

Frankland Fields LNR South Woodham Ferrers Management Plan 2026 – 2036



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Introduction

1.0 General information

Area: Approximately 2.9ha

Ownership: Chelmsford City Council since 2004

Site name: Frankland Fields Local Nature Reserve

W3W: [sidelined.defeat.domain](https://www.w3w.co.uk/sidelined.defeat.domain)

Awards: Green Flag

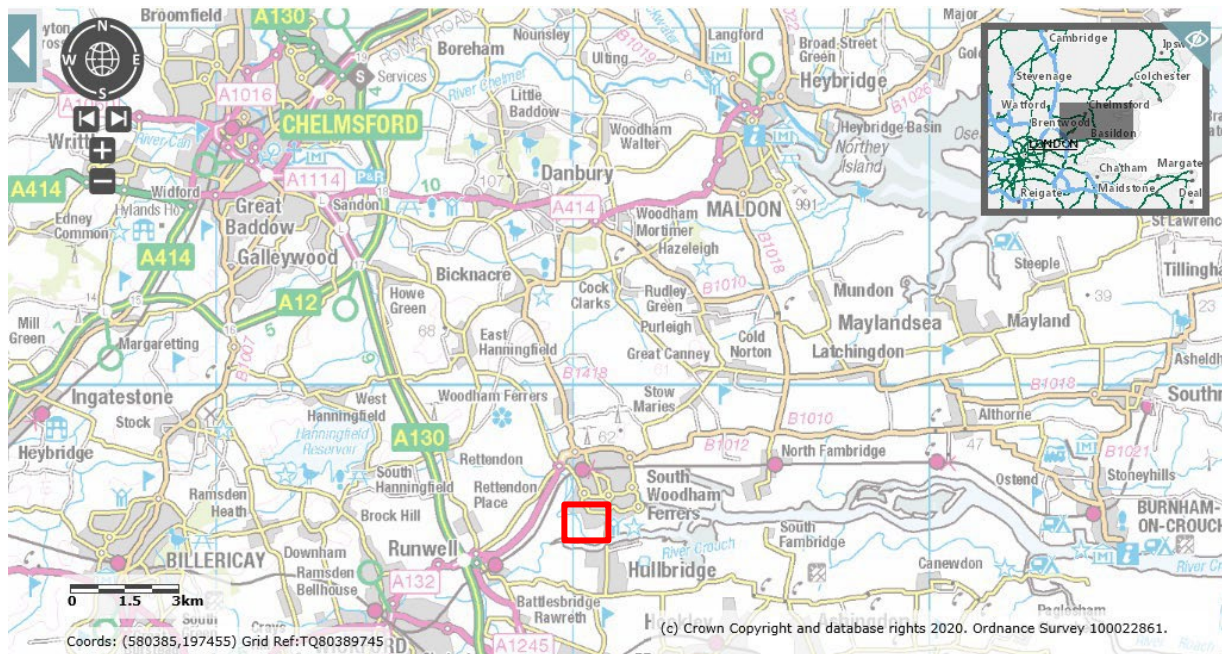


Figure 1: Frankland Fields LNR, South Woodham Ferrers. (Magic Map, 2020).

1.1 Site location

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

1.2 Management

This is the responsibility of the Council's Parks and Green Spaces team. The site is managed by City Council employees and volunteers. Regular monthly volunteer sessions encourage local people to come to help with the general maintenance of the site, whilst working to the management plan, developed with an independent ecologist.

1.3 Designations

The site is identified as Open Space in the Council's Site Allocations Development Plan document. It was declared a local nature reserve 7 June 2022 (refer fig.2)

1.4 Site history

It was originally farmland, part of Peatlands Farm until the 1990s, prior to the development of South Woodham Ferrers as a New Town in the 1980s.

1.5 Management achievements since inception

- Ongoing removal of Hawthorn and Blackthorn from the two open areas.
- Maintenance of footpath links to surrounding areas.
- Creation of a footbridge to provide a link with the River Crouch footpath.
- Improvement of grassland biodiversity.
- Signage and interpretation
- Promotion of the site

Key to the success of the site is to increase biodiversity and maintain the open grassland as a mosaic habitat with managed tree copses.

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 that Frankland Fields LNR is significant, shown in figure 3 and 4.

- LNRs – there are two LNRs located within 500m of the site (Fenn Washland and Kendall Park).
- 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.
- 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
- 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.
- 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 LNR is part of the mosaic of different habitats in this area.

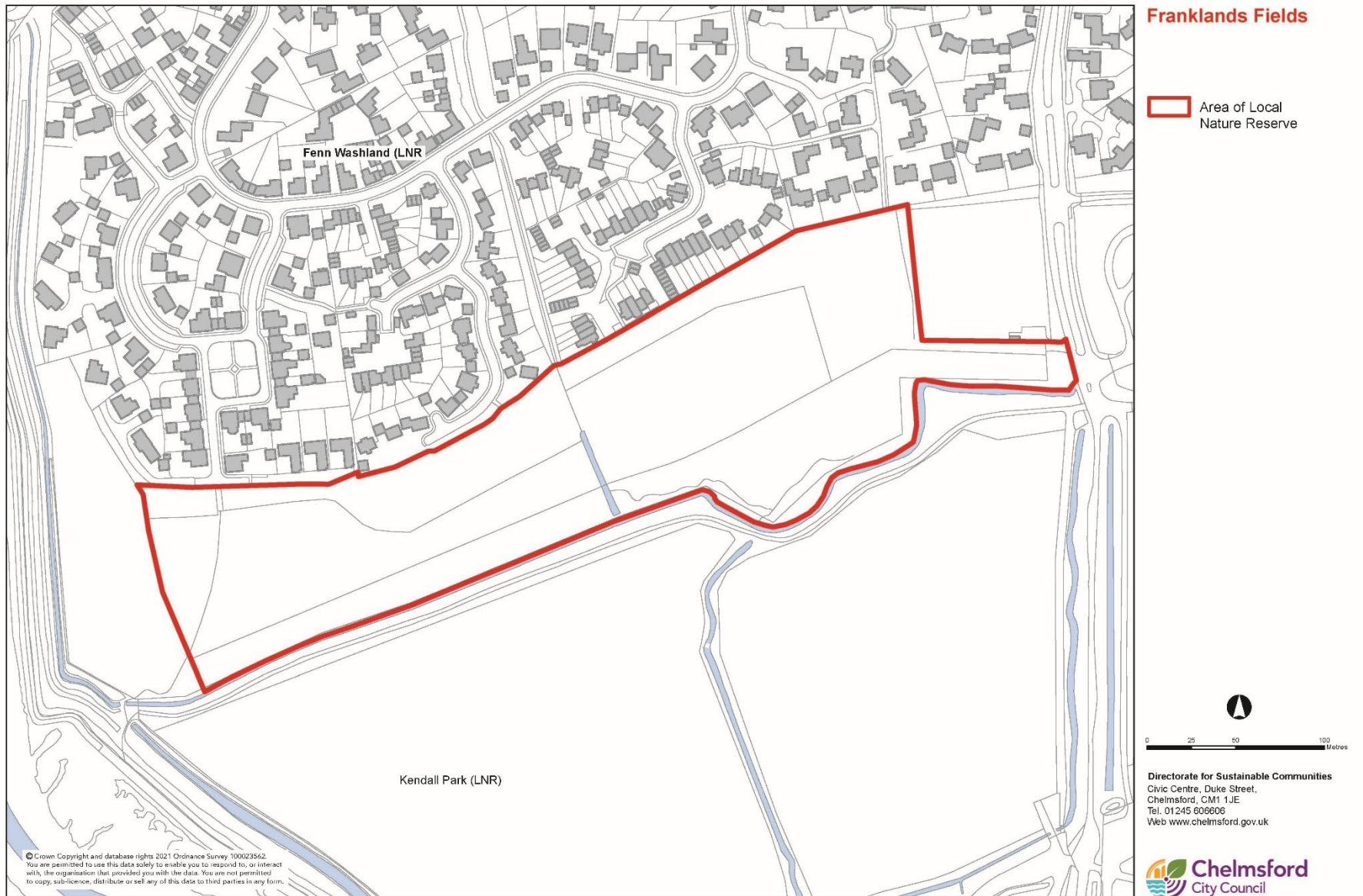


Figure 2: Map showing the boundary of Frankland Fields Local Nature Reserve

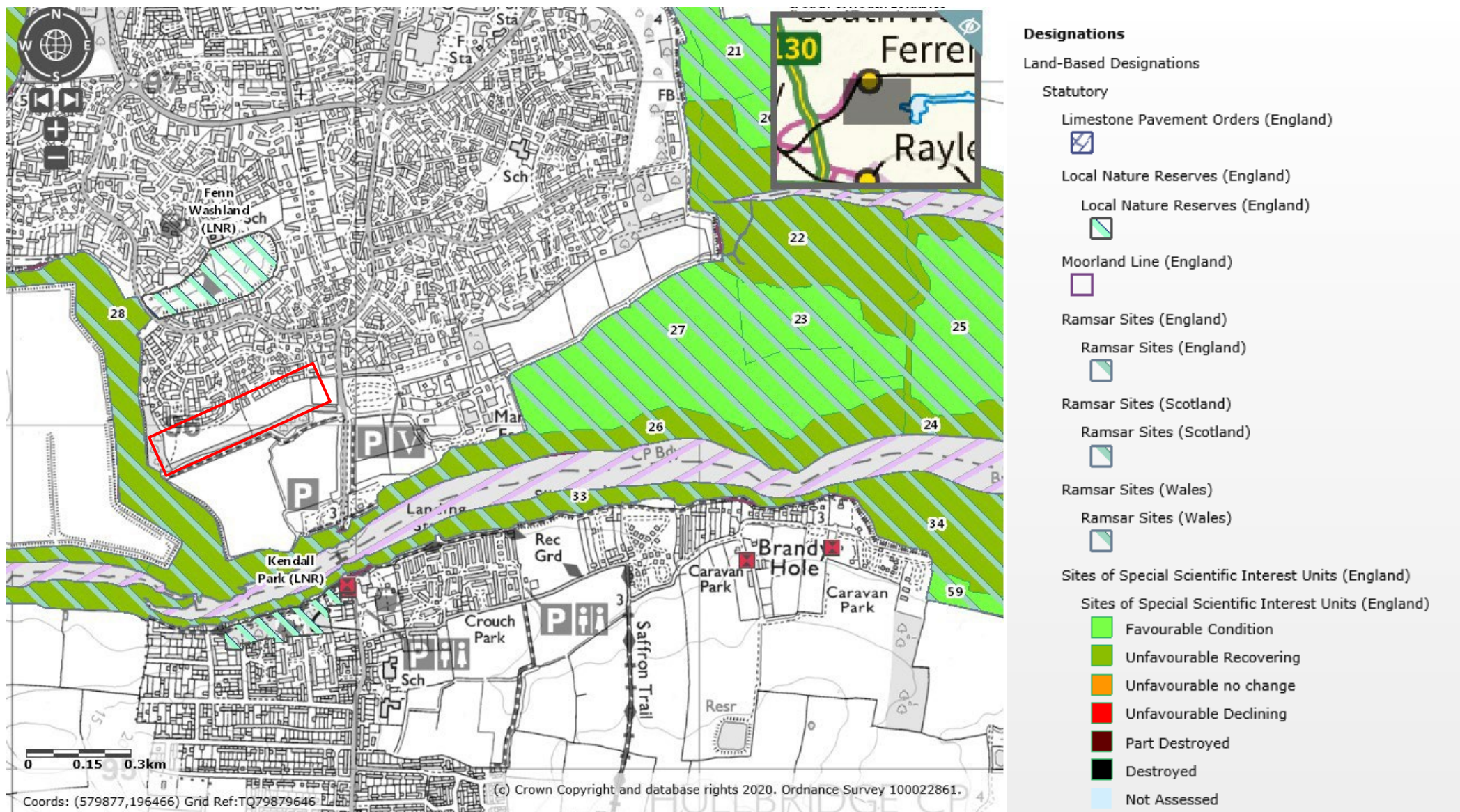


Figure 3: Map showing the nature reserves and important conservation sites located near to Frankland Fields, highlighted in red (Magic Map, 2020)

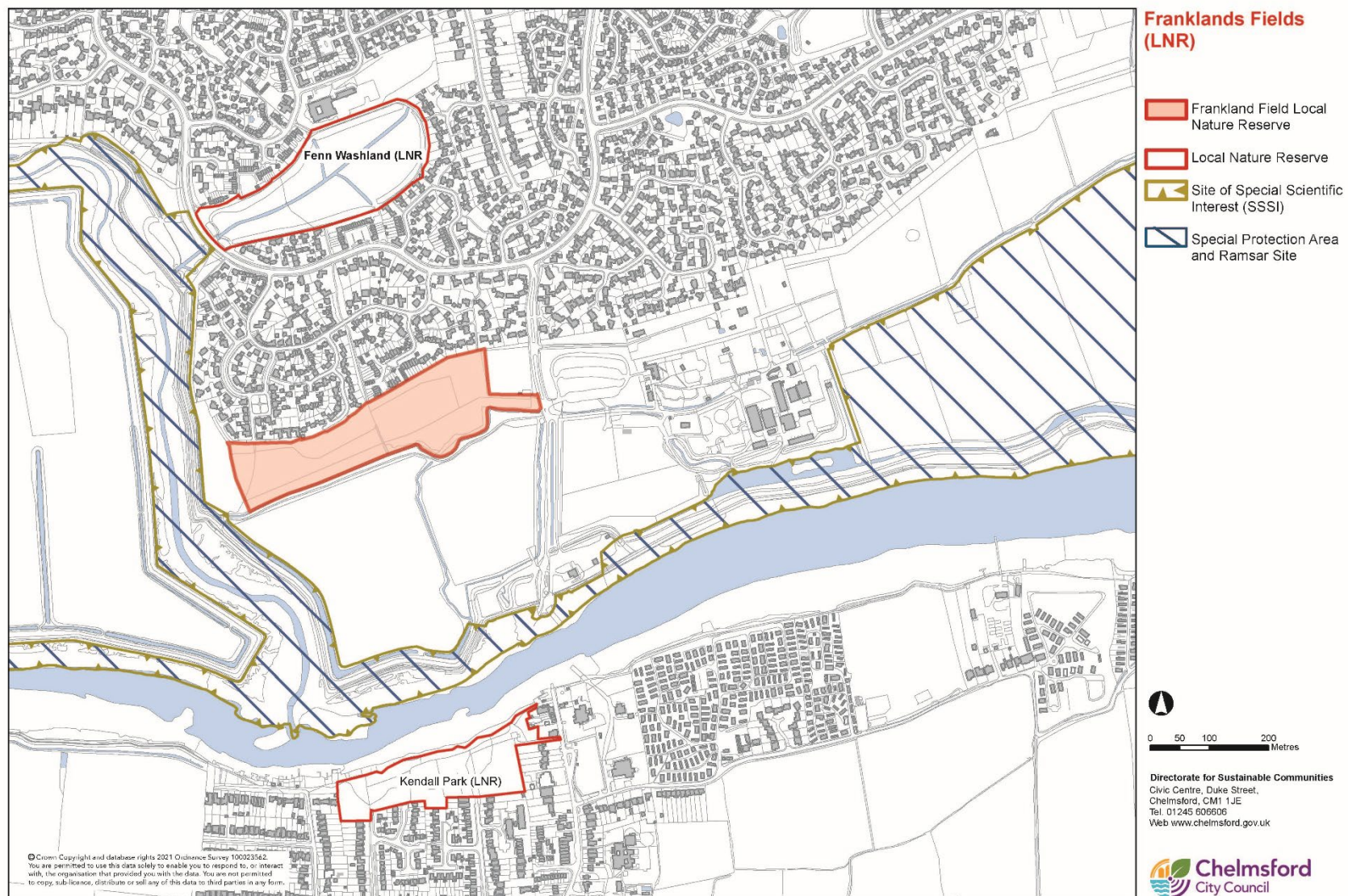
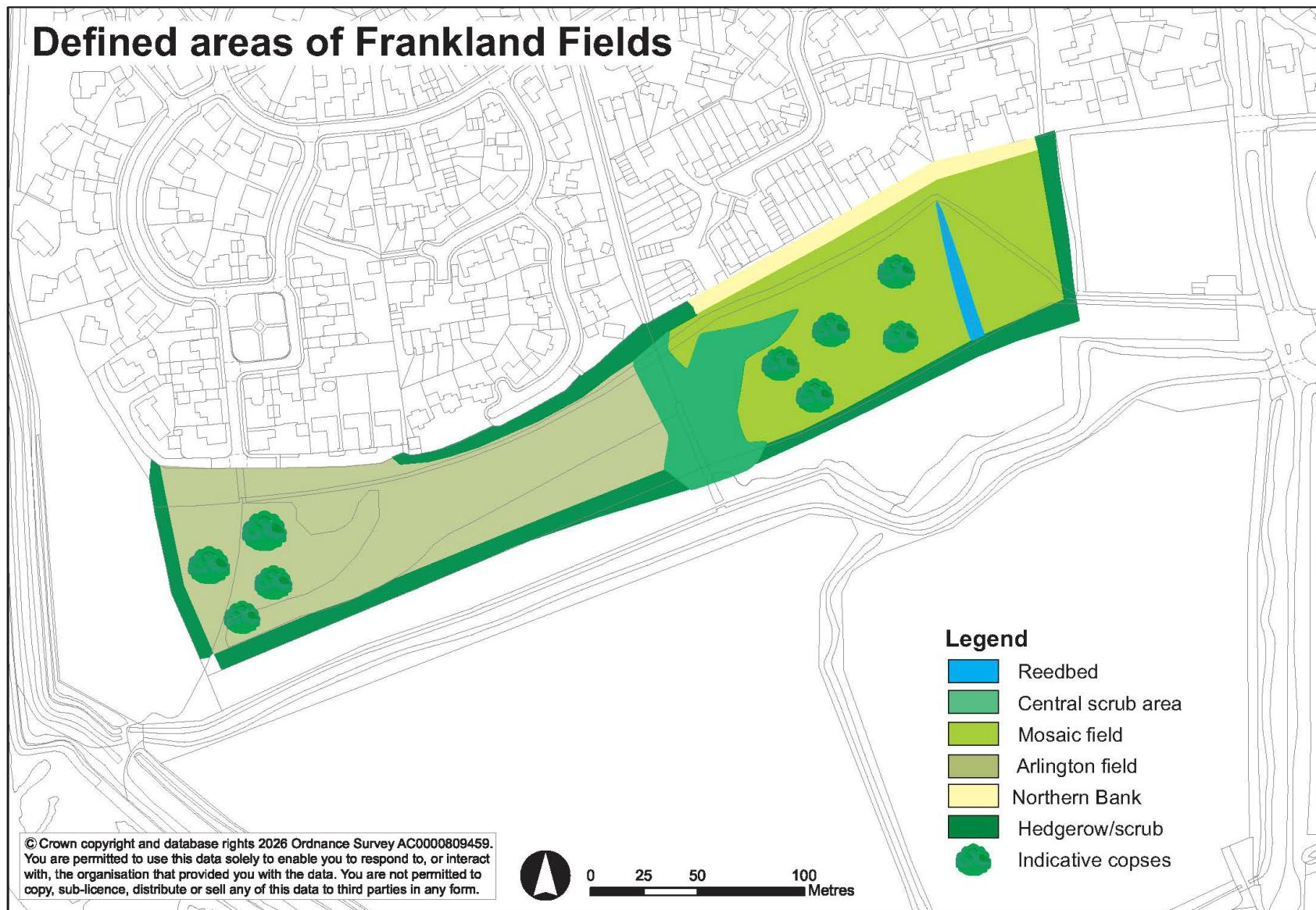


Figure 4: Map showing habitat types in Frankland Fields Local Nature Reserve



Based upon the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary office Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Chelmsford CC licence number 100023561. 2015.

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 main habitats shown in figure 5.

There are two main areas which make up the nature reserve. These were previously part of two separate fields which were farmed as agricultural land. Woodland adjoins the site to the south and west. Hedgerows are present on the site, some of which are remnant hedgerows from the time when the area was agricultural land. There is a bank on the northern edge of the site which provides flood protection for the housing.

2.1 Mosaic Meadow

The field closest to the allotment site and Marsh Farm Road is around 1.3ha and is primarily open grassland with scrub islands. These are of high value as habitat for birds and small mammals (shown in figure 5 habitats). There is access to the area by a track from Marsh Farm Road, a footpath from Haddon Mead and Holkham Avenue. There is scrub located on the south side of the site adjacent to the woodland on the Marsh Farm site.



2.2 Arlington Field

This field is located closest to Arlington Square and is around 1.6ha and is primarily open grassland with several trees dotted around (shown in figure 5). There is access to the areas from Mosaic Meadow and Arlington Square for machinery. There is also pedestrian access to Arlington field by footpaths from Osterley Place and the River Crouch footpath. The field has a predominance of Blackthorn that requires ongoing management. Originally Essex County Council planted up the boundaries with Blackthorn causing an ongoing issue as it's so invasive.



2.3 Central scrub area

The central scrub/tree area is dominated by Hawthorn and Blackthorn with a few mature Oak. It is a remnant of the scrub that was present on the site. It is a small area, connected to the wider landscape, and it provides habitat for birds and small mammals including bats. Its linkage is a valuable asset in terms of connectivity for animals through the site.



2.4 Northern bank

The bank to the north of the site, borders the residential area and is understood to provide flood protection. It was created when the housing was built and runs the entire northern length of the site.

The bank is mostly open grassland with some sections that are covered in scrub. It provides habitat for small mammals, insects, birds and reptiles. It also has some encroachment of Cherry Laurel which requires managing. Issues can also arise from fly tipping along this boundary.



2.5 Hedgerows/scrub



The hedgerows on the site border the allotments and divide Mosaic Meadow 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 Mosaic Meadow and is an important site for birds, small mammals and insects. It is comprised mainly of Common reed with some grasses and soft rush. Scallops have been cut from this to create areas for amphibians.



3.0 Site evaluation

The site is small but contains a diverse mix of habitats. A key aim of the management plan is to continue to consolidate the key habitat areas and ensure that the Mosaic Meadows remain such that a mix of habitats are provided. The benefit of the site for wildlife must be balanced against the value for people that use the site. The site can lie very wet in the winter and early spring months.

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. The maintenance of this site intends to enhance and protect the habitats present. It is considered the most important habitat is the grassland, including where scrub is within as a mosaic as this is a high value habitat.

Survey data for the site is known as a baseline. The aim is to continue to monitor the site and undertake further additional surveys as required in order to check that the site management is providing the best habitats for species. Key species are to be identified and site management is to reflect this.



3.1.1 Grassland/Meadow

The meadow areas are the main habitat on site and they are important for a wide variety of wildlife. This habitat is comprised of species including Yellow Rattle, Grass vetchling, Vetch, Cowslips, Oxeye daisy, Creeping buttercup, Birdsfoot trefoil and Meadow buttercup. Also, within some areas of meadow there are trees/scrub islands around which do not affect the overall open character of this grassland. These islands consist mainly of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Dog Rose and some fruit trees.

This is an important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, especially bees. This site was surveyed by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and it was identified as an important site for the Shril 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. The site is of considerable significance for birds as it lays adjacent to a RAMSAR and ground nesting birds are present within meadow areas.



3.1.2 Amenity Grassland

Within the site main pathways, although well walked, are additionally cut approximately once a month, depending on growing conditions, to ensure people stay on paths and this helps to protect meadow areas.



3.1.3 Scrub

The scrub on site is mainly Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Bramble and located mostly around the edges of the site. 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. There needs to be a balance between scrub and grassland, this is important to ensure that the site has greatest value. To maintain the biodiversity of the site the scrub areas are 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.

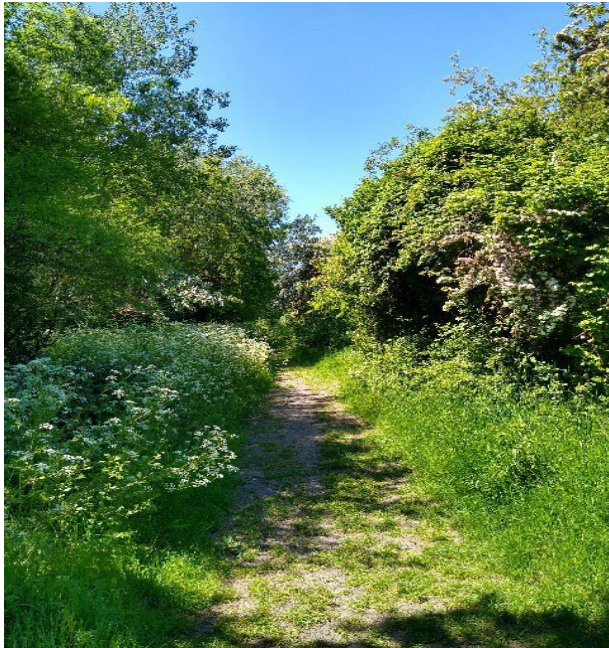
3.1.5 Woodland

There is limited woodland on site which is located mostly along the southern boundary of the site. 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

Ditches provide wetland habitat which enhance the biodiversity of the site. They are located close to the allotment end of the site and have standing water for the winter and early spring months. They connect to the ditches on the adjacent site managed by Essex County Council and have Common reed and other grass growing on the banks. They provide habitat for birds, insects, newts, frogs, and small mammals (particularly water voles). Small scallops have been excavated along the main ditch to endeavour to create habitat for amphibians

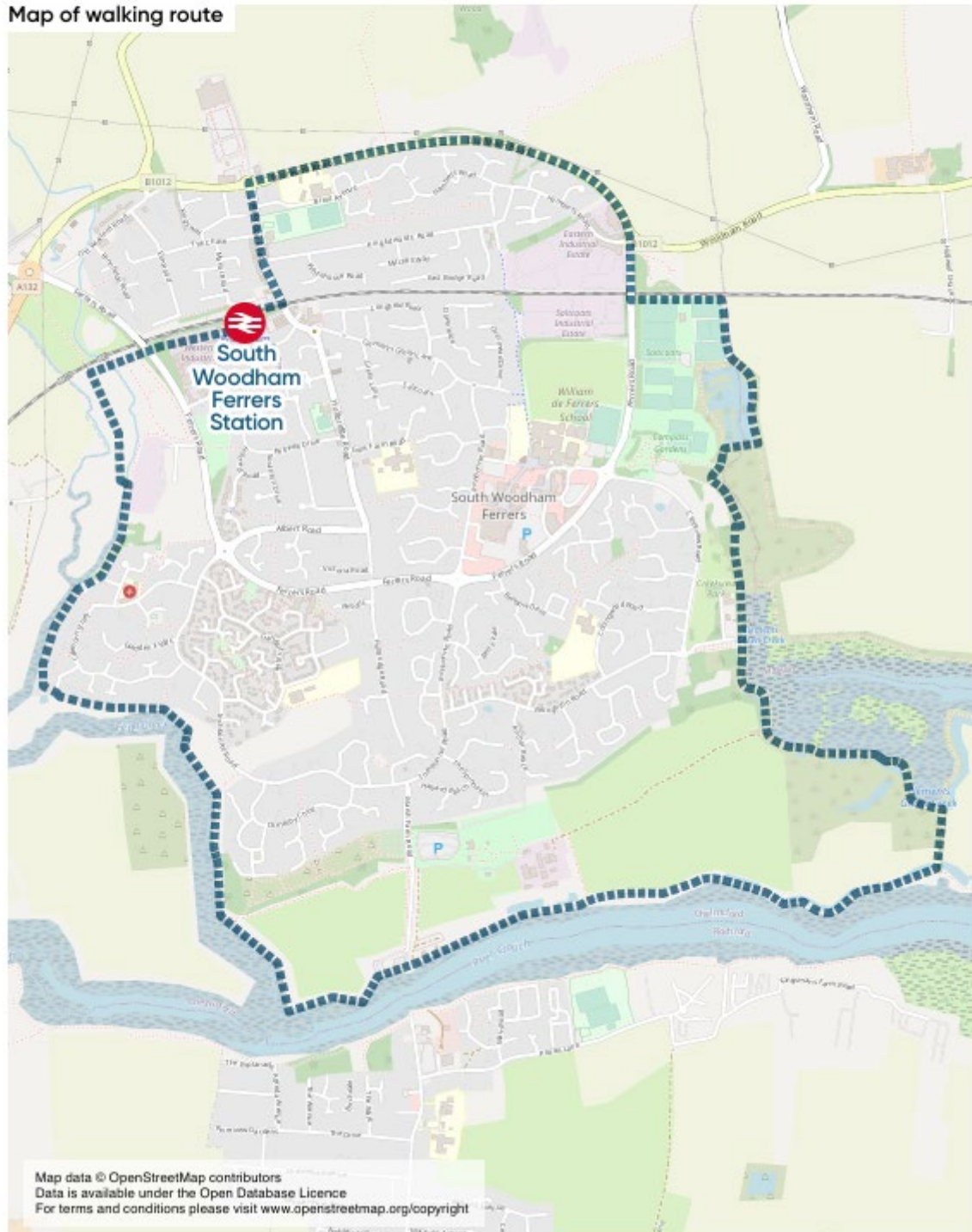


3.2 Community and Education

It has great connectivity to the South Woodham Ferrers walk network, which is based along the river corridor.

10 South Woodham Ferrers circular walk

Map of walking route



3.2.1 Volunteering

Monthly volunteer sessions are held to manage the site for wildlife. The sessions are led by the Parks Ranger as part of the parks volunteer programme. They are aimed at the local community and are publicised by the Town Council as well as on site. Volunteers also attend from across Chelmsford.

Sessions focus on practical tasks across the nature reserve, carried out in line with the management plan, and include habitat surveys at various times of the year. All sessions are led by Parks Rangers, and the City Council provides the hand tools and equipment needed for each task. In addition, corporate groups from local businesses volunteer on specific projects at the site, organised and led by the ranger.



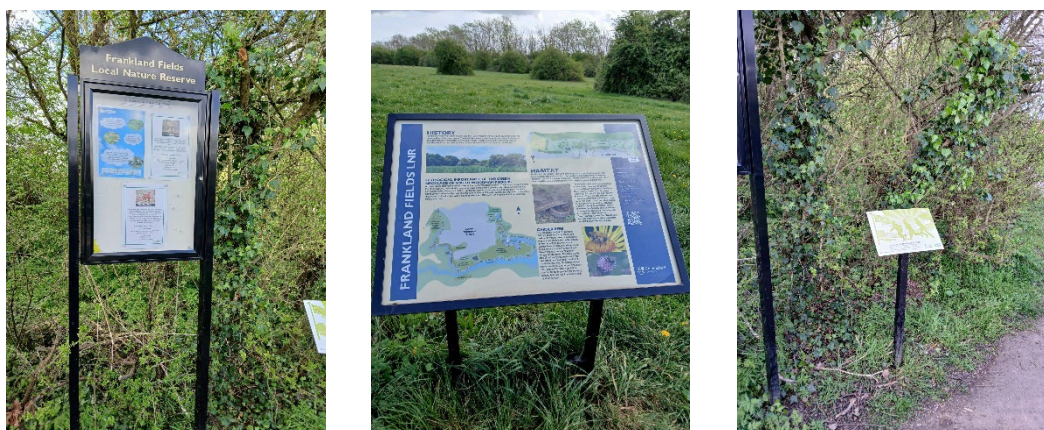
3.2.2 Local schools

As part of the parks outreach programme, Park Rangers deliver sessions for local primary schools at this site and other Chelmsford City Council parks. These include habitat survey sessions delivered through the Space to Thrive project.

3.3 Information and reporting provision

On-site signage and interpretation are provided at the main entrances, as shown in the images below. These give visitors information about the habitats and wildlife found on the site. Poster cases around the site also display species information, session dates, and contact details for enquiries. They include the ParkWatch number, which is an emergency contact number for the Parks department.

3.4 Marketing and promotion



Notice boards at the main entrances provide visitors with information about events, volunteering opportunities, and ways to get involved. These include QR codes directing visitors to the main Parks website. The website has information about the site, opportunities to get involved, and activities for children to enjoy during their visit, such as bug hunts and wildflower identification.

www.loveyourchelmsford

The site is also promoted via the main parks communication this includes;

- Parks Volunteer Newsletter
- LYC newsletter which highlights various parks and LNRs throughout the year and activities.
- LYC Facebook
- LYC Instagram
- Specific projects such as Space to Thrive.
- South Woodham Town Council liaison

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, with valuable scrub mosaic with ditches and hedgerows around the edges of the site.

- To manage the variety of habitats within the site to maximise their biodiversity value.
- To undertake additional survey works by professionally qualified people and to continue to monitor survey data
- To maintain and enhance the grassland.
- To develop the site as a learning resource for local schools.
- To maintain public access within the site.

4.2 Key Specific Objectives 2026 to 2036

Specific Objective	Description	Target achievement date
Enhance the connectivity to other sites nearby.	Maintain the hedgerows and work with surrounding organisations to enhance connectivity.	ongoing
Create more hibernacula.	Build hibernaculum - The south-eastern corner contains a small area of rank grassland which would be suitable for reptile hibernation habitat	.2036
Continue towards species rich grassland target.	Maintain grassland by removing blackthorn scrub growing within it maintain the area of the current scrub mosaic in Mosaic Meadow. Manage to ensure they remain as islands	ongoing.
Enhance the ditch/pond area by 10%.	Enhance the ditch/pond by digging out a small section and removing roots of Blackthorn. Create leaky dams	By the end of 2031
Northern boundary	Manage cherry laurel and if possible, remove, prevent fly tipping and use of weedkiller by adjacent houses	ongoing
Central tree line between fields	Improve bat habitat opportunities install bat boxes, maintain vegetation bat approach lines accordingly	2036
Central tree line between fields	Ensure plan for succession planting replace fallen oak	2028
Continue to survey for bats and monitor	All areas	2036

5.0 Outline Management operations (2026 to 2036)

October to December

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion Date	Additional Resources
Annual cut and clearance of grassland areas by mechanical means.	Mosaic Meadow and Arlington Field	High	Annually. This is weather dependent and is cut upon direct instruction in accordance with this.	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. This is weather dependent and is cut upon direct instruction in accordance with this.	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut back and maintain footpath and entrances to the site.	Arlington Field and Mosaic Meadow.	High	Monthly as per Parks Volunteer sessions	

January to April

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Coppice and clear Blackthorn in sections along the side of Arlington Field. Record plan	Arlington Field	High	By the end of March. 2 nd cut of field if ground conditions allow to minimise Blackthorn regeneration	Green waste to be removed from site.
Cut and clear half of reed bed.	Mosaic Meadow ditch 'B'	High	By the end of Feb	Green waste to be used for a hibernaculum.
Enlarge the reedbed area by digging out next to the ditch. Scope out adding additional scallops- build in leaky dams	Mosaic Meadow ditch	High	As funds are available.	
Creation of a hibernaculum on site in a suitable spot.	On site	Medium	As required.	
Additional tractor cut of Arlington Field if dry ground conditions- note Cowslips and avoid cutting. Endeavor to manage blackthorn	Arlington Field	High	End April	
Ensure Blackthorn hedge on southern boundary is kept cut back			ongoing	
Create bee cliffs on Northern bank for solitary bees.			ongoing	

May to June

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 (goats' rue and creeping thistle)	Arlington field and Mosaic Meadow	High	During the growing Season to be undertaken by Parks Volunteers	Green waste to be removed from site.
Monitor species rich area to control invasive/competitive species.	Arlington field and Mosaic Meadow	Medium	During growing season	Green waste to be removed from site.
Main Footpaths cut	All areas	High	Growing season	Carried out by grounds maintenance.
Review seating and add additional plank seats		medium	ongoing	
Habitat species survey	All	High	ongoing	

July to September

Activity	Area	Priority	Completion date	Additional resources
Path Management – cut edges of main paths.	All	High	As required	
Remove Goat's Rue small trees and other invasive/competitive species.	Mosaic Meadow	High	During the growing Season by Parks Volunteers	Green waste to be removed from site.
Undertake safety inspection of trees on site.	All	High	Annually	Council staff Arboricultural Officer to carry out.
Cut back pedestrian entrances to the site, top up path surfacing	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

Bumblebee Conservation Trust (2014) Case study 5: Frankland Fields Nature Reserve. *Bumblebee Conservation Trust*.

Google Maps. (2020) Google maps aerial of Frankland Fields. *Digital Globe, Get Mapping plc, Infoterra Ltd and Blue Sky*. Available at: <https://www.google.com/maps/@51.6338189,0.6090596,333m/data=!3m1!1e3> (Accessed 5th May 2020).

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