

Frankland Fields Management Plan

2020 – 2025



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Introduction

1.0 General information

Area: Approximately 2.9ha

Ownership: Chelmsford City Council since 2004

Site name: Frankland Fields



Figure 1: Frankland Fields, South Woodham Ferrers. (Magic Map, 2020).

1.1 Site location

The site is situated within South Woodham Ferrers close to the River Crouch and opposite Marsh Farm Country Park. The site runs parallel to the River Crouch and there is pedestrian access to the footpath alongside the river.

1.2 Management

The site is the responsibility of the Council’s Parks and Green Spaces team. The site is managed to keep the grassland areas free of trees by City Council employees and volunteers. Footpaths around the site are kept clear by being mown every 2 weeks during the spring and summer by City Council employees. Regular monthly volunteer sessions encourage local people to come to help with the general maintenance of the site. Chelmsford City Council’s H&S policy gives an overview of how Chelmsford City Council deals with health and safety issues.

1.3 Designations

The site is identified as Open Space in the Council's Site Allocations Development Plan document. It is anticipated that it will be declared as a Local Nature Reserve in the near future.

1.4 Site history

The site was originally farmland, part of Peatlands farm until the 1990s. It was originally in the possession of Essex County Council but transferred to Chelmsford City Council for management in 2003.

1.5 Management achievements

1. Removal of Hawthorn and Blackthorn from the two open areas.
2. Maintenance of footpath links to surrounding areas.
3. Creation of a footbridge to provide a link with the River Crouch footpath.
4. Removal of blackthorn along the southern edge of both fields.
5. Improvement of grassland biodiversity.
6. Clearance of the bank on the northern edge of the site

Key to the success of the site is to increase biodiversity and maintain the open grassland land, whilst keeping the site accessible to all.

1.6 Connectivity with other sites

There are other important sites for wildlife located close to this site and it is for this connectivity to other sites is where Frankland Fields has importance, shown in figure 3.

- 1) LNRs – There are two LNRs located within 500m of the site (Fen Washland and Kendall Park).
- 2) Ramsar sites - (These are sites of wetland importance, particularly for waterfowl) both banks of the River Crouch and a large area to the East of South Woodham Ferrers are designated as Ramsar sites.
- 3) SSSIs – (These are Sites of Special Scientific Interest based on the wet grassland habitat). The SSSIs located nearby are in favourable and unfavourable (recovering) conditions and are the same as the Ramsar sites
- 4) SACs – (The Special Areas of Conservation are wetland habitats designated under the Directive 92/43/EEC). The SACs located nearby include the River Crouch channel and associated smaller channels.
- 5) SPAs – (The Special Protection areas are areas designated for the conservation of wild birds). The SPAs located nearby are also the same as the SSSIs and Ramsar sites.

Many species will move between a variety of these different sites and Frankland Fields is part of the mosaic of different habitats in this area.

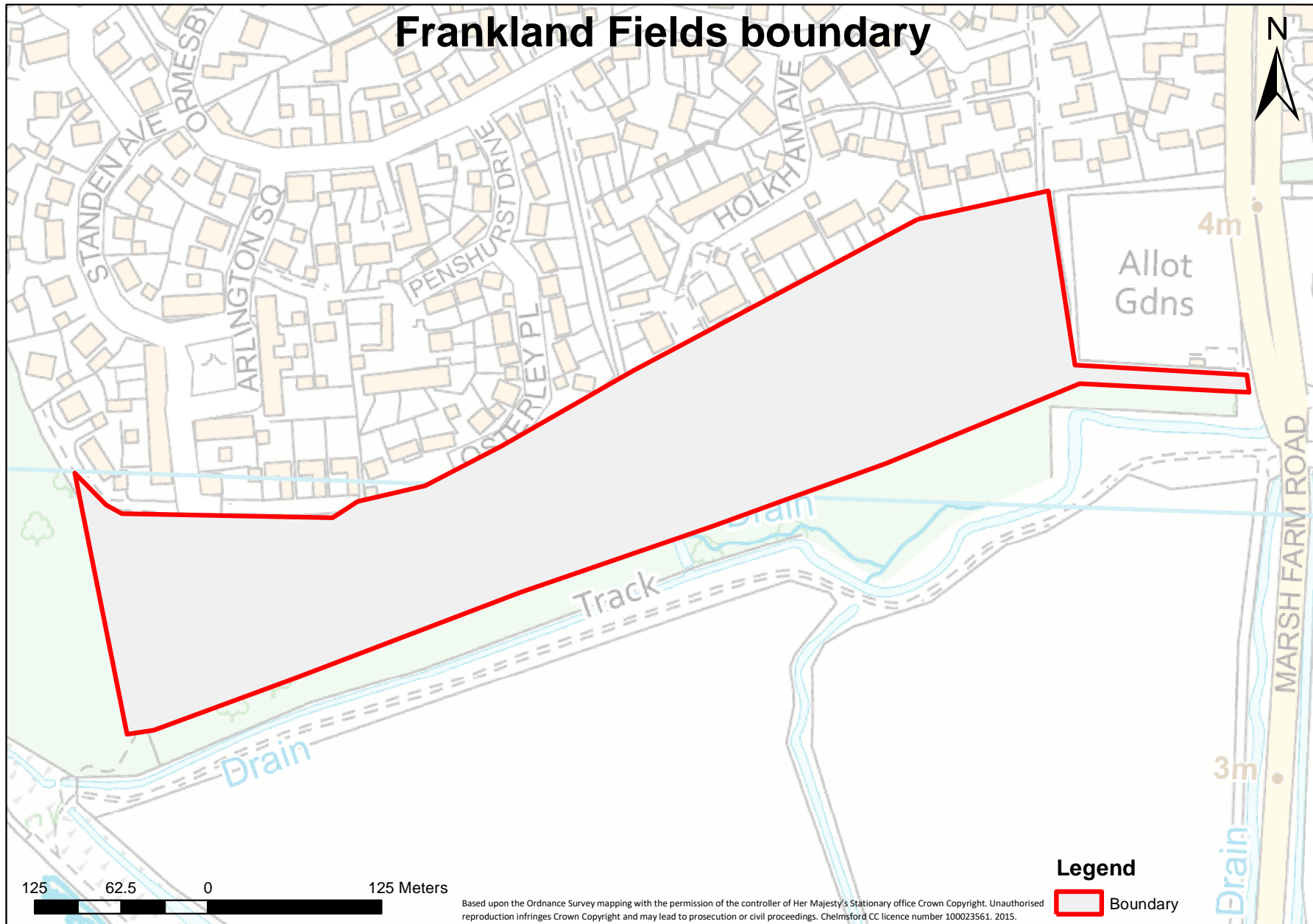


Figure 2: Map showing the boundary of Frankland Fields Nature Reserve (Compiled by the author, 2020)

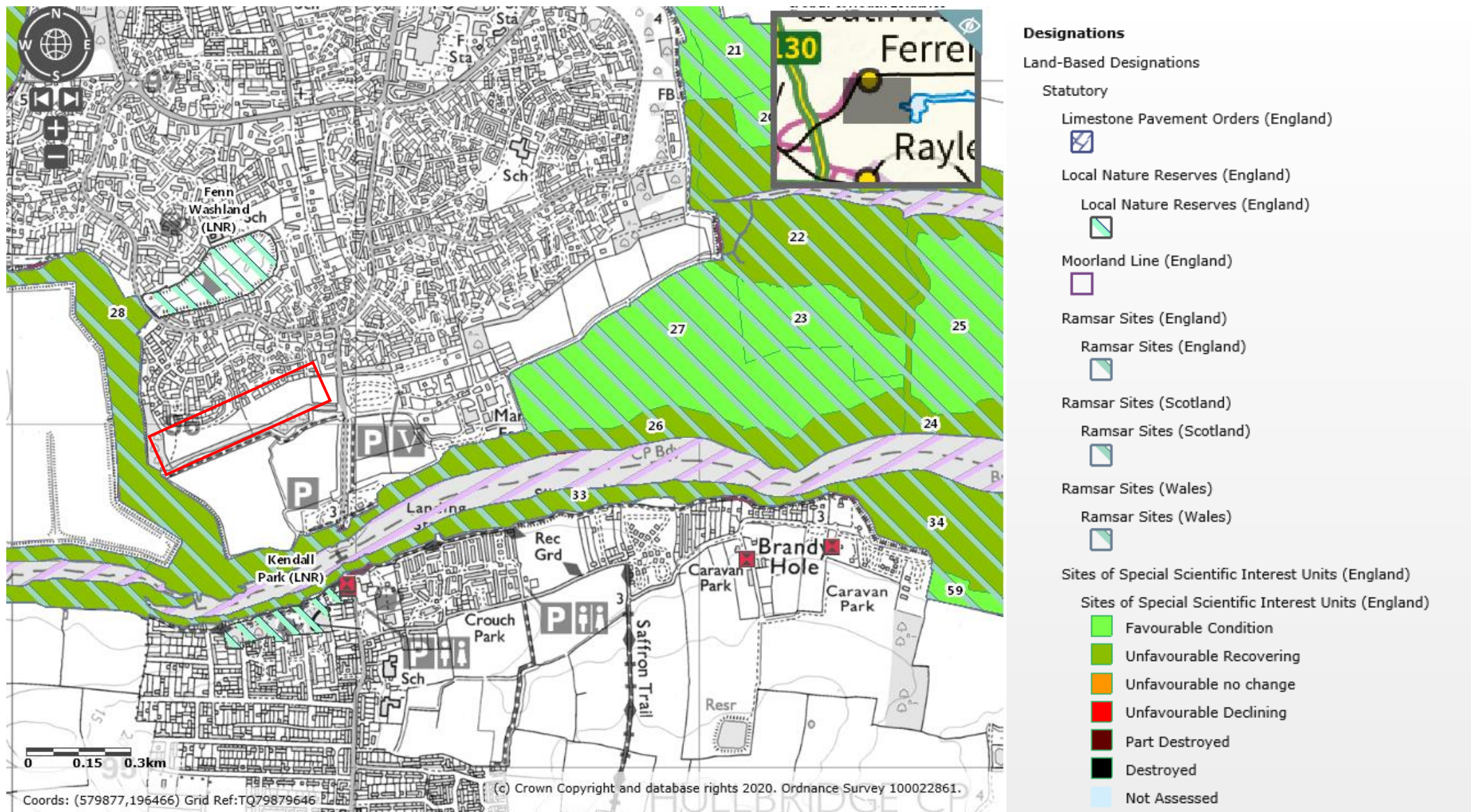


Figure 3: Map showing the nature reserves and important conservation sites located near to Frankland Fields, highlighted in red (Magic Map, 2020)

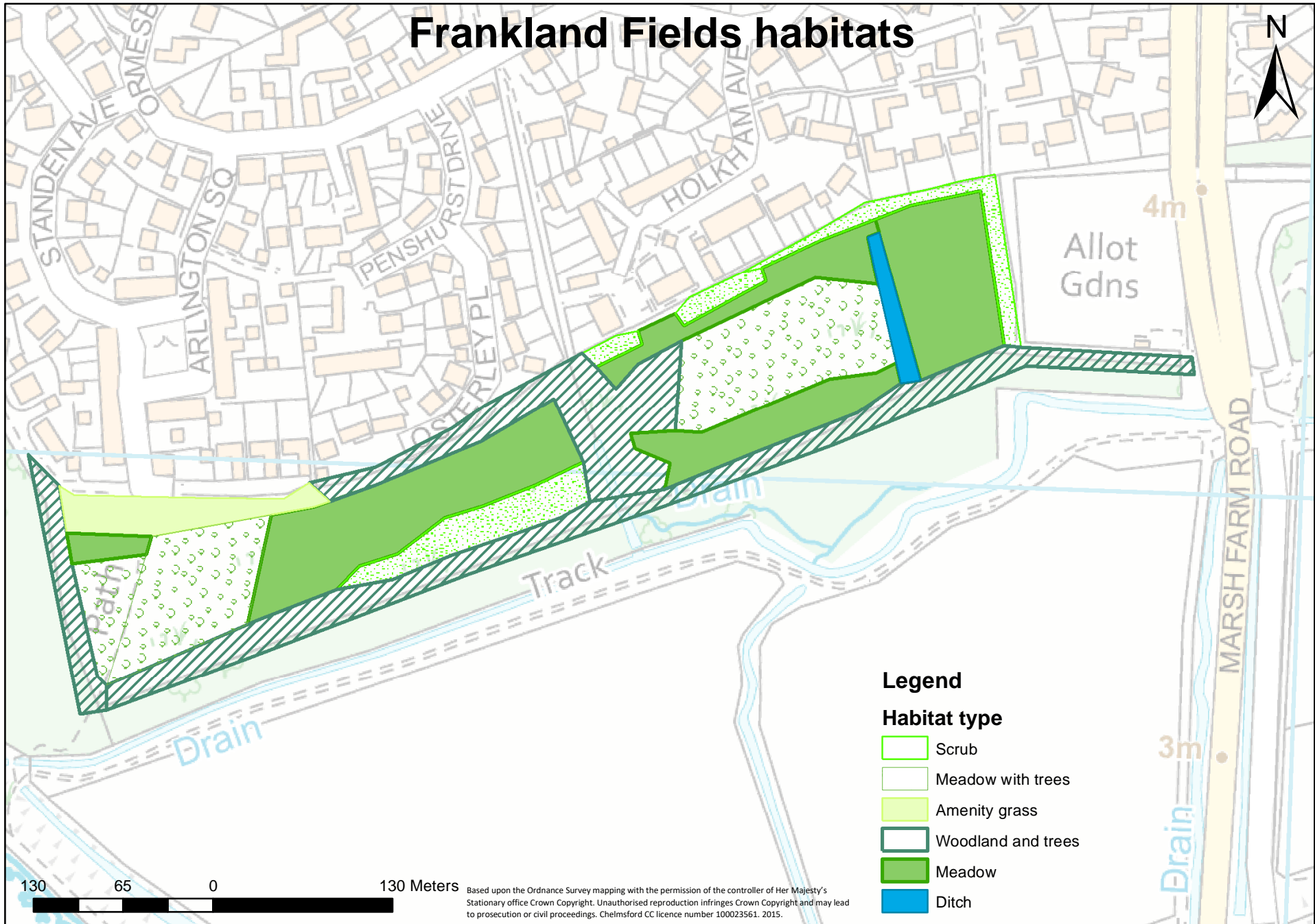


Figure 4: Map showing habitat types in Frankland Fields (Compiled by the author, 2020)

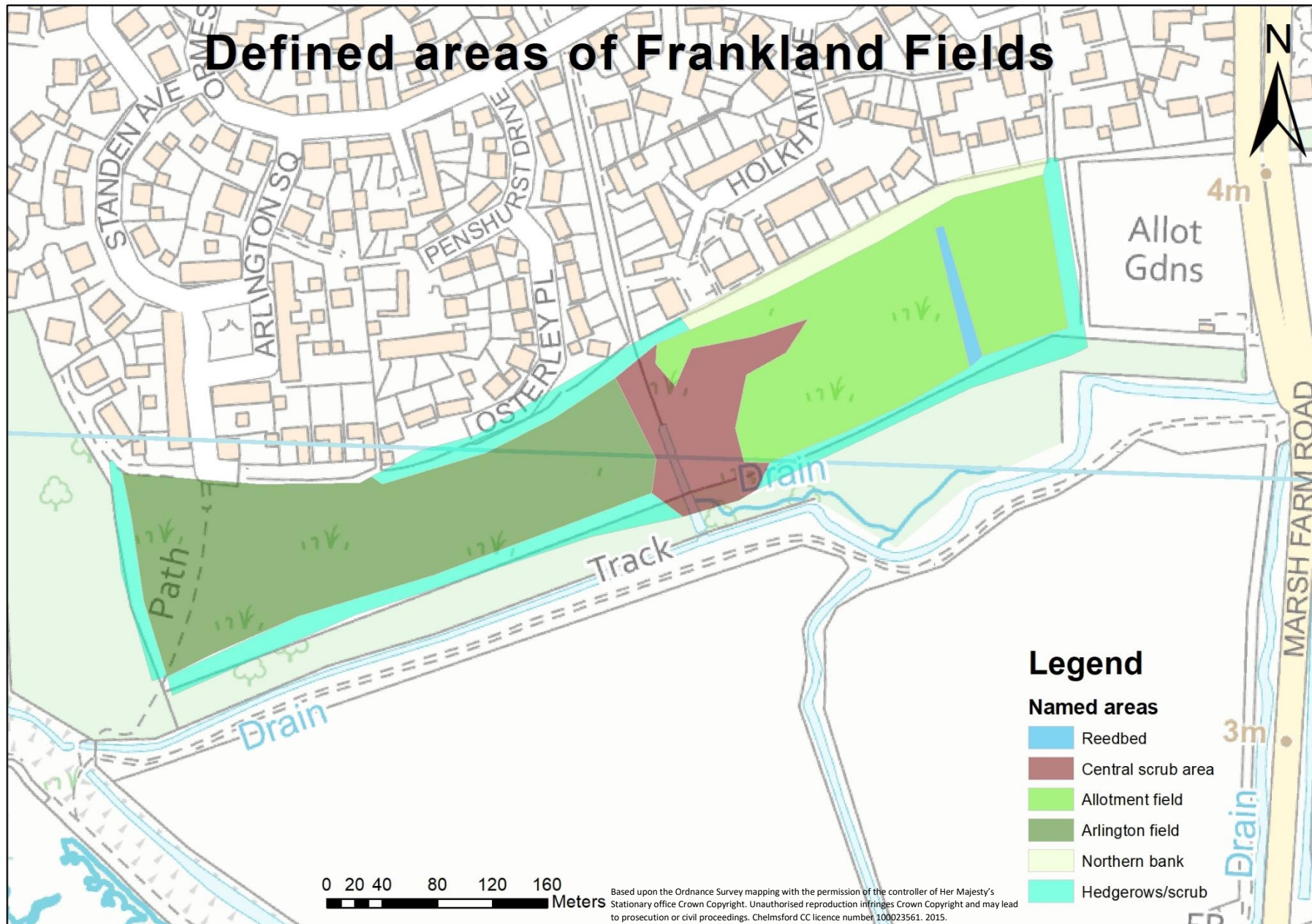


Figure 5: Map showing defined areas of Frankland Fields (Compiled by the author, 2020)

2.0 Site description

The site is divided up into six habitats: grassland (meadow), scrub, woodland, meadow with trees, amenity grassland and a ditch (shown in figure 4). There are two main areas which make up the nature reserve. These two areas were previously part of two separate fields



which were agricultural land. Woodland to the South is on land managed by Essex County Council and hedgerows are present on the site, some of which are remnant hedgerows from the time when the area was agricultural land. Also, there is a bank on the northern edge of the site which provide flood protection for the new houses.

2.1 Allotment field

The field closest to the allotment site and Marsh Farm road is around 1.3ha and in primarily open grassland with several trees dotted around (shown in figure 5). There is access to the area by a track from Marsh Farm road, a footpath from Haddon Mead and Holkham Avenue. The field is primarily used by dog walkers and for leisure activities. There is scrub located on the south side of the site adjacent to the woodland on the Essex Country Council site.

2.2 Arlington field

This field is located closest to Arlington Square and is around 1.6ha and in primarily open grassland with several trees dotted around (shown in figure 5). There is access to the areas from allotment field and Arlington Square for vehicles. There is also pedestrian access to Arlington field by footpaths from Osterley Place and the River Crouch footpath. The field is primarily used by dog walkers and for leisure activities.



2.3 Central scrub area

The central scrub area is dominated by Hawthorn and Blackthorn with some Oak dotted amongst (shown in figure 5). It is a remnant of the scrub that was present on the site before clearance was carried out. It is a small area but connected to the hedgerow which separates Arlington field and Allotment field. It provides habitat for birds and small mammals.

2.4 Northern bank

The bank to the north of the site borders the residential area and provides flood protection. It was created when the housing was built and runs the entire northern length of the site (shown in figure 5). The bank is mostly open grassland with some sections that are covered in scrub. It provides habitat for small mammals, insects, birds and reptiles.



2.5 Hedgerows/scrub

The hedgerows on the site (shown in figure 5) border the allotments and divide allotment field and Arlington field. These hedgerows are comprised of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Field Maple, and Oak. They provide connectivity to other adjacent sites and connectivity around the site for birds, small mammals, and insects. There is also a hedge located along the boundary with Osterley place comprised of Laurel, Hazel, Field Maple, and Hawthorn.

2.6 Reedbed

The reedbed on site is located within Allotment field (shown in figure 5) and is an important site for birds, small mammals and insects. It is comprised mainly of Common reed with some grasses and soft rush.

3.0 Site evaluation

The site is small but contains a diverse mix of habitats including grassland, scrub, ditches, and woodland. The site is primarily comprised of open grassland with some areas of scrub and trees scattered around the site. A key aim of the management plan is to continue to consolidate the key habitat areas and ensure that the site remains open. Figure 4 outlines the habitats that are present on the site of Frankland Fields. The benefit of the site for wildlife must be balanced against the value for people that use the site. Sites like this can have conflict between people and wildlife so getting local people to understand which wildlife the site provides habitat to.

3.1 Biodiversity

The site has a rich biodiversity and provides an important habitat for many different species. The mix of habitats and links with other wildlife sites nearby enhance its value and help to increase its biodiversity. With any site the greater the number of habitats present usually means that there is a greater biodiversity (shown in figure 4). The maintenance of this site intends to enhance and protect the habitats present. The most important habitat is grassland and is surveyed in order to determine their value and condition.

3.1.1 Grassland/Meadow

The meadow areas are the main habitat on site (shown in figure 4), and they are important for a wide variety of wildlife. This habitat is comprised of species including Yellow Rattle, Grass vetchling, Buch vetch, Oxeye daisy, Creeping buttercup, Birdsfoot trefoil and Meadow buttercup. Also, within some areas of meadow there are trees dotted around which do not affect the overall open character of this grassland (shown in figure 4). The trees dotted in these areas consist mainly of Hawthorn, Blackthorn and some fruit trees.



It is important and important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, especially bees. This site was surveyed by Bumblebee Conservation Trust and it was identified as an important site for the Shill carder bee and the Brown-banded carder bee (Bumblebee Conservation Trust, 2014). In addition to this the wildflowers in this habitat are important for other pollinators including butterflies and other insects. This habitat is also important for reptiles and amphibians particularly for Common Lizard, Slow Worms and Newts.

3.1.2 Amenity Grassland

There is a small area of amenity grassland located to the West of the site, close to Arlington Square (shown in figure 4). This is cut on a monthly basis to provide some amenity space for the local residents. It has limited value for wildlife, however it only accounts for a small percentage of the area of the total area of the site.



3.1.3 Scrub

The scrub on site is mainly Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Bramble and located mostly around the edges of the site and a small clump in between allotment field and Arlington field. It is an important habitat for a wide range of birds and small mammals. In addition, this habitat provides important linkages to other sites for birds, bats and small

mammals. It is also important to note that the balance between scrub and grassland is important to ensure that the site has greatest value. To maintain the biodiversity of the site the scrub area needs to be maintained.

3.1.4 Hedgerows

The hedgerows on site are comprised of similar species to the scrub areas, being Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Bramble and Field Maple. The hedgerows on site are around the edges and connect the site to surrounding hedgerows and therefore surrounding sites. The hedgerows on the site provide habitat for birds, bats, mammals and insects. They are also important for enhancing biodiversity through allowing connectivity to other parts of the site.

3.1.5 Woodland

The woodland on site is located mostly along the southern boundary of the site (figure 4). It links to the woodland on the Essex County Council area of land which is adjacent to this site. It is comprised of Ash, Oak, Poplar, Hawthorn and Blackthorn. It provides habitat for birds, bats, small mammals, insects and reptiles during the winter months.



3.1.6 Ditches

The ditches on site provide wetland habitat on site which enhances the biodiversity. Ditches are located on close to the allotment end of the site and have standing water for the winter and early spring months of the year. They connect to the ditches on the adjected site managed by Essex County Council. They have common reed and other grass growing on the banks. They provide habitat for birds, insects, newts, frogs, and small mammals (particularly water voles).

3.2 Community and Education

As a nature reserve close to an urban area it is important for the local community as an area for dog walking and exercise.

3.2.1 For the local community

The footpaths on site also connect to other footpaths on the River Crouch. Open green spaces like this are important for mental health particularly in urban areas (Rick Nauert, 2018). The site is an important pedestrian link for local people between the town and the River Crouch footpath. It provides a peaceful place to escape the busy town centre and an opportunity to engage with wildlife.

3.2.2 Volunteering

Monthly volunteer sessions are run on site to manage the site for wildlife and to keep the footpaths maintained. Volunteer sessions are run by the Volunteer Leader for 2 hours and local people are invited along to help to carry out practical maintenance on the nature reserve. Tools and equipment are provided by the City Council appropriate to the job. In addition to this, corporate groups (from local businesses) volunteer on specific projects on the site organised and lead by the Volunteer leader

3.2.3 Local schools

Occasionally local schools are invited to the site to carry out practical work.

3.3 Information and reporting provision

On-site signage and interpretation are provided at the main entrances (shown in the image below). This gives information about the habitats and the wildlife present on site. The interpretation panels also show an aerial map on the site and contact details for enquiries about the site and the number for Parkwatch which is an emergency contact number for the Parks department.



3.4 Marketing and promotion

Notice boards are located at the main entrances to inform people visiting the park about events, volunteering and ways that they can get involved. In addition to this the new Parks website has information about the site and ways to get involved along with activities for children to do on site e.g. going on a bug hunt, identifying wildflowers and much more. This website has been recently created and it will be developed further over the coming months.

3.3 Budget

The budget for the site will be provided by the budget from Chelmsford City Council Parks for Nature Reserves. The budget for general maintenance of the site will come from the ground's maintenance budget e.g. for footpath maintenance. For one off projects, additional funds will be obtained from local development.

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Management objectives

The overall aim for managing this site is to maintain and enhance the grassland habitat and to maintain the other habitats. The main habitat blocks are grassland, scrub patches located around the site and ditches and hedgerows around the edges of the site.

1. To manage the variety of habitats within the site to maximise their biodiversity value.
2. To maintain and enhance the grassland.
3. To develop the site as a learning resource for local schools.
4. To maintain public access within the site.

4.2 Specific Objectives 2020 to 2025

Specific Objective	Description	Target achievement date
Enhance the connectivity to other sites nearby.	Maintain the hedgerows and work with surrounding organisations to enhance connectivity.	By the end of 2025.
Create more hibernacula.	Build at least one hibernaculum each year to 2025 spread around the site.	Every year until 2025.
Continue towards species rich grassland target.	Maintain grassland by removing scrub growing within it and maintaining the area of the current scrub.	By the end of 2025.
Enhance the ditch/pond area by 10%.	Enhance the ditch/pond by digging out a small section and removing roots of Blackthorn.	By the end of 2025.

5.0 Management operations (October 2020 to October 2025)

October to December 2020

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Annual cut and clearance of grassland areas by mechanical means.	Allotment field and Arlington field.	High	Annually	Council employees using mechanical means and removal of green waste from site.
Annual cut and clearance of grassland, cutting by mechanical means and clearance by volunteers.	North bank.	High	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut back and maintain footpath and entrances to the site.	Arlington field and allotment field.	Medium	Monthly	

January to March 2021

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Coppice and clear Blackthorn in sections along the side of Arlington field.	Arlington Field	High	By the end of March	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut and clear half of reed bed.	Allotment Field ditch 'B'	High	By the end of Feb	Green waste to be used for a hibernaculum.
Creation of a hibernaculum on site in a suitable spot.	On site	Medium	As required.	

April to June 2021

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Path Maintenance – Surface entrances to ensure that this is reduced trip hazards.	All	Medium	Every two months	Road Plainings
Remove weed species from grassland (hogweed, goats rue and creeping thistle)	Arlington field and allotment field	High	During the growing season.	Green waste to be removed from site.
Monitor species rich area to control invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field and allotment field	Medium	During growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Footpaths cut by a ride on mower.	All areas	High	Growing season	Carried out by grounds maintenance.

July to September 2021

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Remove Hogweed, Goat's rue small trees and other invasive/competitive species.	Allotment field	High	During the growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Undertake safety inspection of trees on site.	All	High	Annually	Council staff to carry out.
Cut back pedestrian entrances to the site	All	High	As required	
Remove trees growing within the grassland on the Northern bank.	Northern bank	Medium	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.

October to December 2021

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Annual cut and clearance of grassland areas by mechanical means.	Allotment field and Arlington field.	High	Annually	Council employees using mechanical means and removal of green waste from site.
Annual cut and clearance of grassland, cutting by mechanical means and clearance by volunteers.	North bank.	High	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut back and maintain footpath and entrances to the site.	Arlington field and allotment field.	Medium	Monthly	

January to March 2022

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Coppice and clear Blackthorn next section along the side of Arlington field.	Arlington Field	High	By the end of March	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut and clear half of reed bed (Alternate each year)	Allotment Field ditch 'A'	High	By the end of Feb	
Creation of a hibernaculum on site in a suitable spot.	On site	Medium	As required.	
Create bee cliffs on Northern bank for solitary bees.	Northern bank	Medium	As required	
Lay half of hedge along Osterley Place road.	Allotment Field	Medium	By the end of Feb	

April to June 2022

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Path Maintenance – Top-up surface at entrances to ensure that this is reduced trip hazards.	All	Medium	Every two months	Road Plainings
Remove weed species from grassland (hogweed, goats rue and creeping thistle)	Arlington field and allotment field	High	During the growing season.	Green waste to be removed from site.
Monitor species rich area to control invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field and allotment field	Medium	During growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Footpaths cut by a ride on mower.	All areas	High	During growing season	Carried out by grounds maintenance operative.

July to September 2022

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Remove Hogweed, Goat's rue, small trees and other invasive/competitive species.	Allotment field	High	During the growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Undertake safety inspection of trees on site.	All	High	Annually	Council staff to carry out.
Cut back pedestrian entrances to the site	All	High	As required	
Remove trees growing within the grassland on the Northern bank.	Northern bank	Medium	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.

October to December 2022

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Annual cut and clearance of grassland areas by mechanical means.	Allotment field and Arlington field.	High	Annually	Council employees using mechanical means and removal of green waste from site.
Annual cut and clearance of grassland, cutting by mechanical means and clearance by volunteers.	North bank.	High	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut back and maintain footpath and entrances to the site.	Arlington field and allotment field.	Medium	Monthly	
Coppice blackthorn along the edge of Allotment field.	Allotment field.	High	As required	Green waste to be removed from site.

January to March 2023

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Coppice and clear Blackthorn next section along the side of Arlington field.	Arlington Field	High	By the end of March	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut and clear half of reed bed (Alternate each year)	Allotment Field ditch 'B'	High	By the end of Feb	
Creation of a hibernaculum on site in a suitable spot.	On site	Medium	As required.	
Create bee cliffs on Northern bank for solitary bees.	Northern bank	Medium	As required	
Lay half of hedge along Osterley Place road.	Allotment Field	Medium	By the end of Feb	

April to June 2023

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Path Maintenance – Top-up surface at entrances to ensure that this is reduced trip hazards.	All	Medium	Every two months	Road Plainings
Remove weed species from grassland (hogweed, goats rue and creeping thistle)	Arlington field and allotment field	High	During the growing season.	Green waste to be removed from site.
Monitor species rich area to control invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field and allotment field	Medium	During growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Footpaths cut by a ride on mower.	All areas	High	During growing season	Carried out by grounds maintenance operative.

July to September 2023

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Remove Hogweed, Goat's rue, small trees and other invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field	High	During the growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Undertake safety inspection of trees on site.	All	High	Annually	Council staff to carry out.
Cut back pedestrian entrances to the site	All	High	As required	
Remove trees growing within the grassland on the Northern bank.	Northern bank	Medium	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.

October to December 2023

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Annual cut and clearance of grassland areas by mechanical means.	Allotment field and Arlington field.	High	Annually	Council employees using mechanical means and removal of green waste from site.
Annual cut and clearance of grassland, cutting by mechanical means and clearance by volunteers.	North bank.	High	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.
Coppice Blackthorn in the southwest corner of Allotment field.	Allotment Field	Medium	As required	Green waste to be removed from site.
Extend ditch to create a larger wet area in the southwest corner of allotment field.	Allotment Field	Low	During the Autum/Winter	

January to March 2024

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Coppice and clear Blackthorn next section along the side of Arlington field.	Arlington Field	High	By the end of March	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut and clear half of reed bed (Alternate each year)	Allotment Field ditch 'A'	High	By the end of Feb	
Creation of a hibernaculum on site in a suitable spot.	On site	Medium	As required.	
Create bee cliffs on Northern bank for solitary bees.	Northern bank	Medium	As required	
Lay half of hedge along Osterley Place road.	Allotment Field	Medium	By the end of Feb	

April to June 2024

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Path Maintenance – Top-up surface at entrances to ensure that this is reduced trip hazards.	All	Medium	Every two months	Road Plainings
Remove weed species from grassland (hogweed, goats rue and creeping thistle)	Arlington field and allotment field	High	During the growing season.	Green waste to be removed from site.
Monitor species rich area to control invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field and allotment field	Medium	During growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Enlarge the reedbed area by digging out next to the ditch.	Reedbed	Low	Autum/Winter	
Footpaths cut by a ride on mower.	All areas	High	Growing season	Carried out by grounds maintenance.

July to September 2024

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Remove Hogweed, Goat's rue, small trees and other invasive/competitive species.	Allotment field	High	During the growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Undertake safety inspection of trees on site.	All	High	Annually	Council staff to carry out.
Cut back pedestrian entrances to the site	All	High	As required	
Remove trees growing in the grassland on the Northern bank.	Northern bank	Medium	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.

October to December 2024

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Annual cut and clearance of grassland areas by mechanical means.	Allotment field and Arlington field.	High	Annually	Council employees using mechanical means and removal of green waste from site.
Annual cut and clearance of grassland, cutting by mechanical means and clearance by volunteers.	North bank.	High	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut back and maintain footpath and entrances to the site.	Arlington field and allotment field.	Medium	Monthly	
Coppice Blackthorn along the eastern edge of allotment field.	Eastern edge of allotment field.	Medium	As required	

January to March 2025

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Coppice and clear Blackthorn along the side of Arlington field.	Arlington Field	High	By the end of March	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut and clear half of reed bed (Alternate each year)	Allotment Field ditch 'B'	High	By the end of Feb	Green waste to be removed from site.
Creation of a hibernaculum on site in a suitable spot.	On site	Medium	As required.	
Create bee cliffs on Northern bank for solitary bees.	Northern bank	Medium	As required	
Finish laying the hedge along Osterley Place road.	Allotment Field	High	By the end of Feb	

April to June 2025

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Path Maintenance – Surface entrances to ensure that this is reduced trip hazards.	All	Medium	Every two months	Road Plainings
Remove weed species from grassland (hogweed, goats rue and creeping thistle)	Arlington field and allotment field	High	During the growing season.	Green waste to be removed from site.
Monitor species rich area to control invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field and allotment field	Medium	During growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Footpaths cut by a ride on mower.	All areas	High	Growing season	Carried out by grounds maintenance.

July to September 2025

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Remove Hogweed, Goat's rue, small trees and other invasive/competitive species.	Allotment field	High	During the growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Undertake safety inspection of trees on site.	All	High	Annually	Council staff to carry out.
Cut back pedestrian entrances to the site	All	High	As required	
Remove trees growing within the grassland on the Northern bank.	Northern bank	Medium	Annually	Green waste to be removed from site.

6.0 References and acknowledgements

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