2
- Y3
- Y4
- Y5



Scale @ A3  
1:500

Date  
December 2022

Rev  
00

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## 7.6 Friends of Southern Country Park Working Map



## 7.7 Links to other documents and websites

- [Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-27](#)
- [Parks and Open Spaces in East Herts](#)
- [East Herts District Plan 2018-33](#)
- [Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-24](#)
- [Climate Change Strategy 2022-26](#)
- [Environmental Sustainability Action Plan 2024-25](#)
- [Thriving Together: Promoting healthy lifestyles, community wellbeing and sustainability 2023-27](#)
- [Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy](#)
- [Raising the standard: The Green Flag Award guidance manual \(2016\)](#)
- [Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(consultation draft, 2025\)](#)
- [Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy \(2022\)](#)
- [ParksHerts](#)