



Grange Paddocks Meadow

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2026 – 2031



OVERVIEW

Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Action Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site. The plan is set out sequentially, first providing background information on the site (Site Description) and an assessment of its condition and opportunities for improvement (Analysis and Evaluation). This is developed into Aims and Objectives for the site, a set of Action Plans which identify how these objectives will be achieved, and detailed specifications for the work to complete the actions.

Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An engagement period in June 2026 enabled stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An engagement summary to be included as an appendix to the final version of this plan will detail the engagement process and summarise the comments received and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
v0	06/06/2026	Draft	KW	AT	RP
v1	27/07/2026	Final	KW	AT	RP

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1.0 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Summary

Site Name: Grange Paddocks Meadow (Red, White and Blue)

Site Address: Rye Street, St Michael, Bishops Stortford, CM23 2TU

Grid Reference: TL 49302 22767

Size: 9.6ha

Designations: Flood Zone 2, Flood Zone 3, Greenbelt

Owner: East Herts Council

1.2 Vision Statement

Our vision is to restore and enhance Grange Paddocks Meadow as a resilient, species-rich landscape, and a welcoming greenspace for people. Management will focus on sustainable grazing supported by carefully targeted traditional practices and appropriate planting across the site. We will also explore opportunities for future floodplain restoration, allowing the site to be better connected to the rivers, able to support nature recovery, strengthen climate resilience and deliver wider benefits for the local community.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Introduction

Grange Paddocks Meadow, also known locally as the Red, White and Blue after the former public house, forms a key part of the wider greenspace network acting as a green lung through the centre of Bishop's Stortford. The site comprises approximately 8.1 hectares of publicly accessible open space within the River Stort valley. A further 1.5 ha forms an area known as Cannons Mill Lane, an open space comprising of short-mown amenity grass, semi-natural grassland and woodland. This area provides an important link between Grange Paddocks Meadow and the football fields at Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, connecting onward via a narrow footbridge.

The meadows are bounded by Rye Street to the west, Michaels Road to the north, the River Stort to the east and Grange Paddocks to the south. The Bourne Brook crosses the site, typically flowing in winter and drying back in summer. The railway line and a well-used pedestrian crossing point runs to the east of Cannons Mill Lane with a small car park situated between the two sites. Recent connections to Bat Willow Hurst Park and the St Michael's Hurst development have increased use of the site and strengthened its role as a continuous green corridor through the valley.



1. The former Red, White, and Blue pub

The grassland is a historically grazed floodplain meadow, forming part of the former town meads estate associated with milling and brewing along the River Stort. Grazing remains central to the site's character and management, with seasonal conservation grazing by native rare-breed Longhorn cattle helping to maintain a low-intervention sward structure and support biodiversity.

Today, the meadows support a varied mosaic of habitats including open grassland, riparian margins, scattered parkland trees, young woodland belts and drainage features associated with the Bourne Brook and River Stort. This diversity supports a range of wildlife typical of the river corridor and combined with open views and

Grange Paddocks Meadow
Greenspace Action Plan 2026-2031
Location Plan

- Legend**
- Grange Paddocks
 - Meadow Site Boundary
 - Cannons Mill Lane Site Boundary

Grange Paddocks Meadow
Grid Ref: TL 492 224
Easting: 549200
Northing: 222400



Scale @ A4
1:10,605
Date
February 2026
Rev
00



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Legend

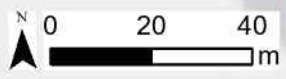
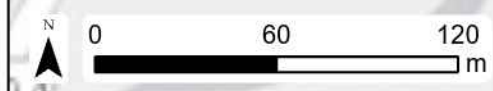
- Grange Meadows Boundary
- Cannons Mill Lane Boundary

Habitats

- Amenity grass
- Plantation
- Grassland
- Ditch
- Sealed surface
- Marginal vegetation
- Scrub
- Wet woodland
- Woodland
- River
- Hedgerow

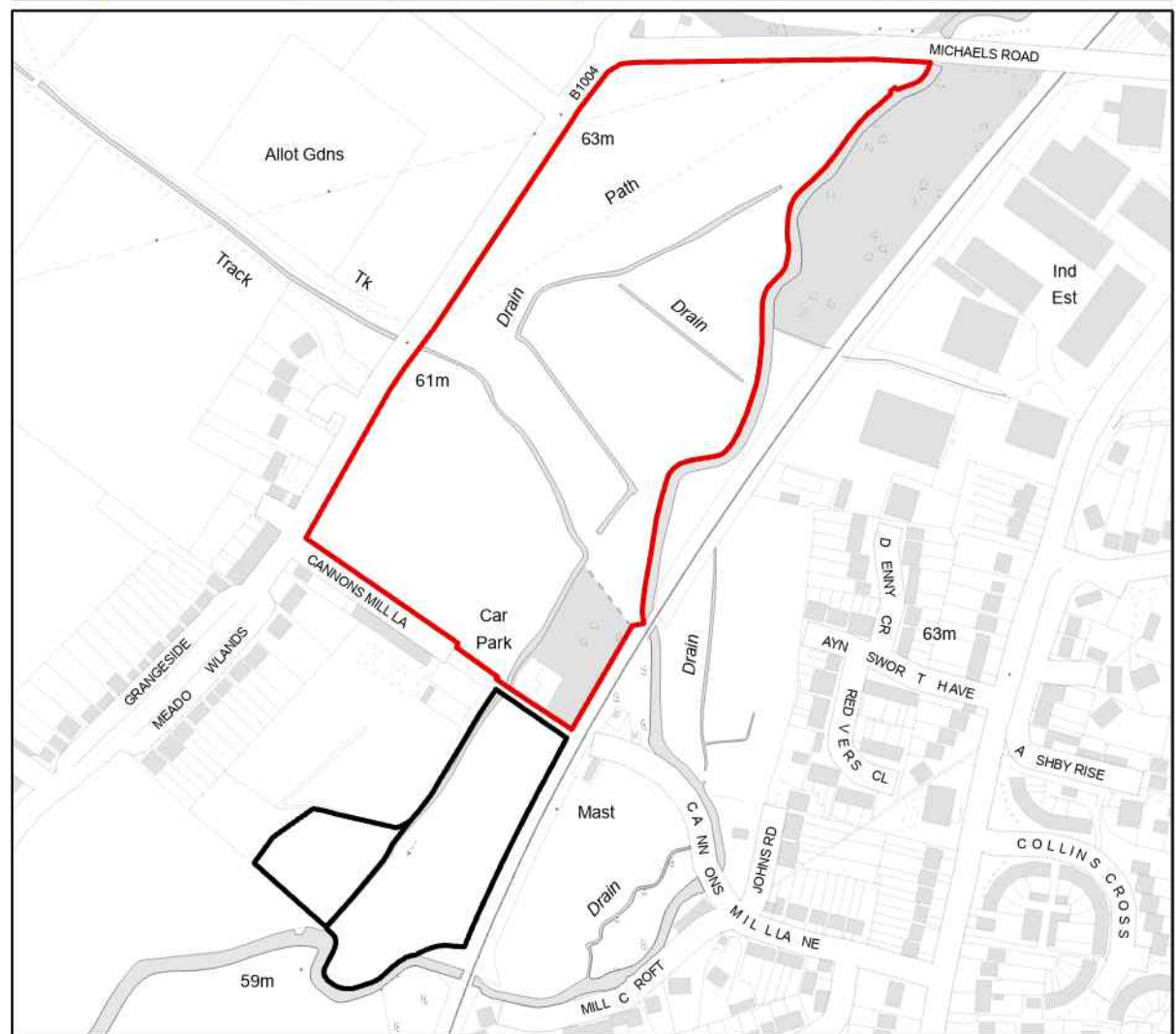
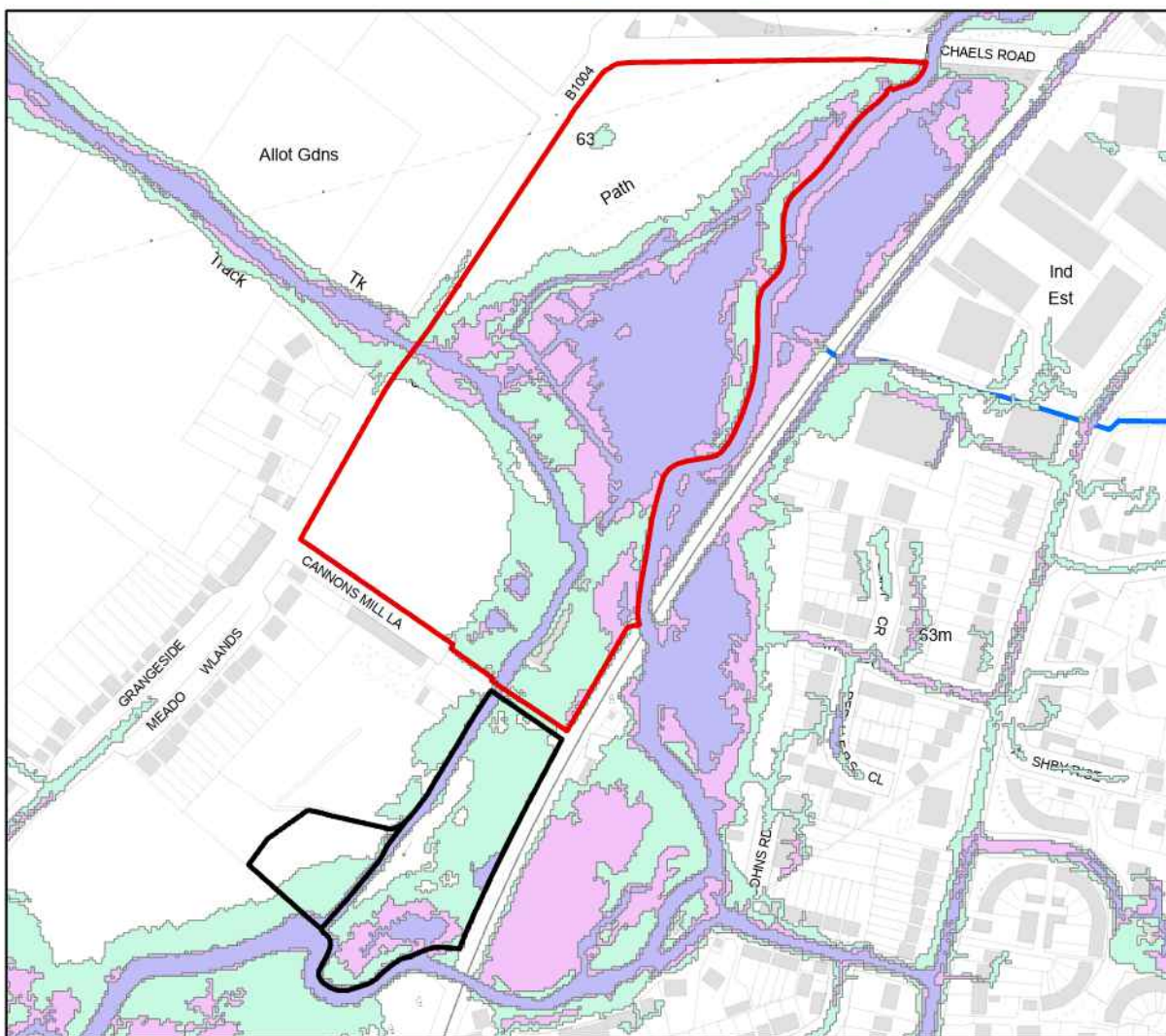
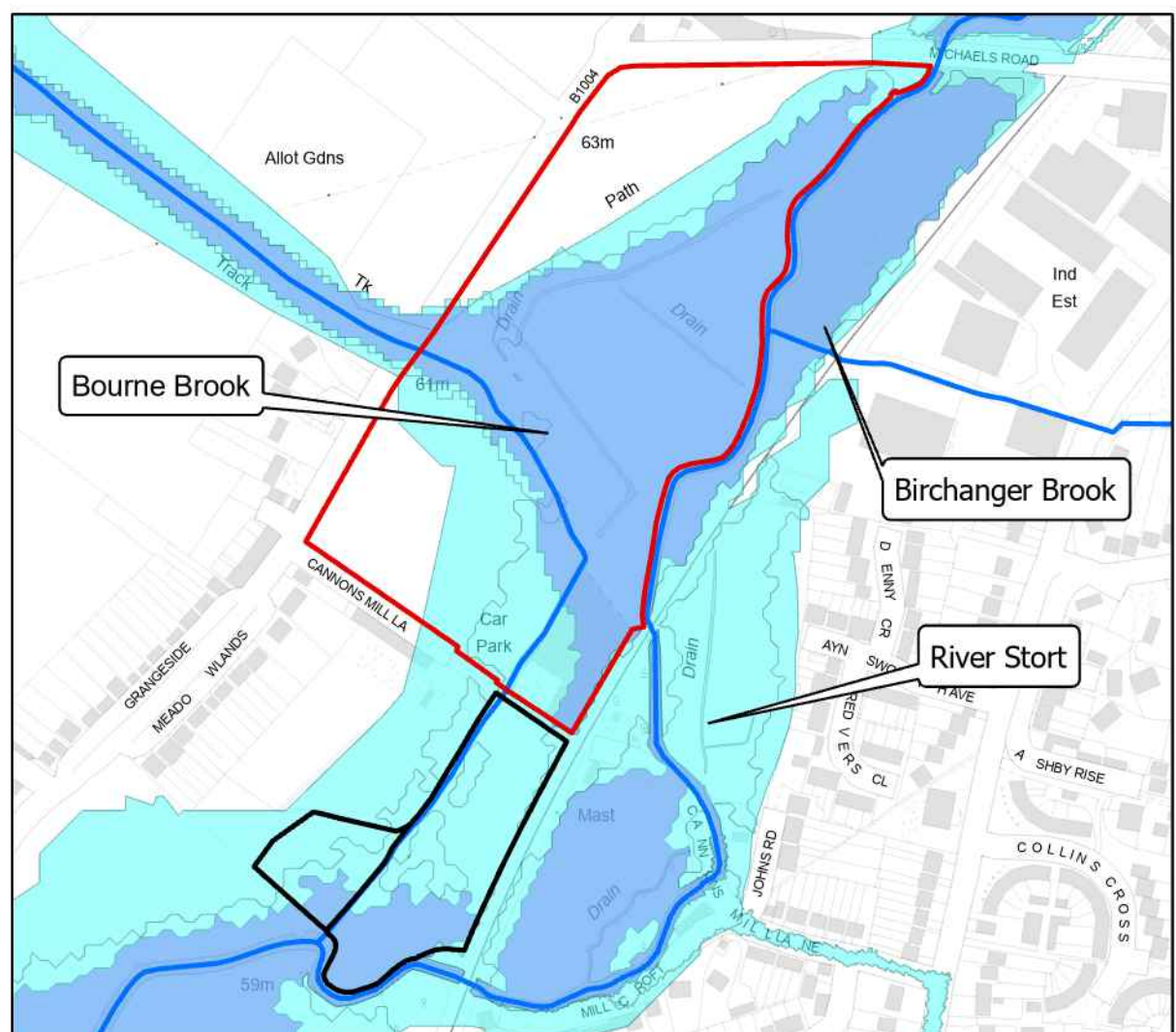
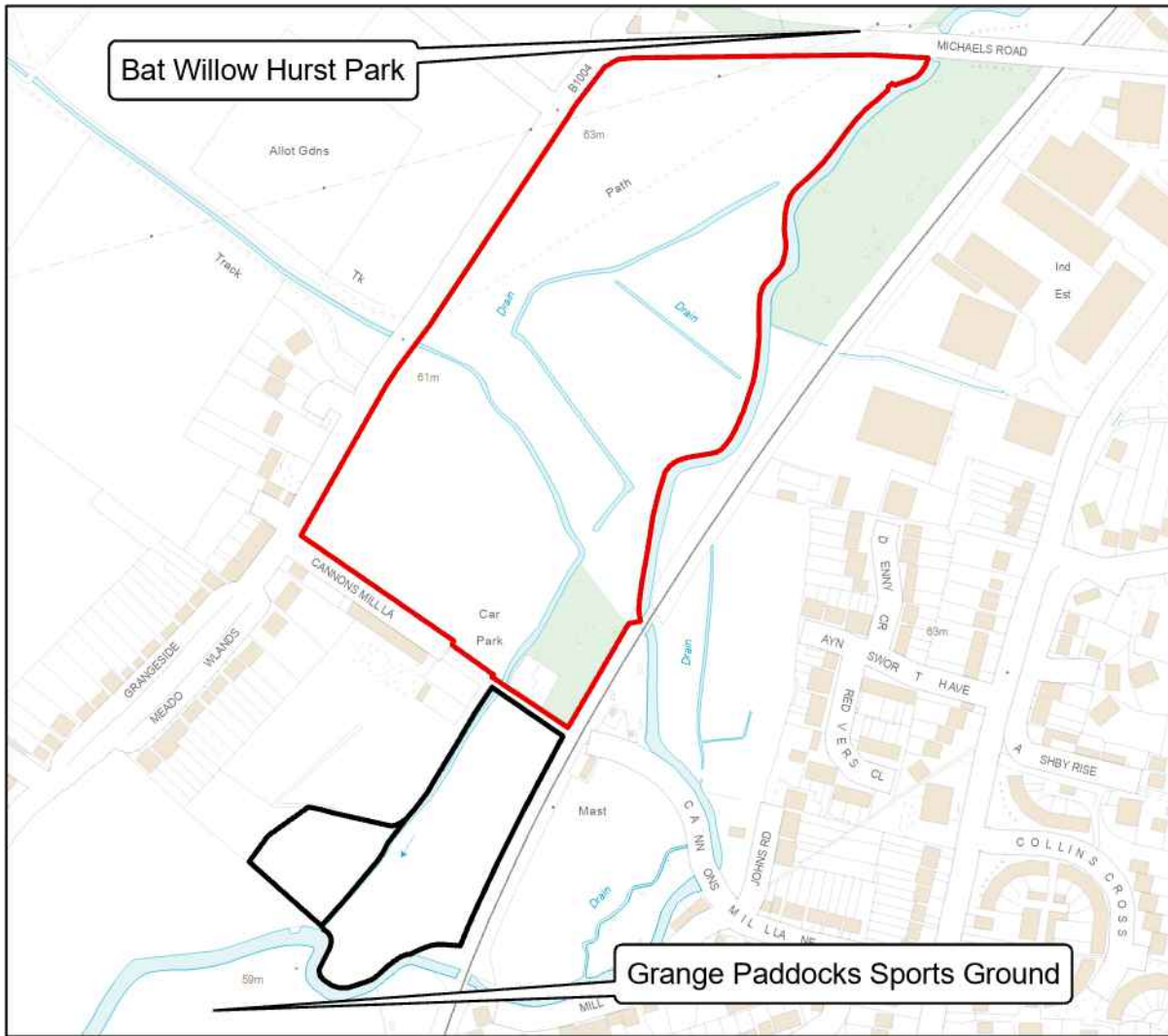
Site Furniture

- Bench
- Interpretation
- Pedestrian gate
- Tree
- Vehicle gate
- Water trough



informal access routes, makes the site highly valued for everyday recreation and contact with nature.

The site is owned and managed by East Herts Council in partnership with the Countryside Management Service.



Grange Paddocks Meadow Greenspace Action Plan 2026-2031 Constraints Plan

- Legend**
- Grange Paddock
 - Meadows Site Boundary
 - Cannons Mill Lane Site Boundary
 - Main River
 - Flood Zone 2
 - Flood Zone 3
 - RoFSW_Extent1in30
 - RoFSW_Extent1in100
 - RoFSW_Extent1in1000



2.2 Site Designations

The site lies immediately adjacent to the River Stort, with the Bourne Brook also crossing the site, and forms part of these main rivers' natural floodplains. As a result, much of the site falls within Flood Zone 3, with smaller areas of higher ground within Flood Zone 2. These zones have a 0.1% to 1% for zone 2 and a greater than 1% for zone 3 chance of flooding.

The site is also located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, forming part of a continuous green corridor that follows the River Stort through Bishop's Stortford and into Castle Park.

2.3 Geology and Hydrology

Grange Paddocks Meadow lies within the Stort Valley floodplain, a landscape shaped by the River Stort over thousands of years. Beneath the site is Upper Cretaceous Chalk, the dominant bedrock of the Bishop's Stortford area, overlain by younger river-deposited sediments.

Surface soils are primarily alluvial, comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel laid down through repeated flooding events. These fertile, moisture-retentive soils underpin the site's productive grassland but also contribute to its tendency to remain wet during the winter months, influencing access, grazing and vegetation management. Historic drainage ditches have altered natural water movement and reduced the extent of regular floodplain connectivity. Patches of older river terrace gravels are also present on the surrounding valley slopes, reflecting earlier phases of the River Stort's changing course and floodplain development.

The River Stort forms the eastern boundary of the site and is part of Hertfordshire's internationally rare chalk stream network, sustained by groundwater flows from the underlying chalk aquifer. Chalk streams are characterised by clear, mineral-rich waters and relatively stable baseflows but are highly sensitive to historic modification and changes in abstraction.

Bourne Brook, a smaller tributary crossing the site, displays strongly seasonal flow patterns, generally running in winter before drying back in summer. Together, these contrasting watercourses play a central role in shaping soils, habitats and management constraints across the meadow and will remain a key consideration in future decision-making and any investigation of floodplain or river enhancement opportunities.



2. The Bourne Brook in Winter

2.4 Landscape Character

The site forms part of the Stort Meads Landscape Character Area, a narrow ribbon of open greenspace following the River Stort through the town of Bishop's Stortford. The landscape is defined by its broad, level floodplain, set between gently rising valley sides, creating a long, open corridor of grassland and informal recreational space.

The character of the area is shaped by expansive views, open sky and a generally uncluttered valley floor, with groups of willow and alder and occasional mature trees providing structure without enclosing the space. Historic hedgerows and small blocks of vegetation add local variety and help soften the transition between the river corridor and surrounding urban edges.

Land use varies subtly along the valley, shifting from pasture and informal grassland in the northern reaches of Grange Paddocks Meadow to more accessible open space closer to the town. This creates a landscape that feels both natural and well-used, with paths, desire lines and regular foot traffic reinforcing its role as an important everyday green space for local residents.

2.5 History and Archaeology

Archaeological evidence indicates that the Stort Valley around Grange Paddocks Meadow supported roadside settlement from the Roman period, associated with the Stane Street corridor. Investigations undertaken in 2019 identified ditched enclosures and related features consistent with a dispersed, working landscape extending across what are now the meadows and river corridor. These findings reflect a long continuity of occupation and land use that has shaped the floodplain's field pattern, routes and drainage.

Through the medieval and post-medieval periods, the valley floor formed part of the town meads, used as seasonally wet grazing and hay ground closely linked to milling and water management along the Stort. In the later 18th century, the river was formalised as the Stort Navigation (opened in 1769), introducing engineered channels, towpaths and drainage work that supported Bishop's Stortford's malt and grain trade and reinforced the floodplain's role as productive grassland managed for water movement and access.

Cannons Mill Lane played an important supporting role within this landscape, providing access to Parsonage Mill, a historic watermill now designated as a Grade II listed building. The mill formed part of a chain of Stort-powered mills serving Bishop's Stortford's milling, malting and brewing industries from at least the medieval period.

The Bourne Brook was historically a marked seasonal watercourse flowing across the meadows from springs rising in Hoggate's Wood and draining towards the River Stort. Mid-20th-century oral accounts describe a fast-running brook after heavy rain,

reportedly “chest-deep” on occasions. Over several centuries the brook was progressively straightened and managed to aid the flow of water off the land. It was further desired to safeguard adjacent assets, notably the mill infrastructure near Parsonage Mill and the road corridor along Rye Street. This legacy of drainage, culverts and managed channels reflects the long history of flood control within the wider Stort valley meads and continues to influence how water and people move through the landscape today.

During the 20th century, parts of the valley saw further utilitarian and flood management uses before gradually transitioning to public open space and recreation. More recently, management focus has begun to shift towards restoring ecological function and sense of place, most notably through the removal of the weir at Grange Paddocks, reflecting contemporary approaches that seek to work with, rather than against, the valley’s historic floodplain processes.



3. Grange Paddocks circa 1888-1915 (OS Six-Inch, 2nd edition)

2.6 Habitats and Wildlife

Much of the site comprises former floodplain meadows managed as neutral grassland, with a mosaic of seasonally wet hollows and historic ditches extending across the central grazing compartment. These open grasslands are enclosed by young woodland belts, dense low level mixed species hedgerows, scattered veteran parkland trees and areas of scrub, creating a varied structure across the site.

Along the eastern boundary, the River Stort is lined with willow pollards, mature alder and riparian scrub, forming a sheltered river corridor that supports a range of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife such as bullhead and kingfisher. Fencing set back from the riverbank has allowed marginal vegetation and scrub to develop, able to provide shelter and protection for the otter and water vole that have both been recorded locally along the Stort.

The Cannons Mill Lane open space includes a smaller area of neutral grassland associated with the Bourne Brook, alongside the site's main areas of amenity-mown grass and more developed scrub. Planted woodland belts and young standard trees of Willow, Alder and Whitebeam frame the entrance to the site and help link the meadows with surrounding greenspaces at Grange Paddocks.



4. Cannons Mill Lane Open Space

Together, these habitats form a diverse floodplain landscape shaped by water, grazing and long-term management, supporting a wide range of species typical of the River Stort valley. The following sections describe the key habitats in more detail and outline the wildlife interest they support.

2.6.1 Grassland

The main block of grassland at Grange Paddocks Meadow forms a broad, open parkland-style landscape and represents one of the key open habitats within the wider River Stort corridor. It is well used for informal recreation, providing an important link within the local walking network, with a series of mown paths and well-defined desire lines helping to maintain access across the site.

The grassland is managed through livestock grazing, resulting in a generally short to medium sward across much of the meadow. Due to past land use, historic nutrient inputs and ongoing influence from the river system, the grassland is currently nutrient-rich and botanically species-poor compared to its potential, with vigorous competitive grasses, nettle and Umbellifers dominating in places.



5. Typical grassland condition at Grange Paddocks Meadow

In drier years, when grass growth is suppressed, there have been periodic increases in Common Ragwort. While this native species provides high value for invertebrates, its presence requires management to ensure safe grazing. Under the Weeds Act 1959, the Council is required to control certain injurious weeds, including Common Ragwort, Creeping Thistle and Spear Thistle. To date, these species have been successfully controlled and will continue to be managed in line with Council policy, with cover maintained at low levels within each grassland compartment unless otherwise specified.



6. Ragwort dominance in previous years

Despite its current species-poor character, the grassland supports important faunal interest typical of open meadow and edge habitats. The open sward provides feeding opportunities for bats, Kestrel and Barn Owl, while occasional records of Common Lizard nearby highlight the value of tussocky grassland created through grazing, sunny banks and lightly disturbed grassland edges. During winter, the open fields attract species such as Fieldfare and Redwing, which forage across the pasture and use adjacent scrub for shelter, underlining the meadow's seasonal value for farmland and floodplain birds.

2.6.1.1 Grazing

Grazing at Grange Paddocks Meadow has a long historic association with the site and remains central to its management. Traditional English Longhorn cattle are used for conservation grazing, selected for their calm temperament and selective feeding behaviour, which makes them well suited to a publicly accessible landscape.

As the grassland is currently nutrient-rich and relatively species-poor, grazing plays an important role in helping to break up dense grass cover, reduce the dominance of competitive grasses and create a more varied sward structure. However, grazing alone has not been sufficient to achieve the desired level of botanical improvement, and additional complementary management practices are therefore considered.



7. Longhorn Cattle at Grange Paddocks Meadow

2.6.2 Woodland

Small belts of woodland and scattered copses occur along the boundaries of Grange Paddocks Meadow, particularly around Cannons Mill Lane, where they form a linear wooded edge to the railway line. These plantations, established approximately 30 years ago, comprise a mix of oak, ash, field maple and hornbeam forming the main canopy, with birch and cherry contributing to a lighter sub-canopy layer. Along Cannons Mill Lane, the species mix shifts towards a higher proportion of willow and alder, reflecting the proximity of the River Stort and Bourne Brook. Elsewhere, occasional patches of hawthorn and elder provide understorey structure.

As planted woodlands with limited previous management, many areas of the woodland interior remain crowded and heavily shaded, restricting ground flora and

natural regeneration. This uniform structure is further influenced by grazing pressure, as cattle browse young shoots and suppress developing shrub growth, particularly within smaller copses that are directly connected to the meadow.

Deadwood in the woodland is present but not abundant, occurring mainly as occasional fallen branches. Despite its limited quantity, this deadwood contributes valuable habitat for invertebrates and cavity-seeking species. Some historic pollarding has taken place along woodland edges, particularly close to Cannons Mill Lane, where lifting the canopy has increased light levels and encouraged a more varied ground structure.



8. Oyster Mushroom growing on fallen deadwood

Scattered mature oak and pollarded willow trees are a defining feature of the site, providing height and structure within an otherwise open grassland landscape and acting as focal points in views across the meadows. The willows, many already showing characteristic veteran pollard forms, contribute strongly to the site's riverside character.

As the oldest trees on site, these oak and willow standards provide long-term continuity and are beginning to develop deadwood features and cavities that will, over time, support a wide range of insects, birds and bats associated with mature parkland. Alongside these, a number of more recently planted standard trees, protected from grazing, have established successfully and are forming a younger generation that will succeed the older specimens and maintain the parkland character into the future.



9. Historic Pollards and new Standards

2.6.3 Water

The main influence on the site, the River Stort forms the eastern boundary of the site and is a classic example of a lowland, chalk-influenced river, characterised by relatively clear flows, stable base water inputs and a combination of shaded and open margins. These conditions are created in part by willow pollards and riparian scrub along the banks. The Stort supports a growing Water Vole population following successful downstream introductions and provides important foraging habitat for species such as Kingfisher, Otter and Egret, which hunt Bullhead in the shallow, clear waters. Small Trout have been historically recorded in this stretch, and the removal of the weir at Grange Paddocks is expected to improve fish movement and encourage recolonisation of suitable gravel and backwater habitats.

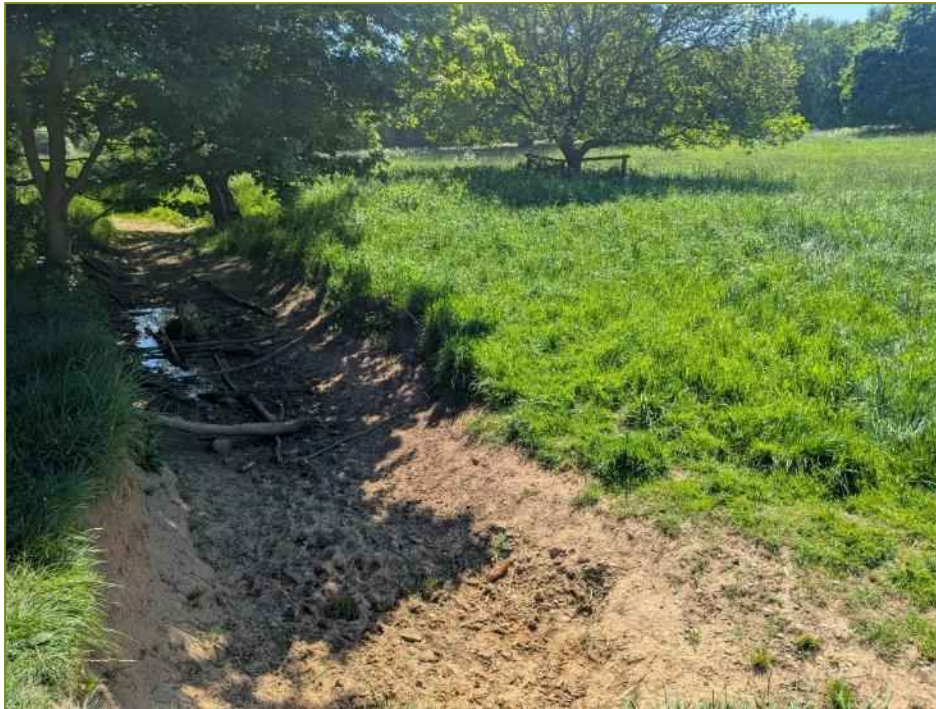
Although naturally capable of supporting a rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats, the River Stort is now largely disconnected from its wider floodplain, particularly on this side of the channel. Historic dredging and modification have confined the river to a fixed course, limiting regular inundation of the adjacent meadows. As a result, hydrological influence is expressed mainly through localised damp hollows and shallow depressions that reflect former flood pathways rather than through extensive seasonal flooding.



10. The River Stort as it flows past the site

In contrast, the Bourne Brook is a much smaller and more dynamic feature, rising quickly after rainfall and receding just as rapidly. Although it behaves in a winterbourne-like manner, it is not formally classed as one. During drier periods, flows often reduce significantly or cease altogether, leaving an exposed channel with

dry, sandy and eroded banks shaped by short-lived, high-energy spate events. Consequently, the brook supports very little true wetland habitat, with vegetation largely limited to sparse scrub and grassland tolerant of both periodic scouring and prolonged dryness. Despite this, the brook introduces important local variation within the meadow, influencing soils and creating open, sparsely vegetated features uncommon elsewhere on site.



11. The Bourne Brook in late spring

Together, these two contrasting watercourses reflect the long history of land use and water management within the site, from the constrained but relatively stable River Stort to the high-energy, modified and diverted Bourne Brook. While both are currently detached from their wider floodplains and exert a reduced influence on natural processes, they remain defining features of the landscape and central to its future management considerations.

2.6.4 Wildlife

As a result of its river corridor location and long-standing low-intensity management, the site supports a number of protected and priority species that require careful consideration in all management and maintenance activities.

2.6.4.1 Protected Species and Section 41 Species

Within the site's main habitat types are several habitats and species listed as **Species and Habitats of Principal Importance (Section 41)**, many of which also align closely with priorities identified in Hertfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). These include chalk-influenced rivers, wet woodland and lowland

mixed deciduous woodland, alongside semi-natural grassland with potential for restoration.

Recorded and notable species associated with the site and surrounding river corridor include:

- **Mammals:** Water Vole, Otter
- **Birds:** Kingfisher
- **Reptiles:** Common Lizard
- **Amphibians:** Common Toad, with historic records of Great Crested Newt
- **Bats:** Natterer's, Brown Long-eared, Daubenton's, Soprano Pipistrelle and Common Pipistrelle
- **Invertebrates:** Norfolk Hawker dragonfly and a suite of notable moth species associated with willow and riparian habitats

These records highlight the importance of the site's river margins, mature trees and semi-natural habitats.

2.6.4.2 *Bats*

As noted in the proceeding protected species summary the site supports a diverse bat assemblage, and their ecological requirements must be considered across all management prescriptions. Given the reliance of the site's bat assemblage on mature trees, willow pollards and the riparian treeline, any works affecting these features must be planned and undertaken with particular care. These structures provide potential roosting opportunities and form critical commuting routes along the river corridor.

Before any works to mature trees or willow pollards:

- A licensed bat ecologist must assess all trees with cavities, splits, decay features or dense ivy for potential roosting use.
- If roost potential is identified, statutory licensing procedures must be followed before works proceed.
- Any new lighting proposals for the site should adhere to the '*Bats and Lighting in the UK*' document produced by the Bat Conservation Trust.

2.6.4.3 *Other Mammals*

In addition to Water Vole and Otter, the site provides regular foraging habitat for Badger, Fox and small mammals such as Field Voles. Occasional muntjac deer are present and may influence woodland regeneration in certain areas.



12. Otter footage from nearby (Credit Friends of Castle Park)

2.6.4.4 Reptile and Amphibians

The grassland margins, scrub edges and river corridor provide suitable habitat for reptile species, with Common Lizard recorded and potential for Slow Worm and Grass Snake in adjacent habitats. Seasonal wet features and the wider river system support amphibian species including Common Toad and Frog, with historic records indicating the site's potential for Great Crested Newt in suitable conditions.

2.6.4.5 Birds

The open meadow, scrub edges and mature trees support a wide range of bird species throughout the year. Along the river corridor, Kingfisher regularly hunt the shallow, clear waters, while Little Egret and Grey Heron are recorded using the wider Stort Navigation. Woodpeckers, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Barn Owl make use of mature trees and open grassland, while Swifts, Redwing and Fieldfare highlight the site's seasonal importance.

2.6.4.6 Invertebrates

The site and its immediate surroundings support a notably rich moth and dragonfly fauna, including the nationally scarce *Norfolk Hawker* dragonfly and a broad suite of conservation-priority moths recorded consistently in the wider Stort Valley. There are a mix of species indicative of nearby high-quality wetland edge, riparian habitat and mature tree lines including some notable rarities such as the Dusky-Lemon Sallow.



13. Kingfisher

While there are currently no dedicated butterfly survey transects at Grange Paddocks Meadow the site's grassland, scrub and riparian habitats are well-suited to variety of butterfly species including Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Common Blue and Orange-tip, all of which are widespread in the Stort Valley. The site also provides habitat suitable for species of local importance such as Small Heath and the ever expanding in range Purple Emperor who require mature willow as a food plant for their larvae.



14. Common Blue Butterfly

The site's willow, scrub and damp edges offer suitable conditions for invertebrates such as longhorn beetles or the Red-headed Cardinal Beetle, which have been recorded in Bishop's Stortford. The river corridor and backwater margins also provide ideal conditions for striking dragonflies and damselflies including Banded Demoiselle and Emperor Dragonfly, both regularly noted along the Stort Navigation nearby.



15. Broad-Bodied Chaser (f)

2.7 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

2.7.1 Public Rights of Way and Informal Routes

Public Footpath 063 crosses the northern part of the site, entering from St Michael's Road via a short flight of steps and a kissing gate, before running broadly westwards across the meadow and exiting onto Rye Street. The route is maintained as a mown grass path to aid visibility and ease of use throughout the year.

In addition to this designated footpath, a number of informal desire lines are well established across both fields, reflecting regular day-to-day movement through the site on either side of Cannons Mill Lane and its role as a valued pedestrian link within the wider greenspace network.

An ambitious cycleway project, known as *Bishop's Stortford North*, is currently in the planning stages and aims to link Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre with the St Michael's Mead development. Although the final alignment has yet to be confirmed and is subject to agreement by East Herts Council as the landowner, the proposal is expected to utilise part of the western edge of the site, connecting Rye Street and Cannons Mill Lane before continuing through the wider greenspace network. If delivered, the scheme would significantly improve safe pedestrian and cycle connectivity in the area, although implementation is likely to be longer-term and dependent on new river crossings and integration with existing infrastructure.

2.7.2 Entrances and Connection Points

Pedestrian access into the grazing compartment is provided through a series of **kissing gates**, located at:

- **Michaels Road (north):** accessed via a short flight of roadside steps



16. St Michaels Road entrance

- **Rye Street (west):** two entrances directly from the roadside

- **Cannons Mill Lane car park (south-west):** two gates leading through the grazing compartment boundary

Vehicular access for site management and grazing is available via a field gate at the Rye Street roundabout and a cattle access gate from Cannons Mill Lane.



17. Cattle Gate into main area

Across Cannons Mill Lane, a small footbridge provides pedestrian access into Grange Paddocks football fields, alongside an additional kissing gate and two field gates, one for vehicle entry and another leading into semi-natural grassland.

2.7.3 Parking and Site Furniture

A small, unsealed car park located at the end of Cannons Mill Lane, accessed from Rye Street, serves both Grange Paddocks Meadow and the adjacent Cannons Mill Lane land parcel. The car park is enclosed by a low bund, hedgerow and fencing, helping to limit visual impact within the wider floodplain landscape.



18. Carpark in Autumn

Litter bins are provided at key access points around the car park and site entrances, where most visitors enter and leave the site. No litter bins are provided within the central grazing compartment itself. This supports a “take litter home” approach, reducing disturbance within grazing areas and minimising risks to livestock while acknowledging the need for provision at destination points. Several benches are situated close to the car park, while a former picnic area requires relocation following fire damage and repeated flooding.

2.7.4 Grazing Infrastructure

Grazing infrastructure currently comprises of perimeter fencing, an internal corral for access, and a single trough located close to one of the woodland belts on the western edge. This boundary fencing consists of a mixture of typical stock fencing, barbed wire fencing and brick border wall. The condition of fencing varies across the site and requires periodic inspection to ensure it remains functional and appropriate for grazing. Access for the grazier is primarily through the vehicle gate leading from Cannons Mill Lane, with additional vehicle access available at Rye Street.

Four interpretation panels created as part of the Waterside Stortford wider projects are on the site. These are focused on some of the history of the site from its ownership, creation and current usage as a route through the river valley.

2.7.5 Interpretation and Signage

Interpretation and signage at Grange Paddocks Meadow is currently focused primarily on providing context about the site within the wider landscape. Four interpretation panels, installed through the *Waterside Stortford* project, provide information on the history, ownership and evolving use of the meadows as a key route within the Stort Valley. Positioned at prominent entry points, these panels support public understanding of the landscape and its historic relationship with the river, while helping to orient users moving through the wider Stort Valley greenspace network. Wayfinding within the site is largely informal, relying on established paths, desire lines and visual openness rather than extensive signage.



19. Example interpretation at Grange Paddocks Meadow

2.8 Community and Events

Grange Paddocks Meadow currently has no formal community group directly associated with its management and no regular programme of organised events. Community use of the area is primarily informal, with visitors making use of the open grassland, riverside routes and neighbouring facilities at Grange Paddocks for day-to-day recreation.

Although the site itself does not host a Friends group, there is an established Friends of Castle Park group based nearby, reflecting active community interest in greenspaces within Bishop's Stortford. To date, engagement relating specifically to the site has been limited, and there is no structured volunteer presence on site outside of the occasional CMS volunteer task day. CMS maintains several Friends groups elsewhere in the district, but none are currently focused on this location.

As new residential communities continue to grow around the Stort Valley, particularly around the Stortford Fields and the St Michael's Hurst developments, there is potential for increased local interest in the area. This creates an opportunity for future community involvement to develop naturally, potentially through strengthening connections with the existing Friends of Castle Park or by encouraging informal local stewardship. For now, community activity within the meadows remains largely informal and centred around walking, dog-walking and use of the wider riverside corridor.

2.9 Site Management and Sustainability

2.9.1 Site Management Structure

East Herts Council, as landowner, holds overall responsibility for implementing this Management Plan. Their role includes the strategic management of the site and ensuring that agreed actions are appropriately resourced, delivered and reviewed. This includes fulfilling their responsibilities as a riparian landowner, overseeing day-to-day grounds maintenance operations, managing budgets and procurement, and acting as the accountable body for external funding applications and claims. East Herts Council also ensures appropriate Member involvement, reporting and governance, and provides support to community and Friends groups to enable safe, effective and well-managed participation.

The Countryside Management Service (CMS) provides specialist technical advice and practical support, particularly in relation to nature conservation, access management and community engagement. CMS plays a key role in translating strategic objectives into on-the-ground delivery, and is responsible for preparing Greenspace Action Plans (GAPs) for the site, including partner engagement, monitoring and review. CMS also produces management specifications, oversees procurement and contract monitoring for conservation works, and delivers practical habitat management through both contractors and its mid-week volunteer

programme. In addition, CMS supports Friends groups through work programming, training, provision of tools, risk assessment and governance guidance, and assists with events, interpretation, publicity and wider communications relating to the site.

2.9.1.1 Environment Agency

The River Stort and the Bourne Brook are classified as main rivers, and the Environment Agency (EA) is the statutory authority responsible for their regulation and management. An [Environmental Permit](#) must be obtained from the EA prior to undertaking certain activities on, over, under or within 8m of the rivers.

2.9.2 Finance

Where specific projects or enhancement works are proposed, their implications for routine maintenance and long-term management will be carefully considered. The Management Plan is intended to balance day-to-day operational needs with strategic investment, ensuring that works remain deliverable and sustainable throughout the five-year plan period and beyond. External funding opportunities will be kept under regular review to support this approach and reduce pressure on revenue budgets where possible.

Several management activities at Grange Paddocks Meadow, particularly conservation grazing, make the site suitable for inclusion within an agri-environment agreement such as Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT). Such agreements can provide long-term financial support aligned with the objectives of this plan. In addition, the Countryside Stewardship Capital Grant scheme may be used independently to support infrastructure or habitat works during interim periods or between longer-term funding agreements.

2.9.3 Health and Safety

The park regularly receives safety and risk assessment surveys undertaken by EHC Parks and Open spaces team on an annual basis. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated annually and monitored through regular site inspections.

The trees within the Council's parks and opens spaces are inspected by a specialist Arboricultural Consultant as part of our Tree Risk Management Programme. Potential tree health issues are also identified through these inspections. These inspections assess structural condition and identify potential tree health or safety issues. Any works recommended for the site are delivered through a rolling programme, with priority informed by the level of risk identified during inspection.

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](#) and the accompanying FAQ [Operating Policies FAQs Leisure Parks - April 23](#).

2.9.4 Environmental Sustainability

East Herts District Council places environmental sustainability at the core of its operations, as set out in its Environmental Sustainability Action Plan ([Environmental Sustainability Action Plan | East Herts District Council](#)) and Climate Change Strategy ([Climate Change Strategy 2022- 2026](#)). The Council has committed to achieving net-zero operational emissions by 2030 and delivers its wider environmental aims through participation in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), which coordinates action on water, biodiversity, carbon reduction, transport and adaptation across the county. ([Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership](#))

Within its parks and open spaces, EHC seeks to minimise environmental impacts, improve habitat condition and promote sustainable land management. These aims support the Council's strategic priorities to reduce carbon emissions, protect natural environments, and contribute to nature recovery. Management decisions are informed by the HCCSP action plans, which guide local approaches to biodiversity enhancement and sustainable resource use.

The Council works closely with partners, including Hertfordshire County Council and county-wide specialist groups, to remain up to date on environmental issues such as tree health, biosecurity and sustainable maintenance practices. This partnership approach helps ensure that management of the district's greenspaces supports long-term environmental resilience and reflects current best practice.



20. Grange Paddocks Meadow in spring

3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

Aim

Already a vital part of the river for biodiversity and informal recreation, the primary management aims for Grange Paddocks Meadow look to further enhance and unlock its potential for both people and nature. By carefully balancing grazing, traditional land-management practices and targeted habitat management, and by exploring opportunities to improve watercourse function and restore natural floodplain processes, the intention is to support a landscape that continues to be a welcoming and attractive place for wildlife and visitors alike.

Objectives

A A Welcoming place

Aim: Ensure the site is safe, attractive, and clearly welcoming to all visitors.

Objectives:

- A1 Maintain clear access routes, signage, and entrances.
- A2 Install new interpretation to inform about grazing as a management tool on the site.
- A3 Create new picnic area within the Cannons Mill Lane open space.

B Healthy, Safe and Secure

Aim: Provide a safe and comfortable environment for visitors while protecting wildlife.

Objectives:

- B1 Carry out routine safety inspections of paths, trees, river edges, and infrastructure.
- B2 Promote responsible dog-walking, exercising and recreation to minimise disturbance to sensitive areas.

C Clean and Well Maintained

Aim: Maintain all habitats and site features to a high standard of care.

Objectives:

- C1 Implement seasonal meadow management, scrub control, and bank-side vegetation work to ensure entrances, sight lines and paths across the site are clear.

- C2 Ensure litter bins, paths, bridges, and access points remain in good working order.
- C3 Provide a clean, litter-free, and well-presented landscape through active response to antisocial behaviour and fly tipping.

D Sustainability

Aim: To manage the site sustainably by minimising environmental impact, using resources efficiently, and supporting long-term resilience in response to a changing climate.

- D1 Seek external funding to assist in the viability of ongoing management and capital projects
- D2 Reduce fuel use, chemical inputs and carbon emissions in the ongoing management of the site in line with the EHC's [Environmental Sustainability Action Plan](#).
- D3 Reuse arisings on site where possible and remove cut material selectively to balance waste reduction with biodiversity and soil-nutrient objectives.
- D4 Integrate climate adaptation into all management decisions, ensuring the site can respond to increased rainfall, hotter summers and changing seasonal conditions.
- D5 Support sustainable public use by promoting access on foot and by bike and encouraging responsible use of the greenspace in line with wider East Herts environmental and health objectives.

E Biodiversity, Conservation and Heritage

Aim: To conserve and enhance the site's biodiverse floodplain habitats, safeguarding protected species while respecting the area's historic function as a managed river valley landscape.

- E1 Carry out low density summer grazing with native rare breed cattle across the meadows.
- E2 Undertake a partial summer conservation meadow cut with removal of arisings to reduce nutrient levels.
- E3 Carry out summer sheep grazing on small semi-natural grassland area adjacent to the Bourne Brook.
- E4 Investigate the feasibility and funding potential of enhancing the river corridor around the Bourne Brook through natural flood management techniques.

- E5 Further investigate the feasibility of enhancing the flood plain meadows of the site by partial reintegration with the river systems.
- E6 Retain uncut refuge areas of grassland around the river margins as overwintering habitat.
- E7 Manage historic trees and pollards through traditional techniques that contribute to both ecological and cultural continuity.
- E8 Carry out light thinning of woodland blocks on rotation to improve canopy and structural diversity. Temporary cattle exclusion measures to allow for natural regeneration.
- E9 Retain deadwood features on mature trees where safe to do, with fallen deadwood in woodland blocks
- E10 Maintain riparian buffers and fencing to protect water vole habitat
- E11 Monitor and control invasive species across the site or injurious weeds where they become an issue.
- E12 Monitor habitats and key species periodically to inform ongoing management.
- E13 Consider the site's historic context when planning new infrastructure, signage or access improvements through refreshed interpretation.

F Community Involvement

Aim: Encourage active engagement and stewardship from the local community.

Objectives:

- F1 Facilitate volunteering opportunities in habitat management, stock checking, wildlife surveys, and citizen-science recording (e.g., iRecord, Butterfly Conservation transects).
- F2 Support community events, guided walks, and interpretation that increase awareness of the site's wildlife and habitats.
- F3 Seek to expand the scope of the Friends of Castle Park along the River Stort to include Grange Paddocks Meadow.

G Marketing

Aim: Promote the site's value and ensure visitors understand its management and ecological importance.

Objectives:

- G1 Provide clear interpretation about the site's habitats, wildlife, and management approach.

- G2 Share updates via council or community communication channels to highlight seasonal features, habitat works, and biodiversity achievements.
- G3 Establish the site as part of the wider Stort Valley ecological network, reinforcing its landscape-scale significance

4.0 ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

4.1 A Welcoming Place

While a key natural open space for the area the site has remained largely unchanged for many years with its location on the outskirts of Bishops Stortford giving it a rural setting. While the expansion of the nearby developments brings additional pressures to the site, it maintains this countryside feel. The site will continue to be managed as an open, welcoming greenspace where people are comfortable to explore, while highlighting its ecological values with emphasis on enhancing it into a place that feels cared for, easy to navigate, and inclusive, without losing its natural floodplain character.

Access points into the site will be kept clear with repairs carried out at key locations where the surface has worn. New gated entry points will be created to address the greater need for nearby residents and engaging with wider local stakeholders and landowners to form better links to the wider community. Paths will continue to be maintained and kept clear to guide users safely across the grazing areas and through the Cannons Mill Lane green space. Where the Bourne Brook separates the site in two in the wettest winter periods, funding will be sought for a small footbridge to enable year round use.



21. Broad grassland crossed by well-used walking routes

Where funding allows, further clear, friendly and informative interpretation panels and signage will be installed, enhancing site-specific information provision and helping visitors understand grazing, seasonal change and on-site habitat management. All signage and interpretation should be maintained to a good standard and regularly inspected for signs of damage. When funding can be secured a new picnic area will be introduced in a more suitable, resilient location, improving visitor comfort and enjoyment while avoiding areas vulnerable to flooding and long-term damage.

4.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure

Visitors to Grange Paddocks Meadow should feel safe and able to all areas of the enjoy the site at all times. It is a popular asset with local residents and walkers but has in the past seen areas of misuse and antisocial behaviour. With the increased number of visitors using the site these issues can be reduced by encouraging reporting of damaged property, concerns about grazing cattle and any anti-social activity.

Routine inspections of paths, entrances, trees and site infrastructure will be carried out to identify potential hazards and ensure that defects are addressed promptly. Tree safety will be managed through a risk-based approach with periodic surveys and reactive works where necessary, balancing public safety with the retention of valuable mature trees and habitat features. River edges, grazing areas and informal paths will be monitored to ensure that access remains appropriate and well defined.

Vegetation management will be undertaken to maintain clear sightlines along main routes and access points, supporting safe movement through the site while avoiding unnecessary disturbance to habitats. Grazing infrastructure, fencing and gates will be checked regularly to ensure they remain secure and clearly understood by visitors.

4.3 Clean and Well Maintained

The site will be maintained to a consistently good standard that reflects with its usage and need to ensure it feels cared for, attractive and well managed throughout the year. The site is visited and inspected by EHC officers, CMS officers and grounds maintenance contractor operatives throughout the year, with an increase in frequency as management activity on the site expands.

Routine maintenance activities will focus on keeping the landscape tidy and functional, while allowing natural processes and seasonal change to remain visible and appreciated. Site condition will be monitored on an ongoing basis, with management approaches reviewed and adjusted where necessary to ensure positive and proportionate outcomes.

Regular litter picking, bin emptying and minor repairs will ensure paths, entrances and open areas remain clean and welcoming. Grassland, scrub and bankside vegetation will be managed through planned seasonal work to support biodiversity while preventing areas from becoming overgrown or untidy. Infrastructure such as paths, bridges, fencing and interpretation will be monitored, cleaned, and repaired as required to maintain both access and appearance.

4.4 Sustainability

Management of the site will be carried out in a sustainable, utilising natural processes where possible that minimise environmental impact while supporting long-term resilience in the face of climate change.

Natural regeneration of areas of marginal scrub and woodland will be prioritised for restocking of trees where possible as a low cost, dynamic low risk method resulting in plants adapted to local conditions. Where replanting is required or where new standards are desired then native, locally appropriate trees will be selected from certified nurseries that supply UK grown, biosecure and pest free trees.



22. Traditional hedgelaying with replanting alongside the Bourne Brook

Funding the grazing, maintenance and routine management of the site has recently been funded directly by East Herts Council. Previously the site was included in part of a wider Stewardship agreement alongside Pishiobury Park, which provided revenue funding supporting conservation grazing. It is the intention to bring the site back into a new Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier agreement which will provide revenue payments to support grazing and make available capital options for fencing, grazing infrastructure, interpretation and other restoration works.

Additional external funding should be sought to ensure the viability and financial sustainability of actions within this plan without putting strain onto limited council budgets.

4.5 Biodiversity, Conservation and Heritage

4.5.1 Grassland Restoration and management

The site has a significant potential as a key grassland habitat within the landscape, both due to its largely unmodified nature and its proximity to the river. Management of the grassland here will be delivered through a clearly defined programme of grazing, cutting, nutrient reduction and monitoring, with the aim of improving habitat quality and maintaining a well-used public green space.

Conservation grazing will remain the primary management mechanism across the main meadow and, for now, the small field adjacent to Cannons Mill Lane Open Space. Grazing of the meadow will be undertaken annually using traditional English Longhorn cattle, selected for their suitability in a publicly accessible landscape and their effectiveness in conservation grazing. The second smaller field does not suit cattle and instead will use a hardy sheep breed instead. Stocking densities will be kept deliberately low, with grazing typically taking place between late spring and early autumn, subject to ground conditions and weather. Grazing levels and duration will be reviewed each year to ensure that soil compaction and poaching are avoided. Grazing infrastructure, fencing and access points will be maintained to allow safe coexistence between livestock and the public.



23. Longhorn Native Rare Breed Cattle – Well liked for their calm nature and grazing behaviour

Grazing alone has not proven sufficient to address the ongoing dominance of competitive grasses under current nutrient conditions. To support and strengthen the benefits of grazing, a targeted cut-and-collect regime will therefore be implemented with support from Countryside Stewardship funding. Each year, approximately one hectare of higher ground, where the former drainage ditches do not prevent access to machinery, will be cut during mid-summer, with arisings removed from site. This approach will be used specifically to reduce soil nutrient levels, weaken vigorous grass growth and create conditions more favourable for longer-term botanical improvement. Cut areas will be rotated annually so that different parts of the meadow are treated in successive years, avoiding uniform management and allowing a gradual, cumulative reduction in fertility across the grassland. To compliment this the introduction of yellow rattle, used sparingly, in the drier, less frequently inundated parts of the floodplain will further reduce grass dominance and encourage wildflower diversity.



24. Nutrient rich but species poor grassland

Uncut wildlife refuge areas will be deliberately retained along the banks of the River Stort to maintain habitat continuity for invertebrates, reptiles and overwintering fauna. These refuge areas are fenced away from the cattle to prevent livestock pressure and managed to prevent their transition into woodland working with volunteers. These locations will be rotated as part of the overall management approach to

prevent scrub encroachment into the wider grassland while ensuring that undisturbed habitat is always present somewhere within the meadow. All scrub management works will be undertaken during the winter period to minimise disturbance to wildlife and avoid conflict with grazing operations.

The control of injurious weeds will be carried out as a routine component of grassland management to ensure livestock safety and statutory compliance. Annual pre-grazing inspections will be undertaken to identify the presence and extent of Common Ragwort, Spear Thistle and Creeping Thistle. Where dense stands of ragwort present a risk to grazing livestock, mechanical control will be applied. Weed management will be proportionate to balance the known biological benefits these plants can have for species with the need for animal welfare.

Grassland condition will be reviewed bi-annually through a rapid grassland assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of grazing intensity, cutting extent and weed control measures. Monitoring will focus on sward structure, dominance of competitive grasses, levels of injurious weeds, and use of the grassland by wildlife such as birds, insects and other wildlife. Findings from this review will be used to inform adjustments to grazing levels, cutting locations and timing in subsequent years.

4.5.2 Woodland Thinning and Standards

Woodland within Grange Paddocks Meadow will be managed through a programme of selective thinning to improve long-term woodland health, increase structural diversity and enhance habitat value, while retaining the wooded character and shelter provided by these blocks.

Thinning will be light and targeted, removing approximately 20-30% of trees and focused on areas where tree density is limiting woodland structure or where even-aged growth has led to a closed canopy. Works will prioritise removal of suppressed, poorly formed or competing stems to improve light to the woodland floor and encourage natural regeneration. This approach supports greater variety of understorey plants, shrubs and ground flora and improves habitat conditions for birds, invertebrates and small mammals.

There will be a requirement to restrict grazing from some of these areas to allow the understory to develop free of trampling and browsing pressure by cattle. Deer are also present in the landscape in significant numbers and with their year-round presence are a factor that alongside cattle will hinder regeneration. Installing fencing along key parts of the woodland will prevent cattle browsing new growth while allowing them shade and shelter. Further monitoring of regeneration in these areas to assess deer pressure outline if other temporary fencing is also required.



25. Cattle sheltering under the dense canopy

The site supports a number of veteran and mature trees which are a defining feature of the landscape and reflect the historic management of the floodplain, with several originating as former pollards before being allowed to develop as standards. These trees will be managed in line with advice from the Woodland Trust and the Ancient Tree Forum as long-term heritage and ecological assets with retention prioritised wherever it is safe to do so. Management interventions will be minimal and sympathetic, aimed at prolonging tree life and maintaining key features such as cavities, deadwood and complex crown structure. Standing and fallen deadwood will be retained *in situ* unless it presents an unacceptable public safety risk or obstructs essential management operations, recognising its importance for specialist invertebrates, fungi and microorganisms and its contribution to the site's natural character.



26. Willow Pollards along the bank of the River Stort

Where necessary, and with careful consideration of visual impact and access requirements, veteran trees may be fenced around their dripline (the area beneath the outermost extent of the canopy). This will reduce soil compaction, prevent damage to roots, and allow natural aging and decay processes to occur safely while creating undisturbed habitat for wildlife. Fenced areas may require occasional management to maintain grassland diversity and prevent nutrient-loving or ruderal species from becoming dominant. Where appropriate, this light-touch management may be undertaken with support from local volunteer groups.

Significant veteran and mature trees will be identified and, where appropriate, submitted for inclusion within the [Ancient Tree Inventory](#), helping to raise awareness of their ecological, cultural and historic value and ensuring they are recognised in future planning and management decisions.

Small numbers of future standards will be planted to replace those reaching full maturity, protected with robust parkland style guards to prevent impact from cattle, and ensure that there will be significant trees on site in perpetuity.



27. Mature Oak within the main grassland area

4.5.3 Floodplain and Waterbodies

Rivers and floodplain features at Grange Paddocks Meadow will be managed using a low-intervention approach, with East Herts Council responsible for land management to the mid-point in the river as riparian landowner, and the Environment Agency retaining regulatory responsibility for the main river. East Herts Council will continue to manage grazing, vegetation and access in a way that protects river margins and associated habitats, while any works affecting river channels, flows or flood risk remain subject to Environment Agency control and consent.

The River Stort lies largely separate from day-to-day land management activity on site, with its influence on the floodplain expressed primarily through historic flooding patterns, soil moisture conditions and nutrient movement rather than frequent or visible inundation. Livestock are excluded from the river corridor through fencing, and this arrangement will be retained to protect bank tops from trampling and compaction, reduce erosion risk and allow marginal vegetation to

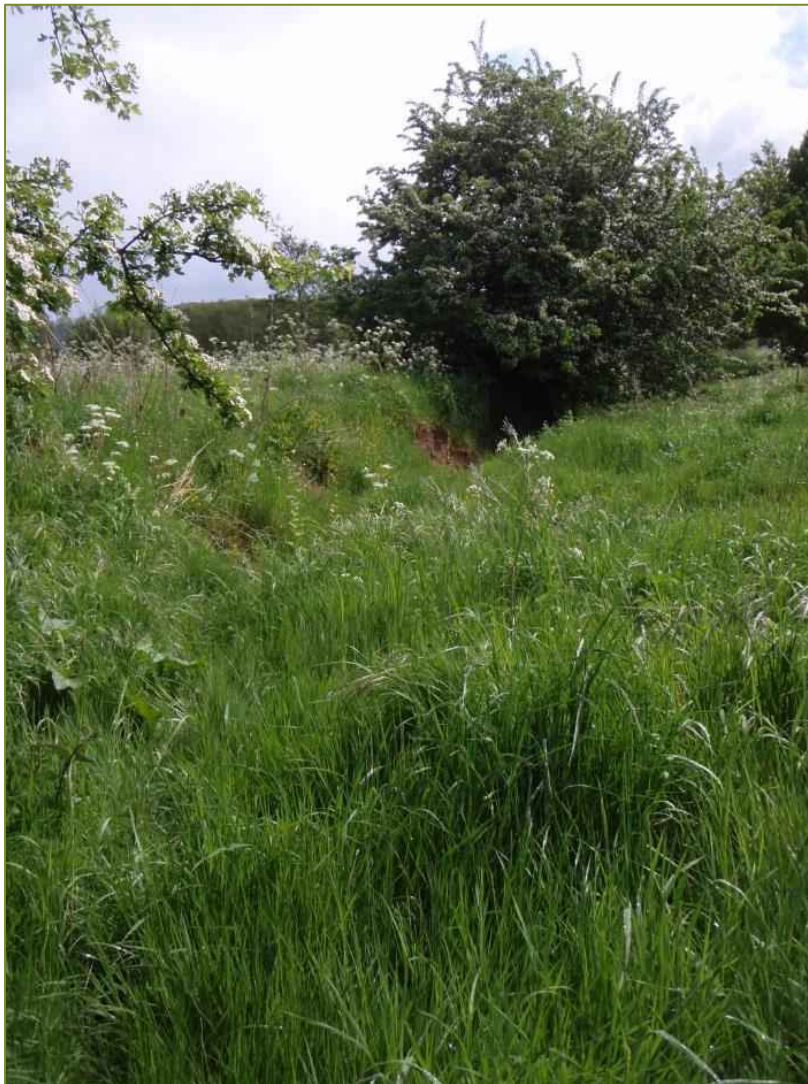


28. Cattle crossing the Bourne Brook in summer

develop. This vegetation provides important habitat for Water Vole and other wetland species, while ensuring that riverbank stability is maintained.

The Bourne Brook, by contrast, is a smaller and more modified watercourse that is seasonally dry for much of the year, with flows typically limited to wetter winter periods or short-lived events. The channel is currently narrow and incised in places, and where dry it is used intermittently by grazing cattle as a crossing point or dust-bathing area. At present, no formal management of the brook channel takes place. Stocking levels for grazing will be maintained at appropriate numbers to avoid unnecessary disturbance where it continues to be part of the grazing regime.

Elsewhere across the meadow, former floodplain features such as shallow ditches and depressions will continue to be managed as part of the wider grassland system. These features may hold water during wetter winters, although this is often subtle and expressed through changes in vegetation rather than standing water. These areas are managed through grazing in the same way as the surrounding meadow, with no active drainage or enhancement works currently undertaken.



29. Old drainage ditch with scrub growing within it

Alongside this pragmatic, low-intervention approach, there is an opportunity to explore longer-term enhancements to floodplain function at Grange Paddocks Meadow including potential reconnection and re-naturalisation of the Bourne Brook. These investigations would consider how carefully designed changes could enhance habitat function, improve floodplain resilience and strengthen ecological connectivity, while continuing to support the meadow's existing uses.

Potential options that may be explored include working to restore the site's existing drainage features, particularly where historic ditches already show seasonal wetting or lie close to the River Stort. This may include assessing whether some ditches could temporarily hold or receive water during high-flow events, or whether reconnection to historic floodplain depressions could allow seasonal wetting. In addition, naturalistic measures to soften or stabilise sections of the currently incised Bourne Brook may be explored. Any such considerations would be developed to work with natural processes and improve habitat function, while ensuring that public access and day-to-day use of the meadow are not adversely affected.



30. The Bourne Brook in spate

Any progress in this area would begin with feasibility work, including hydrological assessment, ecological appraisal and consideration of how any changes might interact with existing grazing, public access and downstream flood risk. This would be undertaken in partnership with relevant organisations, including the Environment Agency, and would be dependent on securing appropriate external funding.

Public engagement would form a key part of this process, ensuring that local users and stakeholders are informed and involved before any options are developed further. The outcome of such investigations may be that no intervention is appropriate or necessary, and current management continues unchanged.

4.6 Community Engagement

Community engagement at the site is currently informal, with the greenspace used primarily for everyday activities such as walking, dog-walking, birdwatching and passing through the river-valley landscape. This makes it a key resource for activities that enhance health and wellbeing, helping people connect with the nature and build familiarity with wildlife, and is a pleasant contrast with the more structured and formal Castle Park downriver.

EHC and CMS will seek to build on this connection by bringing more opportunities for knowledge-sharing and hands-on involvement onto the site. CMS-led volunteer activities, such as conservation tasks, habitat management days and potential Health Walks will help explain how the site is managed and why specific approaches are used, and provide opportunity for direct engagement with the public on site.

There will also be opportunities to increase practical volunteering, including the recruitment and training of livestock stock-checkers, helping support grazing operations while giving volunteers a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the site. CMS will provide oversight, training and support for volunteers, ensuring activities remain safe, inclusive and beneficial to both people and wildlife.



31. Volunteers at work

There is an active and well-established Friends group operating at the nearby Castle Park, which plays an important role in supporting community involvement and stewardship. While Grange Paddocks Meadow does not currently have a dedicated Friends group, there is potential in the future either to explore the formation of a site-specific group or, if there is interest, to consider whether the remit of the existing Friends of Castle Park could be extended along the river corridor to include this site. Friends groups play a valuable role in supporting council land management by helping with monitoring, events, light maintenance, volunteering coordination and

acting as advocates for sites within their communities. Any expansion of involvement would be gradual and responsive, ensuring it complements existing arrangements and reflects community appetite.

Engagement will also be supported through participation in wider initiatives such as Love Parks Week, providing opportunities to celebrate the site alongside other East Herts green spaces. Inclusion in such events helps raise awareness of the site's value, showcase ongoing management, and encourage new audiences to take an interest in caring for local green spaces.

Volunteer-led citizen-science and wildlife monitoring will be encouraged where there is local interest, helping to build knowledge of species and habitats across the site. This may include informal recording of butterflies, birds, invertebrates and river features, with data shared through established recording schemes. Such activity will support local and county biological records, inform future management, and provide people with a meaningful way to contribute to the understanding and care of the site's wildlife.

4.7 Marketing

Information about the site will be shared primarily through East Herts communication channels, including council web pages, local noticeboards, community networks, social media and e-news, and will be supported by CMS social media and e-news where appropriate. These channels will also be used to keep people informed about significant management works, projects and changes on site. This approach will be complemented by new and updated on-site interpretation funded through the stewardship agreement, helping visitors understand the reasons behind land-management activities such as grazing, meadow cutting and river restoration.

Where appropriate, East Herts will work in partnership with local councils, community groups and other key stakeholders to share information and encourage positive engagement with the site.

The management plan itself will act as an important engagement and communication tool, clearly setting out how and why the site is managed and providing transparency around decision-making and future ambitions. Made available through East Herts Council channels and shared with relevant stakeholders, the plan will help build understanding, support informed discussion and encourage a growing sense of shared ownership as the site continues to evolve.



32. The grassland of Grange Paddocks Meadow

5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

5.1 ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.01	Maintain mown paths through the site	A1, C2	March - October	EHC	EHC	GM contractor	-		
0.02	Maintain all pedestrian entrance points.	A1, B1	As required	EHC	EHC	GM contractor	-		
0.03	Maintenance of site furniture and signage including interpretation panels	A1, C2, G1	As required	EHC	EHC	GM contractor	-		
0.04	Undertake periodic tree safety surveys and carry out reactive works if required	B1, B2	October–February or as required	EHC	External contractor	GM contractor	-		
0.05	Inspect the carpark condition, including surface, bund and boundary vegetation.	B1, C2	Spring/ Autumn	EHC	EHC	Officer Time	-		
0.06	Encourage reporting of damaged property, concerns around grazing and antisocial activity	B3, F1	Ongoing	EHC	EHC/ CMS	Officer Time	-		
0.07	Undertake core site maintenance including litter picking, emptying of bins, repairs to fencing and park infrastructure.	A2, C2	Ongoing	EHC	EHC	GM contractor	-		
0.08	Monitor condition of parkland tree guards.	C2, E6	March/ April	EHC	EHC/ CMS	Officer Time	-		
0.09	Carry out pre-grazing ragwort inspection and mechanical control of dense stands	B2, E10	March/ April	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Volunteers	-		
0.10	Undertake seasonal grazing with traditional cattle	E1, E2	May - October	EHC	External Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£2000		

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.11	Carry out biannual rapid grassland condition assessment to monitor effectiveness of grazing regime and cut and collect.	E2, E11	June/ July	CMS	CMS	Officer Time	-		
0.12	Monitor for invasive plants (Himalayan balsam, knotweed) around watercourses and control if needed.	C3, E10	June - August	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Volunteers/ GM contractor	-		
0.13	Scrub management to limit encroachment into wider grassland areas	E2, E7	October- February	CMS	CMS	Volunteers	-		
0.14	Undertake promotion of the site as an asset within the Bishops Stortford River corridor.	G2, G3	Spring/ Summer	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Officer Time	-		
1.15	Liaise with Bishop's Stortford Town Council on their ambitions to create a new cycle route through the site	D5, A1	Ongoing	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Officer Time	-		
0.16	Review previous year's action plan	E11, D4	January/ February	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Officer Time	-		

Task Responsibility

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

Grange Paddocks Meadow

Greenspace Action Plan 2026-2031

Annual Action Plan

Strim and maintain site entrances ☐

Control scrub encroachment in grassland areas ☐

Carry out summer grazing with traditional cattle (May - Oct) ☐

Monitor barrier across Bourne Brook for damage or misuse ☐

Maintain parkland tree guards around mature and veteran trees ☐

Monitor grassland diversity and adjust grazing regime as appropriate ☐

Arrange cut and lift if unable to be grazed ☐

Hand pull ragwort if abundance would restrict grazing of site ☐

Mow main paths across both sides of site if not worn by natural usage ☐

Monitor river for Himalayan Balsam and control if present ☐

Strim and maintain site entrances ☐

Inspect carpark condition, surface, bund and strim boundary vegetation ☐

Cut and lift of seeded areas ☐

Legend

☐ Grange Meadows Boundary	Site Furniture
☐ Cannons Mill Lane Boundary	
Habitats	☐ Bench
☐ Amenity grass	☐ Interpretation
☐ Plantation	☐ Pedestrian gate
☐ Grassland	☐ Tree
☐ Ditch	☐ Vehicle gate
☐ Sealed surface	☐ Water trough
☐ Marginal vegetation	
☐ Scrub	
☐ Wet woodland	
☐ Woodland	
☐ River	
☐ Hedgerow	

Annual Management

Maintain pedestrian access points	☐
Maintain interpretation and signage	☐
Maintain site furniture	☐
Core maintenance: Litter picking, emptying of litter bins, fencing repairs	☐
Undertake periodic tree safety surveys and reactive works	☐
Encourage visitors to report damaged property, grazing concerns, antisocial behaviour	☐
Seek external funding opportunities	☐
Monitor condition of parkland tree fencing and repair as needed	☐
Carry out pre-grazing checks	☐
Promote the site at events and via wider social media communications	☐
Review previous years action plan	☐

Scale @ A4

1:2,500

Date

Feb 2026

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5.2 YEAR 1 2026 - 2028

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.01	Secure Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier funding for grazing the site with rare breed native cattle and restoring the floodplain meadow	D1, E1, E4	March - June	CMS/ EHC	CMS/ EHC	Officer Time	-		
1.02	Re-establish grazing of the small field of rough grassland off Cannons Mill Lane with sheep	E2, E7	May - September	EHC	External Contractor	Internal Budget	£600		
1.03	Cut and collect 1ha area of higher ground away from drainage ditch system	E2	July	EHC	External Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£1000		
1.04	Carry out investigation into feasibility and funding options for wetland project	E3, E4	Ongoing	CMS/ EHC	CMS/ EHC	External Funding	£20000		
1.05	Carry out 30% thin on the wooded areas of Cannons Mill Lane	E7	October-February	CMS	External Contractor	Internal Budget	£3000		
1.06	Install a new gate alongside the field gate by the cattle corral	A1, B1	February/ March	EHC	External Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£600		
1.07	Install a small footbridge across a section of the Bourne brook	A1, E12	Summer	EHC/ CMS	External Contractor	External Funding	£2500		
1.08	Support the ambition to expand the work of the Friends of Castle Park to include the river corridor up to and including Grange Paddocks Meadow	F1, F2	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer Time	-		
1.10	Design and install grazing themed interpretation panel obtained through grant funding	G1, E12	Summer/ Autumn	CMS	CMS	Countryside Stewardship	£2000		
1.11	Wildflower seeding of 0.25ha of amenity grassland along Cannons Mill Lane	E2	October	CMS	External Contractor	Internal Budget	£1000		
0.12	Engage with residents to train and recruit stock checkers	F1	March/ April	CMS	CMS	Officer Time	-		

Task Responsibility

Blue square	District led	} Officer/ Contractor delivered
Red square	CMS led	
Yellow square	District led	} Volunteer delivered
Orange square	CMS led	

Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks and create cattle exclusion areas (yr2)

Cut and collect 1ha of grassland in mid-July (yr 2)

Cut and collect 1ha of grassland in mid-July (yr 3, 4, 5)

Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks and create cattle exclusion areas (yr2)

Create new picnic area (yr2)

Regraze the small sheep field (yr 2, 3)

Plant future Oak and Willow Standards and protect with parkland fencing (yr 2)

Repollard a small number of the mature Willow for long term health (yr 2)

Grange Paddocks Meadow

Greenspace Action Plan 2026-2031

Year 2-5 Action Plan

Legend

Red line	Grange Meadows Boundary	Site Furniture	Pink square	Bench
Blue line	Cannons Mill Lane Boundary		Blue circle with 'i'	Interpretation
Habitats			Red circle with dot	Pedestrian gate
Light green	Amenity grass		Green circle	Tree
White with diagonal lines	Plantation		Orange square	Vehicle gate
Light green	Grassland		Grey square	Water trough
Blue hatched	Ditch			
Grey	Sealed surface			
Light green with dots	Marginal vegetation			
Dark green	Scrub			
Dark green	Wet woodland			
Dark green	Woodland			
Blue	River			
Green wavy line	Hedgerow			

Source further funding based on outcome of wetland feasibility studies

Tree Planting aftercare

Monitor and repair exclosures as needed

Update and monitor for Countryside Stewardship requirements

Write updated GAP

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Countryside
Management
Service



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5.3 YEAR 2 2027 - 2028

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Cut and collect 1ha area of higher ground away from drainage ditch system.	E2	July	EHC	External Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£1000		
2.2	Re-pollard a small number of mature Willows	E6	October-February	EHC/CMS	External Contractor	Internal Budget	£500 – 800 per tree		
2.3	Plant future Oak and Willow standards and protect with parkland fencing	E6, E7	December/January	EHC	EHC/CMS	Internal Budget	£300		
2.4	Seek further funding based on outcome of wetland feasibility study	D1, E3	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer Time	-		
2.5	Create new picnic area within Cannons Mill Lane open space	A1, C2	Spring/Summer	EHC/CMS	External Contractor	Internal Funding	£3000		
2.6	Carry out 30% thin of the woodland copses in Grange Paddock Meadows and fence target areas	E7	October-February	EHC/CMS	External Contractor	Internal Funding	£3000		

5.4 YEAR 3-5 2028-2031

Ref. no.	Action	Obj. Ref.	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Cut and collect approximately 1ha area of higher ground away from drainage ditch system. (Year 3, 4, 5)	E2	July	EHC	External Contractor	Countryside Stewardship	£3000		
3.2	Subject to agreement and funding, deliver wetland project (year 3)	E3, E4	Summer/ Autumn	CMS	External Contractor	TBC	TBC		
3.3	Tree planting aftercare (year 3, 4)	E6	Spring/ Summer	CMS	CMS	Volunteers	-		
3.4	Carry out any further actions required by funding through Countryside Stewardship	E1, E4	Ongoing	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Countryside Stewardship	-		
3.5	Undertake review of 5-year plan (year 5)	E11	July - September	EHC/ CMS	EHC/ CMS	Officer Time	-		
3.6	Write new greenspace action plan 2032-2037 (year 5)	E11, D4	October - December	EHC/ CMS	CMS	Officer Time	-		

Task Responsibility

Blue square	District led	} Officer/ Contractor delivered
Red square	CMS led	
Yellow square	District led	} Volunteer delivered
Orange square	CMS led	

Grange Paddocks Meadow

Greenspace Action Plan 2026-2031

Year 1 Action Plan (2026)

Legend

Red line	Grange Meadows Boundary	Site Furniture	Pink square	Bench
Blue line	Cannons Mill Lane Boundary		Blue circle with 'i'	Interpretation
Light green	Amenity grass	Habitats	Red circle with 'x'	Pedestrian gate
Purple line	Plantation		Green circle	Tree
Light green	Grassland		Orange square	Vehicle gate
Blue line	Ditch		Grey square	Water trough
Grey	Sealed surface			
Light green	Marginal vegetation			
Dark green	Scrub			
Dark green	Wet woodland			
Dark green	Woodland			
Blue line	River			
Green line	Hedgerow			

Install a second trough

Design and install additional Grazing Interpretation

Cut and lift 1ha of grassland in mid- July

Liaise with Environment Agency for installation of small footbridge

Install new pedestrian kissing gate

Re-graze the small sheep field

Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks

Repair uneven surfaces around entrances

Carry out 30% thin of woodland blocks

Wildflower seed open grassland area

Investigate inclusion into Countryside Stewardship scheme

Seek funding for a feasibility study into reconnecting the river to wetland features

Liaise with Town Council around their ambition to create a new cycle route

Support Friends of Castle Park to expand scope along the wider river corridor

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6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

6.1 General prescriptions relevant to all woodland management operations

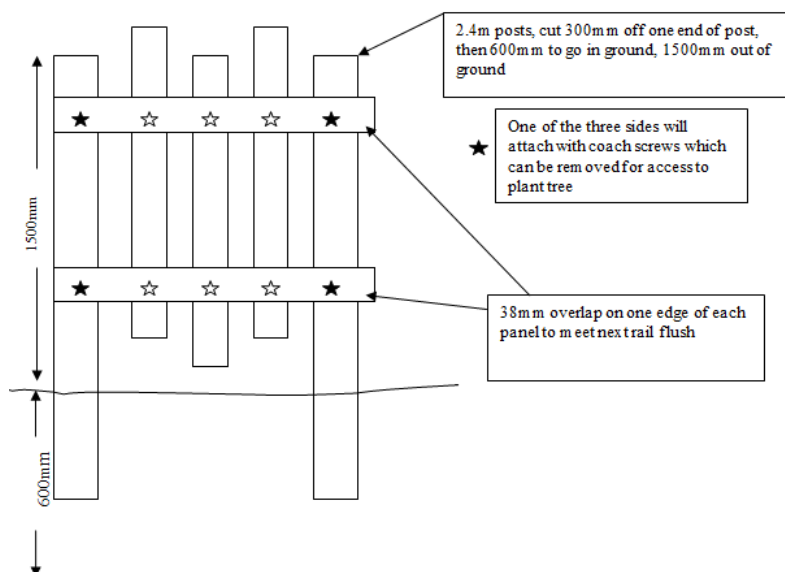
- **Habitat Retention** Significant veteran/ specimen trees to be retained and managed sensitively, in line with advice provided by the Woodland Trust and the Ancient Tree Forum.
- **Retain standing and fallen dead wood.** Review all available options to ensure that retained standing deadwood is safe, prioritising wherever possible options which minimise the requirement for tree surgery, such as excluding public access (via fencing), relocating footpath/ benches etc.
- **Visitor Safety** - Members of the public should be kept a safe distance from active tree works with signs, and/or, banksmen. Access routes may require temporary closure.
- **Timing** - Unless otherwise stated, all vegetation management work will be undertaken between 1st September and 28th February.

6.2 Tree Planting

- **Purpose** - Tree planting is to be considered when replacing tree losses across the site and for long term tree cover.
- **Method** - Plants will be supplied to conform to BS3936 and BS8545. Plants are to be grown in the UK and to be of UK provenance, sourced from Seed Provenance Zone 402 (with Zones 405 and 406 also acceptable) and below Elevation Zone of 300 m.
- The meadow should be planted with the following species; oak, willow and hornbeam.
- New plants are to be protected by 1.2 m tree guards and stakes and by parkland tree guards where necessary (see below).
- Spread a 1m diameter circle of bark chip mulch (at least a year old) at depth not less than 50mm around each tree.
- **Future management** - Planting area to be kept weed free within 0.5m of each plant, and stakes and guards to be maintained.
- Mulch to be reapplied as required.

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.



6.3 Thinning works

- Systematic - Remove majority of poorly formed/suppressed, breaking up uniformed grid structure
- CMS volunteers to remove smaller stems for access prior to works, removing all (poorly formed and suppressed stems) with hand tools: cut into short lengths and stack in habitat piles
- Officers to identify and mark any larger stems for removal by chainsaw > suitable for Glendale to implement (external contractor if not)
- Timber products:
 - Extract any quality material, if possible to market to local merchants. Retain 30% of timber as deadwood habitat.
 - Smaller material to be chipped and used as required 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 and reduce “corridor effect”

6.4 Annual cut and lift – “Conservation cut”

- The mapped areas should be cut once between late June and the end of August wherever possible, the timing in this period will ideally be changed from one year to the next. This should replace regular, short interval amenity mowing in the cannons mill lane area.
- The grass should be cut using a tractor and topper (or pedestrian tractor and Allen scythe for harder-to-access areas) to a sward height of 40mm-60mm. Using machinery such as flails should be avoided as this obliterates the grass. Volunteer groups may cut grassy areas using a scythe or heavy-duty strimmer.
- The cut grass should be left for a period of 4-7 days to allow drying and seed dispersal.
- The arisings should then be lined using a tractor and tedder, collected with a baler then removed from site. Smaller versions of these implements may be mounted on pedestrian tractors or volunteer parties may rake up the arisings and pitch them into a trailer.
- In some circumstances the arising “hay” may be useful to local farmers however due to the likely presence of contaminants (dog muck) the bales should be disposed of as green waste.

6.5 Wildflower seeding of amenity grassland:

- Best carried out in the autumn
- Approx. area to be seeded 250m²:
- Prepare suitable seed bed by scarification to create approx. 60-70% bare soil
- Sow pure wildflower seed mixture at approx. 1g/m²
 - 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

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Engagement Summary

7.1.1 Introduction

A single engagement period was held from XXXX, which will enable stakeholders to comment on the details within the plan and the proposed management actions in full.

7.1.2 Engagement Feedback

7.1.3 Stakeholder List

- Relevant Hertfordshire County Council councillors
- Relevant East Herts Council councillors
- Relevant Hertfordshire County Council officers
- Relevant East Herts Council officers
- Bishops Stortford Town Council
- Friends of Castle Park
- Bishops Stortford Waterside
- Rights of Way
- Hertfordshire Ecology
- Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record
- Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
- Hertfordshire Natural History Society
- Butterfly Conservation Hertfordshire and Middlesex Branch
- The Ramblers Association
- River Stort/ Lea catchment partnerships
- Open Spaces Society
- Environment Agency
- Natural England (Ref CSHT)
- The Land Trust at Bat Willow Hurst Park
- Local Residents

7.2 Policy Context

7.2.1 East Herts Council Strategies

7.2.1.1 [*Climate Change Strategy 2022–2026*](#)

- Sets out how East Herts will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate change, and restore natural environments.
- Applies to council operations, planning, communities, and partnerships.
- Supported by themed action plans and funding programmes.

7.2.1.2 [Environmental Sustainability Action Plan](#)

- Delivery document supporting the Climate Change Strategy.
- Covers:
 - Council operations and estates
 - Use of regulatory and planning powers
 - Influencing residents, businesses, and partners
- Updated and monitored annually.

7.2.1.3 [Corporate Plan / LEAF Priorities \(Environmentally Focused\)](#)

- Environment and sustainability sit under one of the four core corporate priorities.
- Includes commitments on:
 - Air quality
 - Sustainable travel
 - Energy hubs and carbon reduction
 - Wildlife and natural environment enhancement

7.2.2 Hertfordshire County Council Strategies

7.2.2.1 *Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy*

Hertfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019. The [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy](#), revised in January/February 2026, contains eight clear ambitions to guide the county's transition to a greener, fairer future:

1. Reduce what we throw away
2. Promote a circular, not linear, economy
3. Be carbon neutral in our own operations by 2030
4. Contribute to a net zero greenhouse gas county before 2050
5. Ensure the council and the county are ready for future climates
6. Accelerate nature recovery on our own land and water
7. Collaborate with stakeholders and partners to drive nature recovery across Hertfordshire
8. Work together to create healthier air for all

7.2.2.2 *Tree and Woodland Strategy (2022-30)*

The Tree and Woodland Strategy sets out ambitions for Hertfordshire's treescapes until 2030:

- Supporting the establishment of at least 1.8 million new trees across Hertfordshire, including at least 1.2 million trees, one for every resident of Hertfordshire, and at least 100km of hedgerows, equating to 600,000 hedgerow trees.

- Promoting and supporting the development of woodland management plans to help ensure woodlands provide a range of benefits to their owners, wildlife and local communities, while remaining resilient to pressures on tree health.
- Facilitating and enabling residents and businesses to support tree and woodland establishment and enhancement initiatives in Hertfordshire.

7.2.2.3 *Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) Action Plans*

East Herts is an active partner in county-wide action plans covering:

- **Biodiversity**
- **Water**
- **Carbon reduction**
- **Transport**
- **Behaviour change and adaptation** (in development)

7.2.2.4 *Local Nature Recovery Strategy*

The Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is one of 48 strategies which collectively cover the whole of England. Each local nature recovery strategy is specific and tailored to its area.

Our LNRS was developed by the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership, which is formed of partners across public, private and voluntary sectors. The strategy works in conjunction with a wide range of local strategies to ensure the aims for nature are consistent with other countywide goals.

The LNRS can be viewed at [Local Nature Recovery Strategy | Hertfordshire County Council](#) and contains 2 key parts:

- A local habitat map.
- A written statement of biodiversity priorities.

The strategy and map provide a framework which can be used by everyone to help nature recover and which will help drive investment and action for nature across Hertfordshire. The map shows the key areas for nature in Hertfordshire and the areas where actions would have the most positive impact. The written statement sets clear targets, priorities and actions to support habitats and species and combat the pressures facing habitats across the county.