

MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016-2021

# Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve and Swan Pond Pasture

To be read in conjunction with Chelmsford's Green Spaces Strategic Framework document which contains details of the City Council's policy documents and recording systems.



[www.chelmsford.gov.uk/parks](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/parks)



# Foreword

One of the principal aims of the Local Authority is to improve quality of life for its residents. Parks and Green Spaces are key to this, good quality green spaces generate enormous social, economic, environmental and ecological benefits as well as making areas more attractive.

The City Councils Corporate Plan puts down a marker on its intent to deliver quality parks and green spaces. The plan states we will achieve quality accreditation for the care of our parks and green spaces.

We also have to recognise that, important as the immediate benefits are to communities, the decisions we make about the places where we work and live today will long outlast us. Good proactive management of our Parks today will leave a real legacy for those who come after us.

Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve is an important site close to the City Center and is part of a network of parks providing a green lung to the City

Our parks and green spaces are some of the most valuable community assets we have. They are the precious jewels of our landscape to be treasured and maintained for people of all ages and from all backgrounds. Their importance cannot be underestimated nor their necessity overlooked. We recognize that the quality of our public spaces directly affects the quality of life of our residents.

Over the life of this plan it is our aim to provide parkland that caters for the needs of the visiting public. We will listen and will aim to make improvements year on year to make the sites more attractive, well respected and safe for all.



**Bob Massey**  
Cabinet member for Parks & Green Spaces



# Guidance in reading the management plan

The management plans for City Parks are all about review and improvement to both site facilities and management practices. The route to excellence is paved with continuous improvement, self-assessment, good management practices and the discipline of planning.

This management plan is designed to be used as an easy reference manual that can be understood by all interested parties.

The plan deals specifically with matters relating to Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve and needs to be read in conjunction Chelmsford's **Green Spaces Strategic framework document**. (The later document contains much of Council's corporate strategy and policy documents as they relate to parks).

The Parks Service is continually reviewing and updating strategic documents to ensure we are responding to changing needs, complying with the latest legislation and setting targets in accordance with the corporate plan and service plans. More details with regards to strategic documents can be found in the policy document entitled Strategic Framework for Parks and Green Spaces.

In drafting the document the Green Flag judging criteria were used as an audit tool. This ensures that we are embracing the criteria necessary to deliver a facility that matches the national standard for parks and that we have embraced the eight key Green Flag objectives.

1. A well-managed Park
2. A welcoming Park
3. A healthy, safe and secure Park
4. A well maintained and clean Park
5. A sustainable Park
6. A park that addresses conservation and heritage
7. A park where community involvement is encouraged
8. A well marketed and promoted Park

Use of the Green Flag criteria provides a standard for systematic and committed approach to maintaining and improving the quality of parks enjoyed by local communities. In addition it is

essential to develop a public based benchmark audited externally by a third party. Green Flag being the recognised National Standard for Parks and Green Spaces.

In addition credence has been given to considering recent research concerning parks undertaken both locally and nationally. It is important to be aware of both social and market trends. Particularly pertinent is new thinking derived from our own authority's corporate objectives and from consultation feedback arising from local research.

In these times of austerity Parks are particularly important in delivering health initiatives. Investment in Parks is seen to be prudent as the returns can be enjoyed by both current and future generations.

It is hoped that through reading the plan the reader will glimpse how the staff team have to balance the priorities, policies and pressures that apply and will see the rationale for establishing time scales for putting objectives into practice. The production of such a document allows the contribution that the site makes to the local community to be measured and progress against key objectives can be monitored by the management team and by visitors alike.

**Information of a more generic nature has been drawn out of the site specific management plan and is now found in a companion guide entitled Strategic Framework for Parks and Green Spaces.**



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# Section 1 – Site information

## 1.0 Site information

Site name	Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve	
Site status	Local Nature Reserve – declared in March 2005 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 Part of Local Wildlife Site Ch 68 – Chelmer Valley Riverside. The remainder of the Local Wildlife Site is owned by Essex County Council. Part of the Green Wedges identified in the Chelmsford Local Development Framework Core Strategy and North Chelmsford Area Action Plan, which recognises its importance for amenity and recreation as well as biodiversity. The site forms the southernmost part of the Essex Wildlife Trust’s Upper Chelmer Living Landscape.	
Total area of site	16 Hectares Swan Pond Pasture 2.1 Hectares	
Component areas		
Surrounding land		
Natural geology		
Significant features/ key issues		
Tenure	Freehold A small area west of Stable Field is owned by	
Location		
Ward	The Lawns, Trinity, Moulsham and Central	
District	Chelmsford	
County	Essex	
Post code	CM1 1FG	
OS grid reference		
Byelaws	LNR Designation	
Opening hours	Site is accessible 24/7	
Use	Informal public open space and popular commuter route for walkers and cyclists.	
Essex police support	Emergency	999
	Non-emergency	03003334444
	Via text message	07624800101



Chelmer Valley Nature Reserve is located along the eastern banks of the River Chelmer. It runs for approximately 2.5km from Valley Bridge Broomfield in the north to Victoria Road in the town centre.

Swan Pond Pasture is accessed from a residential road of Lawn Lane (See Plan 1).

## 1.2 Management responsibility

Chelmsford City Council's Parks and Green Spaces team is responsible for strategic development of the site. Routine maintenance is undertaken by the Grounds Management Service.

## 1.3 Resources

The routine site maintenance is undertaken by the Parks and Green Spaces Grounds Management Service.

Local volunteers undertake a range of activities within the site. They meet normally monthly.

## 1.4 Site history

Historically most of the site was farmed with a mix of arable and pasture although there were areas of swampy woodland recorded on the 1843 Tithe Map. Some of the hedge boundaries recorded on the Tithe Maps are still in place.

Close to the Anglia Ruskin University was the Bishop Hall Mill. There is evidence to show that this site has been used as a mill since the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. The current course of the river was shown on the 1591 Walker Map, and it is likely that this would have been created when the original mill was built in Saxon times.

Chelmsford Borough Council originally managed the site as informal public open space. At that time it comprised amenity grassland with some areas planted with fast growing trees to screen the newly constructed Chelmer Valley Way and Rivermead area. The northern fields were cut very infrequently which resulted in ash and oak saplings and scrub establishing across much of the unimproved grassland.

The site was declared a Local Nature Reserve in July 2005 and since then the Council supported by local volunteers has managed and developed the site in accordance with the management plan to maintain areas of higher biodiversity value and to enhance other parts of the site.

## 1.5 Context for Designation as a Local Nature Reserve

The riverside corridors within Chelmsford form valuable green corridors that run into the city centre. They are important for amenity, recreation and biodiversity areas. Such networks of natural habitats are increasingly recognised as valuable for linking sites of biodiversity importance and providing routes or stepping stones for migration, dispersal and general exchange of species in

the wider environment. Within Chelmsford these river corridors have been identified as Green Wedges which are protected under Policy CP9 (Protecting areas of Natural and Built Heritage and Archaeological Importance) in the Council's Core Strategy.

The first Chelmsford Biodiversity Action Plan published in 2002 highlighted the value of all river corridors for biodiversity. In 2003 a study of all the riverside parks was carried out to identify those areas that could be further enhanced through modification of their management regimes. The 2005 Chelmsford Habitat Survey identified the whole site a Local Wildlife Site.

The site is situated approximately 1 mile downstream of two Essex Wildlife Trust nature reserves. In addition there are other Local Wildlife Sites both up and downstream of the LNR.

A public consultation was carried out between October 2004 and February 2005. This showed almost unanimous support for the proposal to declare the site a LNR. The site was declared a Local Nature Reserve in July 2005.

Since the site was declared an LNR Essex Wildlife Trust has promoted its Living Landscape concept; the LNR is at the southern end of its Upper Chelmer Living Landscape.

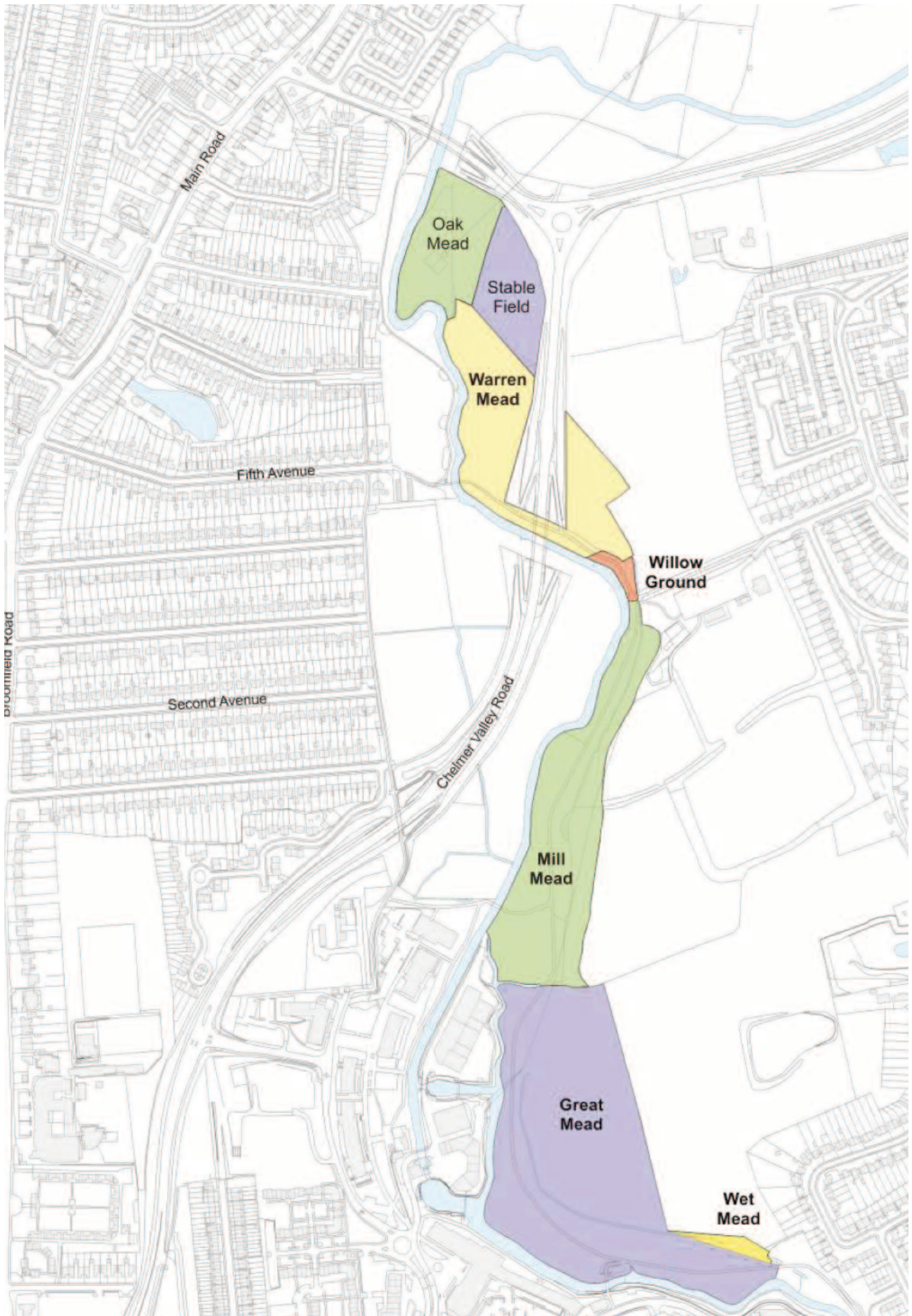


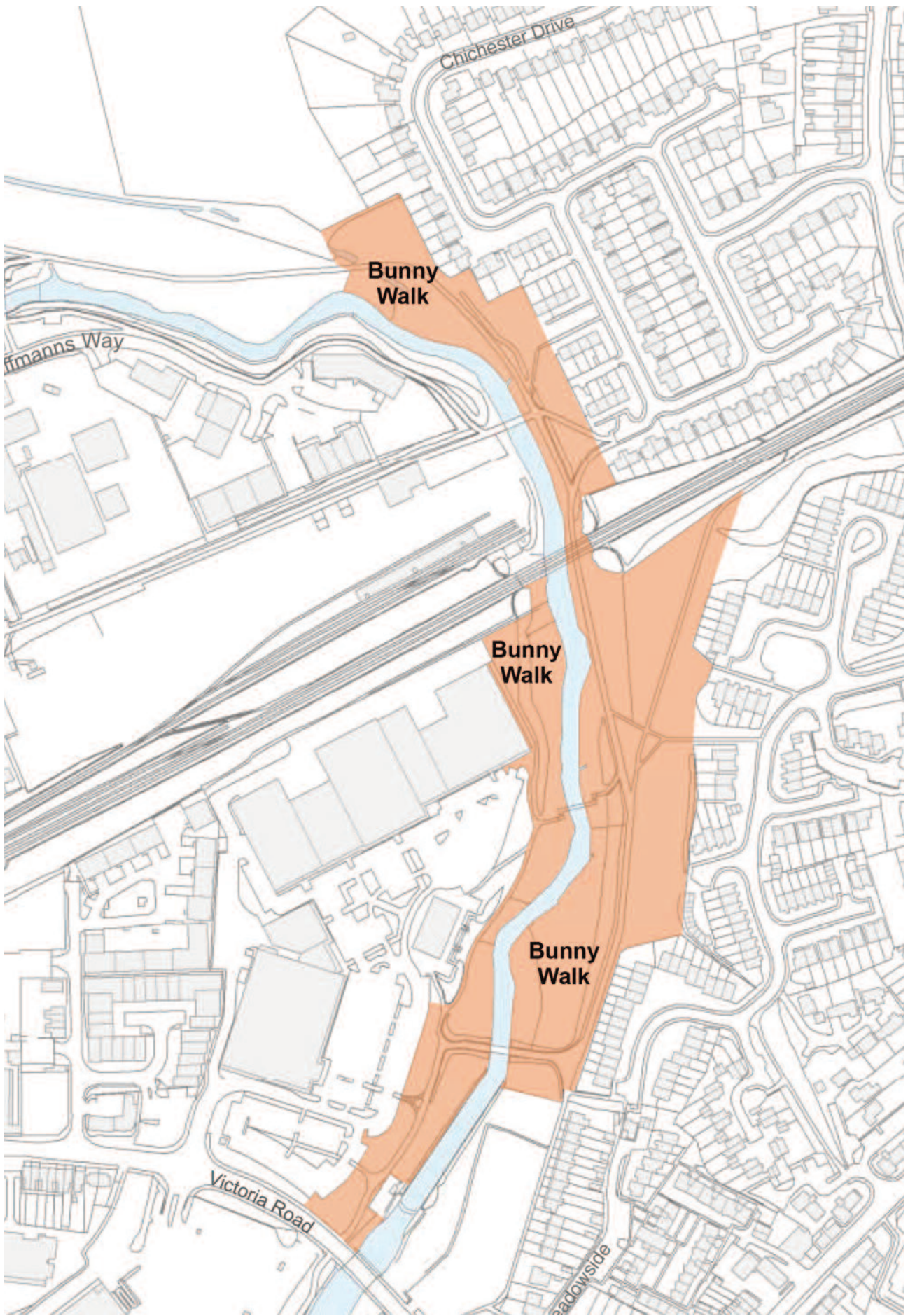
## Section 2 – Site Description



### 2.0 Site Description

The reserve follows the eastern side of the River Chelmer upstream from Victoria Road in the centre of Chelmsford for approximately 2.4km to Valley Bridge Road, Broomfield. At its narrowest point it is less than 20m wide but in Great Mead this increases up to 190m wide. It comprises a series of distinct areas that were named after the field names recorded on the Tithe Map.





## 2.1 The river

The river has been heavily modified over time resulting in a deep, slow-flowing watercourse containing large quantities of emergent vegetation. The earliest recorded changes to the river channel were in Saxon times when it was diverted to feed the Bishop Hall Mill, north of the ARU site. Since then the channel has been straightened and deepened and a series of weirs and sluices have been installed to benefit the mills and other industry operating beside the river.

The emergent vegetation includes bull-rush, bur-reed, yellow water-lily and arrowhead. The river also contains the rare shining pondweed, which is indicative of slow flow. The bank vegetation is dominated by nettles and other competitive species although species such as Purple Loosestrife are also present. There are few trees close to the river's edge.

The nature reserve acts as a flood storage area following periods of heavy rain to help protect the city centre immediately downstream. It floods normally at least once each winter.

## 2.2 Stable Fields

These fields comprise old pasture that was originally part of Springfield Hall farm. Lack of regular management resulted in large quantities of scrub and young trees becoming dominant; however since 2005 a programme of scrub clearance has restored much of the open grassland. The grassland is cut and cleared annually, normally in September. The grassland flora is increasingly diverse although there is an ongoing issue with trying to control Sea Aster which has established on site. Some scrub has been retained to provide greater diversity of habitat.

## 2.3 Warren Mead

This comprises two wooded blocks either side of the Chelmer Valley Way that were planted with hybrid poplar, Lombardy poplar and willows on in the 1970s. There was a very limited understorey and having been planted at the same time there was no age structure within these areas.

Some of the hybrid poplars were felled in 2006 to create clearings in which to plant ash, alder, hazel and shrubs to create a better woodland structure. Two native black poplars have been planted close to the river.

There is a small pond at the southern end of the area which supports a good pond flora although it does need regular maintenance to retain some open water. There is a seasonal pond within the block to the east of the Chelmer Valley Way,

## 2.4 The 'Riverside Walk'

This is the narrowest part of the reserve which runs between the river and Springfield Hall Allotments. The open sections either side of the cycle path have become dominated by stinging nettle, greater burdock and other vigorous species as they were uncut for several years. The regular flooding also introduces additional nutrients which promote the dominance of these species. Since 2009 these areas have been cut at least once a year.



There are two areas that have been planted with willows and poplars which contain no significant shrub layer or age structure.

To the east of the cycle path is a ditch before the ground rises towards the allotments. Young secondary woodland is establishing and is referred to as Allotment Wood. Two veteran oak trees exist which are likely to have been part of an historic boundary. There is a small patch of Butcher's Broom present, which is associated with ancient woods. The wood was planted with predominately field maple. Since 2007 these have been thinned to provide space for the remaining trees to develop and allow more light in to allow the ground flora to develop.

## 2.5 Great Mead

This area forms the widest part of the site. It was formerly open grassland; however much of it was planted with trees in the early 1980s. Tree species include hybrid poplars, grey poplar and some ash planted approximately 10m apart. The ground flora was dominated by nettles. Since 2005 significant tree planting has taken place to ensure the area developed as woodland. The aim was to increase the age structure and diversity of species present and to develop a shrub layer by planting ash, oak, alder, hazel and willow. Some mature hybrid poplars were felled to create larger planting blocks

The northern part of the field is more open with few trees. It is maintained by a large population of rabbits.

Along the main ditch through this area a series of small ponds and wetland features have been constructed to help increase the ecological value of the area.

## 2.6 Wet Mead

This area is situated between the Hoffman Way footbridge and the railway viaduct. It narrows again and becomes more formally managed as it reaches the houses on Hill View Road. The main habitats are plantation and a series of ditches feeding into the river. Since 2005 tree and shrub planting has been carried out to increase the species composition and structure of the plantation areas. Some poplars have been removed.

## 2.7 The 'Bunny Walk'

This section of the site runs from the viaduct to Victoria Road and has been managed predominately as close mown amenity grassland. The area of most ecological value is the marshy area on the bank opposite the Riverside Retail Park. This area appears to be fed by springs and contains areas of sedges; however lack of management means that bramble and stinging nettle are dominating the ground flora.

There are a number of large trees on the green and along the river bank.

Immediately south of the viaduct is a small pond and wetland that was dug out in 2006 and contains a good mix of wetland plants.

The grassland is now cut annually however it is relatively species-poor as a result of its past intensive management.

## 2.8 Swan Pond Pasture (linked to the LNR by location)

Swan Pond Pasture is a field of permanent grassland totalling 2.17 hectares. This area is currently cut annually for hay. The field is enclosed by mature hedges. A full botanical survey has not been carried out for this site however it is clear that it does not contain a diverse flora.

There is a large pond in the north east corner. Reeds dominate most of the open water area. There are large trees surrounding the perimeter of the pond.

Immediately to the north of Swan Pond Pasture is an area of unmanaged wetter grassland which forms part of the Chelmer Valley Local Wildlife Site. It is in the ownership of Essex County Council.

## 2.9 Public access and use

The site forms an extremely well-used link between the city centre and residential areas to the north. The cycleway runs between Victoria Road and Fifth Avenue and contains spurs off to the ARU campus, Parklands Way, Hill View Road and Arun Close, Springfield. It is lit along the whole of the length.

There are several unsurfaced routes leading off from the cycleway. The area north of the Fifth Avenue footbridge contains a circular route beside the river and through the meadows. Additional paths lead off through the Bunny Walk parallel to the cycleway. There is a well-used path passing through Great Mead close to the eastern boundary.

There are 3 bespoke name signs within the site which have been carved in oak. There are 2 interpretive panels with the site. There are a number of directional signs associated with the cycleway.

There are more formal parks and play areas adjacent to the nature reserve at Springfield Hall Park and off Fifth Avenue. These meet the needs for children's play in the local area.



# Section 3 – Site Evaluation

## 3.0 Site Evaluation

### Site in context

The LNR forms the southern section of the Essex Wildlife Trust's Upper Chelmer Living Landscape area and is the only fully accessible part of the riverside north of the city centre.

The Council has taken the opportunity to improve habitat linkages to nearby sites upstream of the Nature Reserve through the improved management of Swan Pond Pasture and the northern section of Springfield Hall Park.

### Habitat

Since the site was declared as a Local Nature Reserve there has been extensive management and habitat restoration works undertaken by volunteers. A key objective has been to more clearly define the various habitat types and to manage them appropriately. This has particularly focussed on restoring the grassland in the north of the site, improving the quality of the wooded areas and developing better wetland habitat.

## 3.1 Grassland

The grassland on site includes some areas of good quality neutral grassland, particularly in Stable Field and the northern part of Great Mead. Great Mead has been kept open largely by rabbit grazing in this area while Stable Field has an annual cut in September with the cut material removed from site.

Stable Field has been the focus of much effort since 2005 to remove scrub and young trees that had established in large areas of the site. Additional work is still required to remove small scrub, regrowth from stumps and developing bramble.

An area of sea aster in the centre of the field is a major problem as it is proving to be highly invasive and out-completes other species.

The remainder of the grassland within the site is species poor and significant areas have become dominated by stinging nettle and thistles as a result of the regular flooding which introduces high levels of nutrients. It is necessary to undertake more regular cutting and clearing of the areas containing coarse species in order to try to encourage a greater diversity of species. It might be necessary to introduce seed of more competitive wildflowers once the other dominant species have begun responding to the management.

There are opportunities to increase the quantity of species-rich grassland by introducing wildflower seed into areas of poorer quality grassland such as in Riverside Walk. A detailed survey of Swan Pond Pasture should be undertaken to determine if additional seeding would benefit this grassland.

In 2016 management of the northern section of Springfield Hall Park was changed to allow longer grass to develop to enable the site to be used as a slow-worm translocation receptor. This improves the habitat connectivity between the LNR and Swan Pond Pasture.

The grazing land on the western side of the river and immediately to the north of the site is owned by Essex County Council and is also part of the Local Wildlife Site. It should be an aspiration to seek to include this land as part of the LNR to enable its management to be improved.

### 3.2 Wetland habitats

The river has been heavily modified over centuries with deep, straight-sided channel and sluices and other structures significantly reducing the rate of flow. This results in a slow-moving, heavily silted river with large quantities of emergent vegetation growing within the channel. Past dredging has resulted in raised banks particularly along the western side of the river. This affects the function of the surrounding land to store flood water and to subsequently drain. Works were undertaken by Essex Wildlife Trust in spring 2016 to create a series of breaches in the bunds.

Opportunities to undertake further works to restore the rivers natural functions should be identified and funding sought with the support of Essex Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency.

#### Ponds

There are four original ponds on the site, although the one in Warren Mead does not currently hold water. The one close to the Arun Close entrance and the one adjacent to the railway viaduct were dug out in 2006 and again in 2012. The one on the Bunny Walk has had little work on it although ditches feeding into have been dug out in the past which has helped maintain water in the pond for longer.

In 2008 4 small seasonal ponds were created along the main ditch running through Great Mead. These hold water for part of the year the weirs should be improved to keep water in them longer. The vegetation in these areas includes species such as Purple Loosestrife and Spiked Sedge.

The remaining ditches have had limited management over time and most are heavily silted or enclosed by dense scrub, in each case limiting their ecological value. It is proposed to cut back the scrub to open up the channels during this plan period.

At the southern end of the site, on the bank opposite the Riverside Retail Park is the largest marsh area remaining on the site. It is dominated by stinging nettle and bramble although there are areas of pond sedge. Little management has been undertaken in this area; however in spring 2011 dead vegetation was cleared from part of the area by volunteers. At present it is not seen as a priority for further works.

There are records of Great Crested Newts breeding on land east of Great Mead although they have not been recorded on site.

### 3.3 Wooded areas

All of the wooded areas were planted in the late 1970s and early 1980s using predominately Hybrid Poplar, Grey Poplar, willows and Lombardy Poplar. While these are fast growing species that provide valuable screening of neighbouring developments a number of factors including the widely spaced planting, the lack of diversity, an even age structure and the practice of mowing between trees in some areas meant that most were not developing as woodland.

Additional tree planting has been carried out in all of the main woodland blocks since 2005. In some cases small groups of poor quality existing trees were felled to create large planting blocks. Ash was a principal component of the planting mix. It is likely therefore most of these trees will die as a result of Ash Dieback. While other species such as alder and hazel are also present ash is the predominant species and its loss will result in a significant impact on the woodland composition.

The Hybrid Poplars on site are becoming very large and are reaching maturity. It is important that there is a programme to remove these trees and replant with a mix of species. Those closest to the main paths should be removed first due to the risk of failure.

Two native Black Poplars have been planted between the river and edge of Warren Mead.

### 3.4 Interpretation and education

The site is ideally situated to provide a range of public activities and educational opportunities.

In 2011 new interpretation panels were erected by the Fifth Avenue footbridge and ARU. A leaflet was developed and was available from dispensers beside the panels although these are no longer being produced.

The use of the site for education visits is limited due to a number of factors. There is a lack of facilities such as toilets or shelter on site. The site is open to the public and is well-used by dog-walkers. There is only limited availability of staff to lead activities on site. There are a number of primary and secondary schools within a short walk of the site that could make more use of it if it were better promoted.

Since the appointment of the Parks Volunteer Leader in 2015 habitat surveying sessions are undertaken every year with the volunteers with the data archived to enable analysis year on year on changes to fauna and flora.

The site is used by Thriftwood College for the John Muir Award which encourages people to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places additionally local primary schools do nature walks in the summer months, both these groups are supported by the Park Volunteer Leader.

Organised group walks use the site in their programmes (EW Trust lead a walk from the site).

The Anglia Ruskin University ( ARU) use the site for food foraging activities as part of the Ideas Festival.

As part of the Youth Offenders programme various groups visit the site to undertake litter picking, all part of a rehabilitation programme.

### 3.5 Public access and use

The surfaced cycleway creates an accessible route linking the residential areas in north Chelmsford to the city centre. This ensures that it is well-used by people passing through the site throughout the day all year round.

The site is also well-used for informal activities such as dog walking. Currently the mix of paths together with the availability of dog waste bins means that the site is generally well used without significant issues.

The cycleway, which is the responsibility of Essex County Council, does contain cracks in certain sections, particularly through the Bunny Walk. Repairs will be required to ensure that it remains safe for users.

The unsurfaced paths are generally accessible throughout the year as the surfaces do not get excessively muddy; however it is necessary to undertake at least annual vegetation clearance to ensure that they do not become overgrown.

When considering management operations on the nature reserve it is essential that consideration is given to the effects actions might have on the amenity of the site and therefore public enjoyment. As an urban site it will be necessary to avoid actions that might significantly open up views towards buildings or result in large piles of dead material, which could also be subject to vandalism.

### Constraints

#### **Pylons, overhead lines and other services**

During 2016 work has been carried out north of the substation adjacent to Stable Field to remove the pylons and install the electricity cables underground. Sections of overhead lines that ran the length of the Bunny Walk were buried in 2009.

There are overhead lines running east-west to the north of the ARU and along the eastern boundary of Warren Mead. These wayleaves need to be maintained to be free of trees.

There are sewers running through the site. One in Great Mead is prone to overflowing and needs to be monitored. Other pipes run through the Bunny Walk.

All of the services should be plotted to ensure that the wayleaves are retained.

## Ash Dieback and other diseases

Ash is one of the most common species in the LNR and has been a key component in the planting schemes since 2005. There is clear evidence that trees within the site are succumbing to Ash Dieback.

There are regular reports of other diseases affecting other tree species. These need to be monitored and action taken as required.

It is important that there is a programme to plant replacement trees within the plantations. It is recommended that a mix of species including alder, hornbeam, oak and field maple should be used to reduce the risk of other diseases having such a dramatic effect on the site.

There are some sycamores on site. These should be retained at present as they occupy a similar ecological niche to ash.

## Invasive species

Currently the site does not contain Japanese Knotweed or Floating Pennywort however it is vital that monitoring is undertaken for these species.

There are patches of Himalayan Balsam along the river bank. These are not dominant and volunteers are used to remove these where it is safe to do so. It is important that the riverbanks continue to be monitored to ensure that it does not establish further within the site.

Giant Hogweed has been recorded in the Bunny Walk area in the past. The plants have been removed to prevent them injuring the public. Monitoring should occur to ensure that this species does not re-establish.

Sea aster has become a significant issue within Stable Field where it has come to dominate the typical grassland species. Control measures include cutting the field before the plants have finished flowering to reduce seeding and by hand-pulling plants in sensitive areas. In 2015 herbicide was applied across the site to kill the plants off. This did prove beneficial as it resulted in a more diverse mix of typical grassland species in 2016.







# Section 4 – Management vision

## 4.0 Management vision

The LNR is part of a larger collection of sites that follow the river valley into the north of the City which include Swan Pond Pasture, Springfield Hall Park and Essex County Council land to the west and north of the site. The Council is now managing its adjacent sites in an integrated manner to deliver more significant biodiversity benefits, address water management issues and improve recreational links. It is trying to ensure that the ECC is also managed appropriately to improve the biodiversity opportunities and also to enhance their visual appearance.

### Management Objectives

- to achieve a consistent management regime for the whole site to improve its value for biodiversity
- enhance the quality of the grassland throughout the site
- improve the age structure and species diversity of the plantations
- to achieve a balance between managing for biodiversity and for recreation and amenity
- to actively involve the local community in managing the site
- to use the site for education purposes

## 4.1 Site Maintenance arrangements and standards

The management of the Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve is principally informed by its designation as a Local Nature Reserve and seeks to maximise its biodiversity value. It is a strategically important, well-used public open space with high numbers of people using it every day. It is vital therefore it is well managed in the most sustainable way to maximise its value for visitors while minimising the environmental impacts on management.

## 4.2 Maintenance Regimes

Chelmer Valley Nature Reserve is managed by Chelmsford City Council (CCC) Parks Services. Specifically it is the responsibility of the Parks & Green Spaces Manager, who is supported by the parks management team. This team is responsible for the day-to-day management of the reserve including all aspects of customer services within the site, to visitor information and welfare, public relations, marketing, promotion, and special event planning.

The Grounds Management Service undertakes landscape maintenance work under the terms laid down in the works specification.

All maintenance operations are run through a 'confirm' computer asset management system. All work is instructed according to the park management's requirements. This system generates a monthly instruction sheet detailing the routine maintenance operations required in particular areas of the park. The Grounds Maintenance Supervisor can then adjust the frequencies and timing of those operations to account for any seasonal fluctuations etc before issuing it to the ground staff. Any operation or repair, which is not 'routine' is detailed in a variation order/instruction also linked to the database system.

Grounds Management Services employ 58 staff who are trained to the appropriate horticultural skills levels. Staff are encouraged to partake in internal and external training to gain recognised qualifications.

### **4.3 Conservation volunteers on the CVLNR**

The nature reserve has had groups of volunteers working on it regularly since at least 2009. There is a regular volunteer session, on site once a month on the 4th Saturday of the month. In addition to this, primary school groups and Thriftwood special needs School have occasional sessions on the reserve carry out a wide variety of tasks. Some of the tasks that have been completed by volunteers over the past 8 years are; planting trees, footbridge building, coppicing, Himalayan Balsam pulling, footpath surfacing, litter picking, pond maintenance, scrub clearance, wildflower seed scattering and dead hedging. We usually have an average of 15 volunteers to the monthly Saturday sessions and the size of the school groups can vary. The work that the volunteers do is vital for the reserve in terms of, maintaining footpaths and improving the site for wildlife. Many of the volunteers that attend the Saturday sessions also have a local connection to the site or use the footpath/cycle route that passes through it.

### **4.4 Tree and forestry works**

The Arboricultural and Conservation Officer is responsible for the council's tree stock and issues instructions to private tree surgeons for any works required, be it tree maintenance works or safety work within the LNR. The tree stock within parks Services remit is now monitored on new tree management software 'Tree Wise'.

The trees in the LNR are inspected on a regular basis by the Arboricultural Officer. It is important that the trees are maintained in a safe condition and any safety works required are highlighted by inspection and dealt with effectively/efficiently.

Park staff undertake weekly visual inspections of trees and record any defects on the general site inspection sheets in turn information from these sheets is relayed to the arboricultural and conservation officer as is deemed appropriate.

## 4.5 Health & Safety obligations

Grounds management Services are fully compliant with all aspects of the Health & Safety legislation. Management keep various files on the subject to ensure compliance and to encourage good working practices.

The Health and Safety File includes:

- the Safety Bulletin Register- internal memos on safety related issues.
- the Risk assessment Register- assessment of task (under the management of Health and Safety at Work regulations), e.g. grass cutting, use of hand tools and other parks equipment, toilet cleaning etc
- the COSHH assessment register -assessment of Substance used (under the control of Substances (Hazardous to Health) Regulations), e.g. weed killer, fertiliser, cleaning products etc.
- the Safe Working practice Register -assessment of application, i.e. equipment pre-use checks, starting and operating procedures, repairs and adjustments etc.
- Statutory test certificates
- depot audits
- accident reports

The Risk assessment File includes:

- generic risk assessments, e.g. grass maintenance, tree pruning
- Site specific risk assessments, e.g., water, traffic, sharps/needles
- Relevant codes of practice, e.g. grass cutting on steep banks
- Sample immunisation sheet
- leptospirosis card

## 4.5 Use of tools and machinery

The Health and Safety implications for the maintenance of tools and machinery are taken very seriously. All tools and machinery are inspected and maintained according to manufacturer's guidelines. Machinery is serviced mid-season and a further full service takes place during the winter months.

CCC provides all tools for the volunteer groups. These are stored the parks depot and are inspected regularly.

### Training for the safe use of tools and machinery

All staff are properly trained in the use of specific equipment and attend courses at appropriate training centres, particularly Writtle University College. Refresher courses are also utilized when necessary. When new equipment is purchased, manufacturers are required to give training demonstrations to operatives.

Volunteers are all provided with a tools safety talk prior to commencing any project. All new volunteers are closely supervised by the volunteer coordinator or experienced volunteers. Volunteers do not use any power tools or machinery.



# Section 5 – Sustainability within land management practices

## 5.0 Sustainability within land management practices

### The Parks and Green Spaces Environmental Strategy

The policy underlines the guiding principles regarding the propagation of environmental sensitivity and responsibility by management and seeks to link a number of key strands together to ensure that Parks and Green Spaces Services reflect the council's overarching policies set out in the corporate plan; the council wide- green procurement strategy and the climate change policy to name but a few.

### 5.1 The use of Pesticides and other chemicals

The council as a whole now uses the SYPOL database for all pesticides and other substances hazardous to health. At present the Service is writing new COSHH assessments and submitting them to SYPOL. There are currently 43 products registered for public places. SYPOL use a traffic light system with red being considered hazardous to health. Any that flag up red will be investigated and where possible we will introduce less harmful products. As a direct result of the SYPOL procedure we have started looking at natural products rather than chemical based ones.

### 5.2 Management guidelines: use of Chemicals

The use of chemicals – insecticides, molluscicides, herbicides, etc. will continue to be kept to the minimum necessary, in compliance with good horticultural standards and requirements for public health and safety. Bio-pesticides will be used where possible.

Fuel, chemicals and other substances are stored in designated areas under the 'control of Substances Harmful to Health Regulations 1992'. Relevant information relating to COSHH is displayed in the designated work area.

The council is proactive in its attitude towards the environmental and safety implications of the pesticides it uses. Further studies are undertaken annually to keep this policy updated. The pest control review has enabled the chemical use within the park to be reduced without affecting the quality of the pest-control regime. Further studies are undertaken annually to keep this policy updated.

The current Service policy on the Use of pesticides is as follows:

- that any operation that requires the use of a pesticide be carried out only if no alternative method is reasonably practicable.

- that any pesticide, which has carcinogenic, mutagenic or teratogenic properties, should not be applied unless no acceptable alternative substance is available for the task in question.
- that, where a choice of acceptable pesticides is available for a particular task, the least hazardous substance be selected in every case.
- that all users be advised of the council's views on the matter and instructed to follow adopted guidelines.
- that any new substance be permitted to be used until evidence is obtained to indicate that it has unacceptable qualities.
- that the list of pesticides currently in use be submitted for re-consideration at intervals determined by the grounds maintenance Services manager.

In accordance with the principles set out in the community plan the use of herbicides and pesticides within the park is limited to the absolute minimum. The football pitch receives some chemical input in order to maintain the correct standard of playing surface; this is limited to the bare essentials.

Parks Services follow the COSHH regulations when specifying pesticides. all specifiers are experienced members of staff and liaison with contractors over chemical use are encouraged.

The contractors only use those herbicides; pesticides or cleaning agents specified in the contract and these are all subject to COSHH risk assessments.

Under the terms of the grounds maintenance specification, pest and disease control is not carried out as a routine operation. An instruction is required for any pesticide application and only used when a pest or disease infestation exceeds the maximum acceptable percentage specified. The use, application, storage and disposal of pesticides and fertilisers are covered by the grounds maintenance specification and to the 'code of practice' reproduced in the Health and Safety policy section control of substances hazardous to health.

Parks Services undertake training in the use of chemicals. In-house training is geared to the yearly assessment of the current needs and contract requirements and areas where training may be lacking. Grounds Services operate a dedicated team servicing all areas. One person is also trained in first aid. Team members are trained to pa1/pa6 level.

### 5.3 Peat reduction Policy

No peat based products are required to be used on the site.

# Section 6 – Management Operations

## 6.0 Management Operations

The management plan covers the period from 2016 to 2021. It should be reviewed annually to assess progress and review future work requirements.

GENERAL		
PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Interpretation</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review existing interpretation and agree strategy for improvements</li> </ul>	P&GS	2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop new entrance signage to improve recognition of the site</li> </ul>		2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide interpretation of wildlife and heritage e.g. the backwater</li> </ul>		2018
<b>Access/path management</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all paths are kept clear of vegetation and open throughout the year</li> </ul>	P&GS/ volunteers	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the condition of the cycleway and repair any damage to the surface</li> </ul>	P&GS/ECC	
<b>Ash dieback</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor effects of disease on trees within the site to inform replanting programme</li> </ul>	P&GS	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspect dying trees to ensure they do not pose H&amp;S risks</li> </ul>		



## STABLE FIELDS

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Scrub management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue remove new scrub and bramble establishing in main grassland areas</li> <li>Treat stumps with appropriate herbicide to stop regrowth</li> </ul>	P&GS? volunteers	Winter and spring each year
<b>Grassland management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut and collect grass by early September in both fields</li> </ul>	P&GS	September every year
<b>Control Sea Aster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure grass is cut and collected before sea aster has set seed.</li> <li>Volunteers to hand pull sensitive areas and where new stands are establishing.</li> <li>Continue to monitor the density of the stands and consider using herbicide to kill the plants.</li> </ul>	P&GS P&GS/ volunteers P&GS/ contractors	September Spring/summer Spring/summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor reinstatement of underground cable area to encourage the establishment of grassland species.</li> </ul>	CCC/UKPN	Spring /summer 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange to formally manage UKPN land. Identify appropriate contact and discuss opportunities to incorporate area into the LNR and to agree appropriate management</li> </ul>	CCC/UKPN	Spring 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with EWT/EA to undertake wetland improvement works to restore pond</li> </ul>	P&GS/EWT	Subject to funding opportunities

## WARREN MEAD

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Woodland management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue process of removal of hybrid poplars and other poor specimens, clearing a group each year. Where necessary apply for felling licence if more than 5m<sup>3</sup> to be felled in one quarter</li> <li>Plant up gaps with alder, hornbeam, field maple, hazel and hawthorn</li> <li>Maintain new planting until trees established</li> </ul>	P&GS/ volunteers	Ongoing



## BUNNY WALK

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Grass management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut grassland areas in April/May and July to control establishment of nettles etc</li> <li>Once dominant species are under control sow appropriate wildflower seed into gaps</li> </ul>	Grounds Management P&GS/ volunteers	Ongoing  2019
<b>Ditch management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean ditch to improve flow of water to the ponds</li> </ul>	GM	2019
<b>Pond management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut back overhanging branches and remove deadwood from with main pond</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	2017
<b>Allotment woodland</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake further thinning of Field Maple</li> <li>Plant hazel and hawthorn within gaps</li> <li>Sow with shade tolerant species</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	2018
<b>Veteran tree management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek advice on best ways to maintain remaining veteran trees</li> </ul>	CCC	2017
<b>Osier bed management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to maintain osier beds on rotation and use cut material for hedge laying, willow domes etc</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	Ongoing

## GREAT MEAD

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Woodland establishment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree programme for removing mature poplars etc and planting replacement trees and shrubs in gaps</li> <li>Replace ash trees with different species when they die</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	Ongoing
<b>Grassland management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut and clear areas of open grassland each September.</li> <li>Remove small trees at the north end of the area to increase the size of the grassland and make it easier to maintain</li> </ul>	GM P&GS/ Volunteers	Annually 2020
<b>Wetland management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the size of the wetland area within the main ditch by grading back edges.</li> <li>Cut back overhanging trees</li> </ul>	GM/P&GS/ Volunteers	2018

## WET MEAD

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Enhance ditches and wetlands</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear fallen material from ditches</li> <li>Coppice scrub beside cycleway and ditches to improve sightlines</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	2017
<b>Woodland management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue removal of remaining hybrid poplars</li> <li>Plant up gaps with trees and shrubs</li> <li>Maintain trees planted in past seasons, removing rabbit protection when appropriate</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	Ongoing

## RIVERSIDE WALK

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Increase species diversity in amenity grassland</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce Yellow Rattle seed to reduce the vigour of existing grass sward</li> <li>Sow suitable wet grassland wildflower seed into the sward to increase diversity</li> </ul>	Volunteers/ CCC	Autumn 2017  Autumn 2018
<b>Manage alder area</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thin stand of alder by 30% to favour better trees</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Contractors	2018
<b>Open up ditch areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear scrub from beside ditches to allow more light to reach banks</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	2020

## RIVER CHANNEL

PROJECT	WHO	WHEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor river banks for Himalayan balsam and other invasive species.</li> <li>Remove plants where safe to do so.</li> </ul>	P&GS/ Volunteers	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with EWT and EA look for opportunities to modify the riverbanks to improve their function</li> </ul>	P&GS/ EWT/EA	Ongoing

# Section 7– Chelmer Valley LNR: Action Plan



NO. PROPOSED ACTIONS	TARGET DATE	LINK WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION	STAFF/ GROUPS INVOLVED	ACTIONS REQUIRED	ESTIMATED COST	PROGRESS	PRIORITY
<b>1. A WELCOMING SPACE</b>							
1.1 Maintain Aspects of Design Structure	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	To monitor all aspects of the design on a regular basis	0	●	1
1.2 Review Visitor Information on Parks and Green Spaces web pages	2017	Economic Growth (Tourism)	P&GS	To review and update as necessary	0	●	1
1.3 Undertake Review of Signage and Interpretation	2018	Economic Growth (Tourism)	P&GS	Prepare new signage to reflect City Status	0	●	2
<b>2. HEALTH SAFETY AND SECURE</b>							
2.1 Progress Meetings	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS	Continue to monitor and review maintenance standards	0	●	1
2.2 Review Accessibility	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS	Review and update information available for disability users	0	●	1
2.3 Responsible dog ownership campaign	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS	Raise awareness of responsible dog ownership in the LNR	0	●	1
<b>3. WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN</b>							
3.1 Review Maintenance Plan	2019	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	Annual performance review of five year maintenance plan	0	●	3
3.2 Review Litter and Waste Management	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	To oversee maintenance works	0	●	1
3.3 Schedule of Maintenance Works	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	To oversee maintenance works	0	●	1

NO. PROPOSED ACTIONS	TARGET DATE	LINK WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION	STAFF/ GROUPS INVOLVED	ACTIONS REQUIRED	ESTIMATED COST	PROGRESS	PRIORITY
<b>4. SUSTAINABILITY</b>							
4.1 Continuous Improvement	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	To continue to maintain to EMS 14001 standard	0	●	3
4.2 River Watch	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS / River User Group	Engage through meetings and monitoring	0	●	1
4.3 Tree Plantations / Coppice	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	Continual review	0	●	1
<b>5. CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE</b>							
5.1 Monitor and maintain habitats	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS/ Volunteers	Regular inspections and cleaning routine to continue to improve habitats for wildlife	0	●	3
5.2 Survey Habitats	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS/ Volunteers	To monitor and compare with recorded data	0	●	3
5.3 Set up Wildlife Friends Group	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS/ Volunteers	To increase community involvement	0	●	3
5.4 Aims to link to adjacent sites and integrate management	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS	To create green corridors under appropriate management	0	●	3
5.5 Maintain and enhance historic boundaries and veteran trees and known pond sites	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	Acknowledge key aspects of the site to protect same going forward	0	●	1
5.6 Maintain and interpret blackwater and old mill waterways	2017	Financial Self Sufficiency	P&GS	Acknowledge key aspects of the site to protect same going forward	0	●	1

NO. PROPOSED ACTIONS	TARGET DATE	LINK WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION	STAFF/ GROUPS INVOLVED	ACTIONS REQUIRED	ESTIMATED COST	PROGRESS	PRIORITY
<b>6. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>							
<b>6.1 Promotional campaign</b>	2017	Enabling Communities	Marketing	To raise awareness and increase number of volunteers within the LNR	0	●	1
<b>6.2 Establish River Warden Scheme</b>	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS	Improve links with E.A.	0	●	1
<b>6.3 Re-establish Friends of LNR</b>	2017	Enabling Communities	P&GS	Broaden the spectrum of people involved in site management	0	●	1
<b>7. MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING</b>							
<b>7.1 Heritage and nature trail leaflet</b>	2017	Economic Impact (Tourism)	Project Board/ Contractors	To continue to oversee the project and manage outcomes	£3k	●	1



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