

BASINGSTOKE & DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL



# BEGGARWOOD WOODLAND PARK and LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

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## Management Plan

2015 - 2025

A 10 year plan setting out the management aims for Beggarwood Woodland Park and Local Nature Reserve, Basingstoke

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## 1. VISION

Beggarwood Woodland Park and Local Nature Reserve will offer a range of opportunities for outdoor play and recreation, provided within an actively managed mosaic of chalk grassland, native scrub and ancient woodland that can be enjoyed alongside the wildlife that is present.



## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 THE AIM OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The aim of this management plan is to provide an integrated approach to the maintenance and management of Beggarwood Woodland Park and Local Nature Reserve. It aims to ensure a good quality space which is rich in biodiversity, accessible and well connected to the surrounding area, multi-functional, attractive and appealing, and of benefit to the community.

### **2.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The purpose is to set out a management plan ('the Plan') and guidelines for the future management of Beggarwood Woodland Park and Local Nature Reserve ('the Park') shown in red on Figure 1. It is intended that this Plan sets out a co-ordinated approach to guide management decisions and priorities for future development of the Park. It will also inform maintenance work within the Park. Council officers and Old Down and Beggarwood Wildlife Group (ODBWG) were consulted on its production.

### **2.3 THE PERIOD OF THE PLAN**

The Plan covers a period of 10 years, 2015 to 2025. Progress will be reviewed periodically to ensure that changes in policy, good practice and increasing knowledge of community needs, and impact of management changes on existing uses of the site, including improved biodiversity, can be properly accommodated within the aims of the agreed Plan.

### **2.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Plan has been written having taken into account the relevant national/local policies and corporate priorities of the council. The assessment and analysis section of the Plan includes criteria used by Keep Britain Tidy's 'Green Flag' award scheme which is a nationally acknowledged benchmark, providing a minimum standard for good quality parks. Full criteria can be found here: <http://greenflagaward.org/judges/judging-criteria/> .

In terms of the overall structure, the Plan is set out as follows;-

- The vision for the Park.
- Policies and corporate priority context affecting the Park.
- A description detailing the features of the Park and its immediate environs.
- A summary of the Park, its features and facilities
- An assessment of the Park, and analysis of features, outlining areas for improvements.
- Overall objectives for the future management of the Park to achieve the vision.
- Action Plan setting out how the objectives will be achieved.
- A programme of work
- How the actions and Plan will be monitored and reviewed.



## 2.5 THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

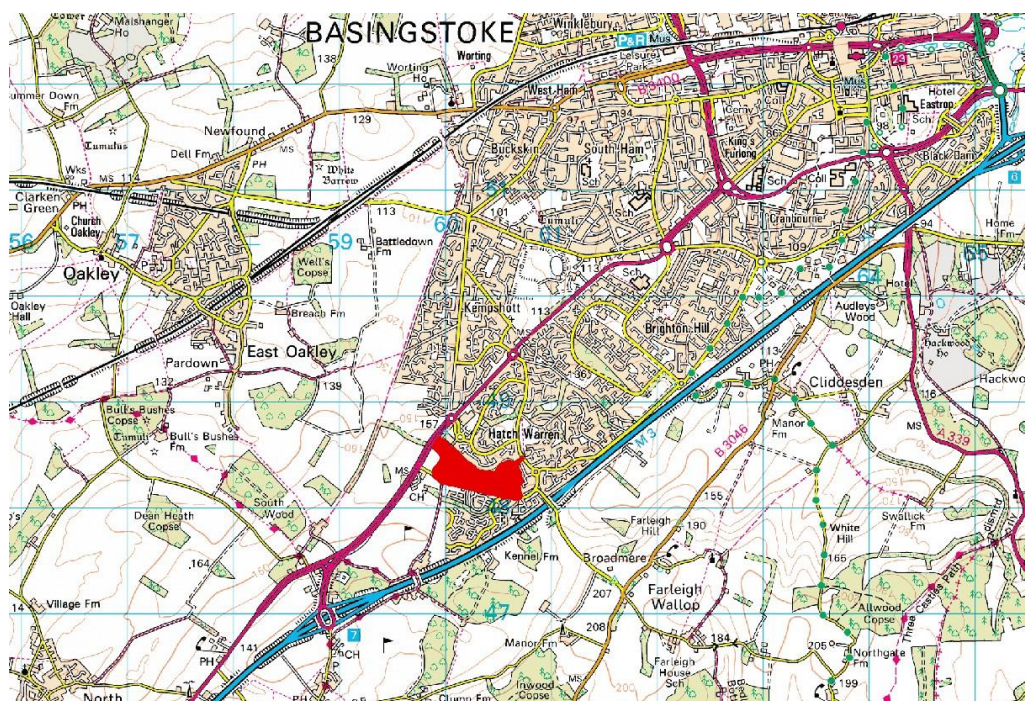
There are numerous international, national and regional strategies, policies and Acts of Parliament which are relevant to the management of publicly owned land. Below is a list of the relevant local documents, which have been informed by higher level (regional, national and international) documents that are relevant to the Park. More extensive details and links can be found in appendix 1.

- The Council Plan (2013-2017)
- Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (2013)
- Living Landscapes (2014)
- Tree Strategy (2014)
- Tree Policy (2012)
- Pride in our Place – The Community Strategy (2006-2016)
- Climate Change Strategy (2014)
- Strategic Plan for Sport and Recreation (2012-2025)
- Sustainability Policy (2014)
- Procurement and Management Strategy (2013-2017)
- Local Nature Reserve Declaration (2017)

## 3. DESCRIPTION AND FEATURES

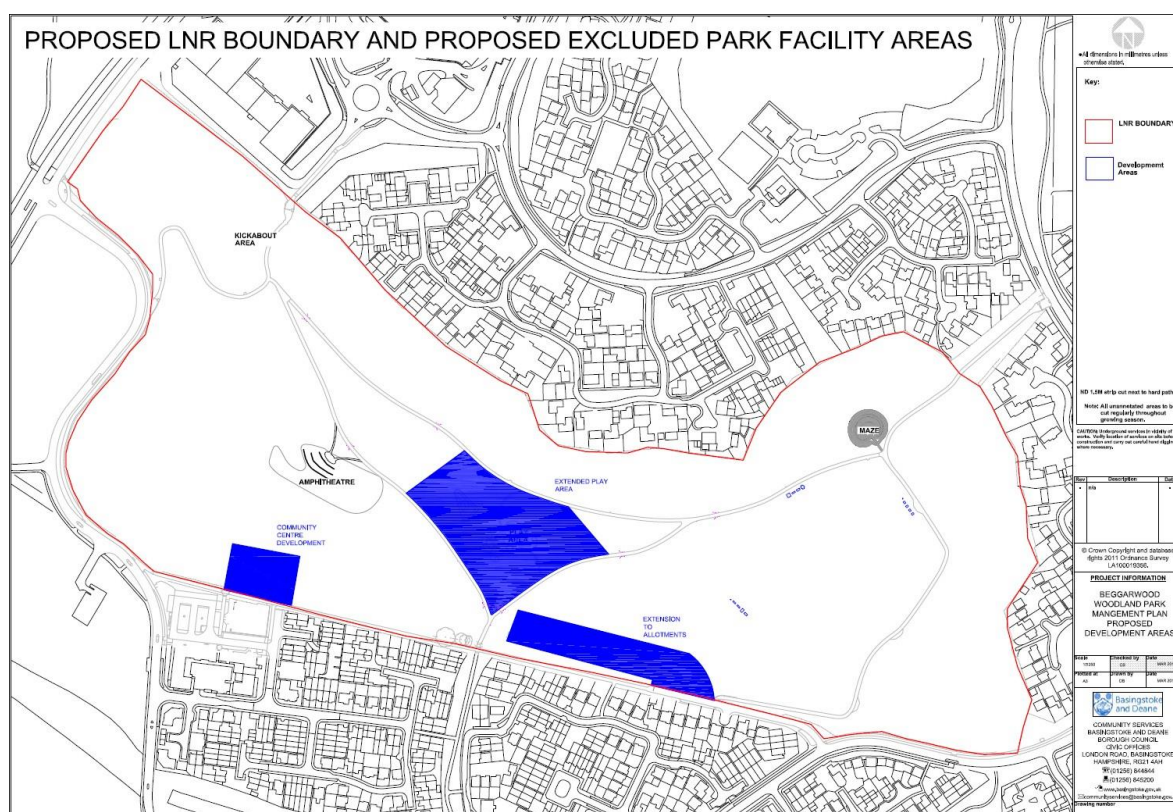
### 3.1 THE SITE – BEGGARWOOD PARK and Local Nature Reserve (SU 6028 4831)

Figure 1. The Park is highlighted red.



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Figure 2 Local Nature Reserve Boundary



The Park is located on the south western edge of Basingstoke between the M3 motorway and the A30 road. Approximately 23.5 hectares (58 acres) in size, the land is owned by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council ('the council') having been adopted in 2010.

### 3.1.1 Surrounding Area

To the north and east of the site is Hatch Warren, a mix of residential and light industrial developments. To the south of the site is the residential area of Beggarwood and to the south west is Basingstoke Golf Course. Beyond the A30 is arable farm land which has recently received planning permission for residential development of 310 houses.

In addition, across the A30 road is Old Down Park. This is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) and it has areas of mature woodland and is developing a calcareous grassland interest with a number of notable species of flora and fauna. Old Down has direct access to the old Roman Road right of way.

A further mature tree belt, a continuation of that to the south of the woodland at Old Down, lies to the south of the Park within the residential development; this is linked to the Park with green corridors.



## **3.2 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT FEATURES**

### **3.2.1 Natural Landscape**

Lying below a high ridge which overlooks Basingstoke and provides views towards Reading, the area is a significant topographical feature with much archaeological interest.

Originally an arable field, the site was developed as a Park between 1999 and 2001, the site consists of open grassland, surrounded by mature woodland along the north and eastern boundaries, and areas of broadleaf plantation. It sits on a north facing slope of underlying chalk.

The woodland to the north and east is designated as a SINC and is an important landscape feature of the area shielding the Park from the residential development to the north.

### **3.2.2 Designed Landscape**

A number of surfaced paths and designated cycle paths cross the site providing routes from the A30 to the north east corner, as well as linkages to the surrounding residential development. There are also a number of informal paths within the site.

Figure 3. Aerial image of Beggarwood Park

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### 3.2.3 Facilities

The Park includes a play area outdoor gym, bike track and amphitheatre located centrally (See figure 2),. Link paths also lead to a maze at the north east of the site, a kickabout area at the north west and allotments along the southern boundary.

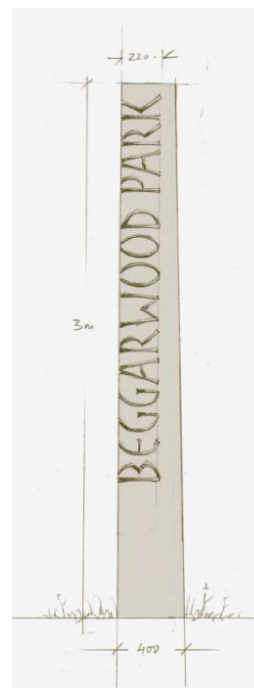
Interpretation signage (see figure 2) is displayed at four entrances into the Park, with additional noticeboards at the north east and south west entrances. An identity for the Park has been created through the use of natural materials, which is reflected in signage, play equipment, bins and seating throughout. Six entrances are marked with a bespoke wooden obelisk (see figure 2) incorporating the Park name.

There are 15 seats around the Park, plus six bins (see appendix 2).

Public consultation has identified the need for a community facility. The site for a building was included in the Park 'Improvements Masterplan' towards the south west of the Park (see appendix 3). Further consultation work and the development of design proposals are currently in progress (January 2015).

### 3.2.4 Tenure

The Park/Local Nature Reserve is owned and managed by the council, with volunteer input to management operations from ODBWG.



## 3.3 SUMMARY OF ACCESS

### 3.3.1 Access Points

There are seven recognised entrances into the Park shown on Figure 2, two of which were informal desire lines which have been upgraded in 2012. Five entrances, two to the north, two to the south and one to the west are hard surfaced and accessible by wheeled users (wheelchairs, pushchairs and bikes). Paths on slopes were designed and installed to comply with standards set by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The North East and North West entrances from the Hatch Warren estate and the South Eastern entrance from Old Beggarwood Lane are suitable for emergency vehicle access.

Informal routes also cross the grasslands, linking facilities and access points, with one running from the local centre (shops and surgery) at the south west of the Park, joining the North West surfaced path, having been upgraded with gravel.

### **3.3.2 Wider Access**

The site links to a wide network of pedestrian and cycle routes that extend beyond the site.

A surfaced cycle path running adjacent to the southern boundary links into a right of way running between the residential development and the golf course, and on to the wider countryside.

To the north west, and linked by a toucan crossing over the A30, is Old Down Woodland Park.

There is no directional signage to or within the Park.

### **3.3.3 Parking**

There are no parking facilities within the park as it was designed to serve the local population who can gain access via footpaths and cycleways. Parking is available at the local centre to the south west of the Park, although shared with shop and surgery users.

## **3.4 SUMMARY OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE VALUE**

The Park contains a number of archaeological sites which have implications for the management of the Park.

Much of the site lies below a high ridge which is likely to have had an historic importance to the local area. There are a number of archaeological settlements on this ridge, as well as Bronze Age burial mounds, individual Bronze Age burials and a roman cremation cemetery (see figure 3). The survival of the Bronze Age burial mounds at Old Down until the last century implies that this was downland pasture through the prehistoric, Roman and medieval period.

It would also appear that the northern boundary (Lower Belt) is of great age and historic importance. It is probably medieval in origin, but may well represent some much earlier landscape division between the lower farmed landscape and a higher pasture landscape with woods on the highest clay capped ground.

Evidence of domestic and farm buildings and enclosures dating back to the Iron Age (750 BC to 43 AD) have been found at the west end of the Park. At the east end, are a Bronze Age (2000 BC to 750 BC) ring ditch - the remains of a burial mound, and further linear features thought to be enclosures.

The old Silchester to Winchester Roman Road to the west of Old Down indicates continued settlement in the Basingstoke area, although it is thought that the farming settlements had started to disappear.

Archaeological finds show that during the Saxon period, the village Hatch existed, which survived until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and it is thought that during this time the downs would have been grazed by sheep and rabbits, hence the name Hatch Warren, the more recent residential area to the north of the Park.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the site was managed as arable farmland, and ploughing during this time would have ploughed out the burial mound to the east of the Park which is no longer visible.

### **3.5 SUMMARY OF ECOLOGICAL AND NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE**

#### **3.5.1 Designations**

The whole area of the Park is due to be declared as a Local Nature Reserve under The National Parks Act 1949 for a minimum period of 21 years after being identified as an area with diverse habitats and species with a high degree of possibilities for public involvement and enjoyment of wildlife.

The Park was chosen to be an LNR following a decision process in which sites throughout the borough were graded using the following criteria which were fully supported by the Council.

Criteria:

- Is the site of high value locally for environmental education and/or research?
- Is the site of natural interest locally?
- Is the site of reasonable natural interest and of high value locally for enjoyment of nature by the public?
  
- In addition, to ensure that significant investment in management is not wasted, short, medium and long term plans for any site needs to be considered.
  
- Stage B
- 3.7 This stage involves a more detailed assessment of the nature conservation and community/public value of sites, and considers the following:-
  - the overall size of the site;
  - the presence of any site designations or notable habitats or species;
  - the viability of the site as a management unit;
  - local community interest in steering site management and development;
  - the extent of public access provision; and,
  - whether the provision of a new LNR will benefit communities without existing local provision.
  
- The stage B assessment of sites followed the criteria-based scoring system set out in Decision Notice 37/2015. This is principally a desktop exercise, but also included a site visit. The priority list presented represents the best available information on the outline suitability of sites for consideration as LNR's.

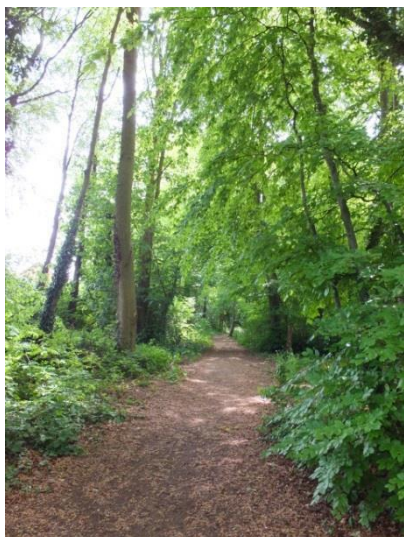


- 3.10 Beggarwood Woodland Park achieved the maximum possible scoring and therefore represents a clear first priority for consideration for declaration as an LNR. This was followed by Wigmore Heath, which is located within 2km of the existing LNR at Pamber Forest LNR. Three sites are placed equal third on the priority list; Black Dam/Crabtree Plantation, South View Cemetery and Tollhouse Meadows.
- 3.11 The top five priority sites all include (to a greater or lesser extent) existing nature conservation designations, have some degree of community support and are already managed to enhance biodiversity. It is therefore considered that the assessment has been effective in identifying priorities and provides a good basis for proceeding with the declaration process in priority order.

It is considered both Beggarwood would meet the LNR designation criteria on the following basis:

- Beggarwood – part of this site already has SINC status due to the ancient semi-natural woodland along its northern edge. In addition the site supports the following species:
  - *Dormice* – a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species which was recorded using the woodland edge habitat.
  - *Skylark* – UK and Hampshire BAP Species using the open grassland areas
  - *Linnet* – UK and Hants BAP Species
  - *House Sparrow* – UK BAP Species

The woodland to the north and east of the site, Lower Belt, is designated as a SINC having been identified as an 'Ancient Semi-natural Woodland', in that there is evidence that it has been continually wooded since 1600.



The woodland is also protected by two 'Tree Preservation Orders', one covering the majority of Lower Belt as mixed woodland and the second for the group of mature Beech at the west end of Lower Belt. The TPO makes it an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, willfully damage or destroy without prior permission from the council.

Trees within the woodland are inspected by Council tree officers, and any required works are carried out by an approved contractor.

### 3.5.2 Habitat

In 2008, Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre<sup>1</sup> (HBIC) surveyed the site (see appendix 4a for the full report) which detailed three main plant communities:

1. MG5b *Cynosurus cristatus-Centaurea nigra* grasslands, *Galium verum* sub-community (3% of area) – a grassland sown with a good composition of species.
2. MG7 *Lolium perenne* Leys and related grasslands (90% of area) – species poor and dominated by grasses including red fescue, rye grass and Yorkshire fog.
3. Broad-leaved plantation and scrub.

### 3.5.3 Flora and Fauna

Within these areas, 8 indicator plant species were identified which are characteristic of unimproved chalk downland or have a strong affinity to calcareous soil, and 2 indicator species which seldom occur outside of unimproved acid/neutral grasslands or are indicative of a long period of uninterrupted grassland management.

The 2008 HBIC survey recorded the site as recently sown with an area of fairly species rich grassland at the western most tip of the site, and the rest of the grassland as being species poor with low botanical interest.

In 2010 additional ecological surveys (ECOSA – appendix 5) were carried out prior to adoption of the site by the council. These surveys identified a number of important species present at the site and mapped their locations.

In 2013 just the woodland known as Lower Belt was surveyed by HBIC (appendix 4b) which identified it as Lowland Beech and Yew woodland – a priority habitat. The survey also recorded a number of notable species previously not recorded.

In January 2014, the woodland was assessed against the UK Forestry Standards by a Good Woods advisor. Recommendations were made and the report can be seen in appendix 6.

Within all the information held, the following important species and habitats have been identified as present at the Park and will help inform management decisions:

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<sup>1</sup> Through a data exchange agreement, HBIC holds and can supply species information belonging to partner organizations including: Botanical Society of British Isles (BSBI) vascular plant database for Hampshire, Butterfly Conservation's butterfly and moth database for Hampshire, Hampshire ornithological Society (HOS) bird records, Hampshire Bat Group (HBG) Records of bat roost visits and sightings, Data administered by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust (HWT) on behalf of species recording groups: Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (HARG) and Hampshire Mammal Group (HMG) (excluding bats & badgers) and UK Bees, Wasps and Ants recording Society (BWARS).



*Small Blue*

Mammals:	Dormouse
Birds:	Skylark Linnet House Sparrow Common Whitethroat Common Bullfinch Song Thrush
Flora:	White Helleborine Stinking Hellebore Sanfoin Sweet-briar Bluebell
Trees:	Small-leaved Lime
Insects:	Small Heath Small Blue Dingy Skipper
Habitats:	Ancient semi-natural woodland Lowland calcareous meadows Hedgerows

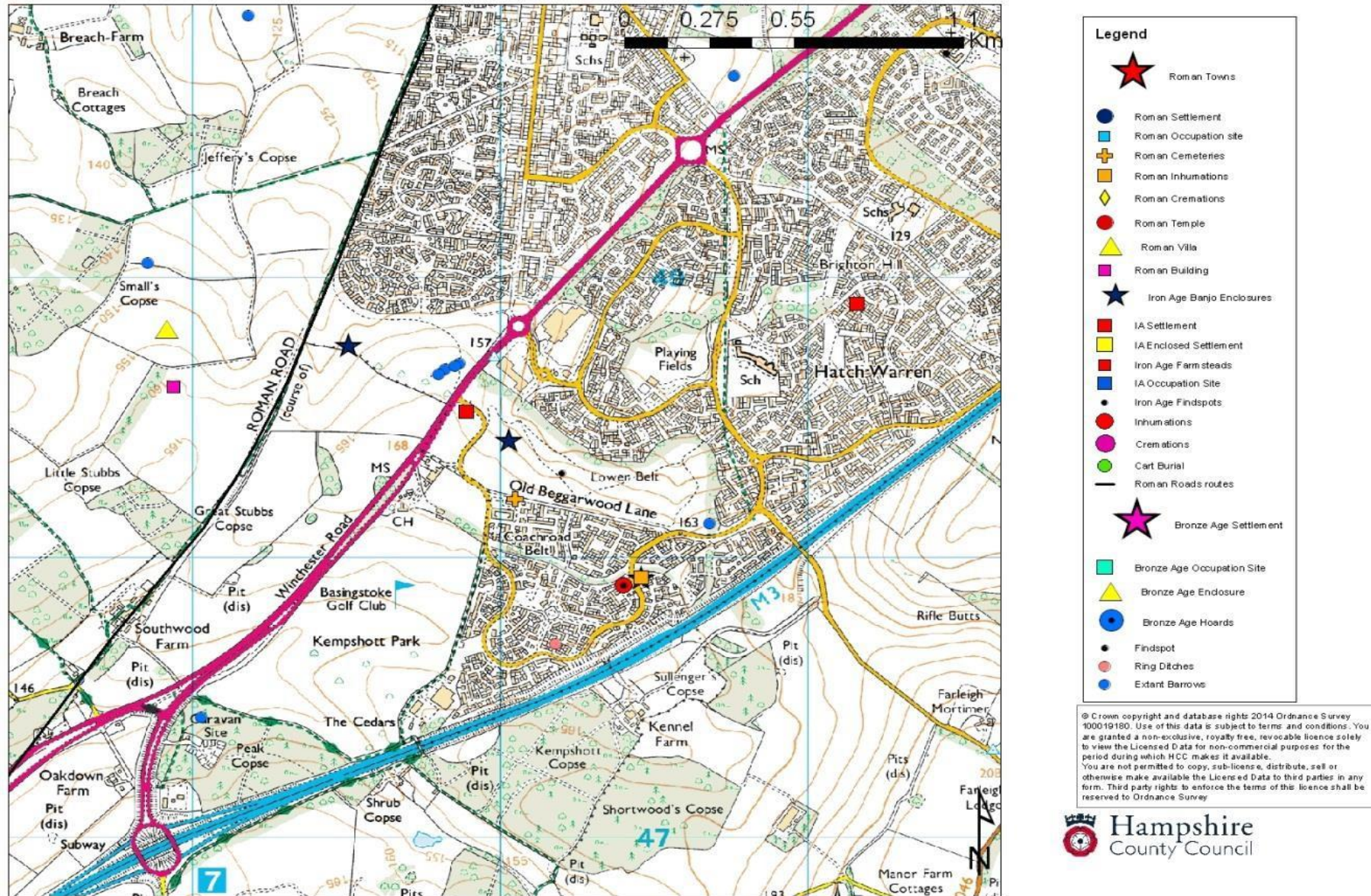


*White Helleborine*

Further details regarding their protection and status can be found in appendix 7.



Figure 4 - Archaeological features



## 3.6 SUMMARY OF USE, VISITOR ATTRACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### 3.6.1 Use

The open grassland, amphitheatre, maze, play area, BMX track, outdoor gym equipment and seating provide opportunities for kite flying, ball games, adventure, exercise, relaxation and picnicking.

No formal park user surveys have been carried out, but perception suggests the Park is well used; dog walkers and people with children are regular users of the Parks facilities, along with cyclists, joggers, and a local running club which uses the facilities for training.

The provision of posts with dog-loops located near play equipment makes the Park more user friendly for families.

The internal paths are plotted as a 'Walk4life' mile, which was originally part of the government's Change4Life campaign to encourage families and adults to eat well, move more and live longer. The walks are way-marked (see appendix 2) and are advertised on the walk4life website ([www.walk4life.info](http://www.walk4life.info)) which is hosted by Walk Unlimited, which took over management when government funding ended in 2012.

There are 15 allotment plots provided in the south of the Park. At the time of writing there is a waiting list of people wanting plots.

### 3.6.2 Stakeholders

Groups and individuals that may be affected by management decisions relating to the Park include:

- ODBWG
- General Public
- Neighbouring land owners
- Local Guides & Scouts Groups
- Local Residents
- HCC Rights of Way team
- KiddieCare (nursery)
- St Marks C of E Primary School
- Local user groups such as Hatch Warren Runners/ Basingstoke Andover District Orienteers

### 3.6.3 Community Involvement

ODBWG formed in 2007 to enhance the wildlife value of nearby Old Down Park and Beggarwood Park. Their aim is to achieve an increased awareness and interest in native species of flora and fauna, and to encourage local involvement of the area. To date, their main focus has been on Old Down Park, but they have held wildlife walks, hosted Guide and Scout activities, carried out work parties thinning sycamore and removing tree guards, and surveyed butterflies, flora, and bees at Beggarwood Park.

To aid ODBWG and volunteers, a plan has been created to help identify specific areas of the Park, for work parties. This can be seen in appendix 8.



**3.6.3.1** Consultation - Prior to adoption by the council, in 2008 a public consultation exercise was carried out, inviting the public to identify facilities they would like provided in the Park. Approximately 600 people attended the event and 200 surveys were completed. The consultation responses were analysed and an Improvements Masterplan was designed (see appendix 3) with projects implemented from 2010-13. Certain aspects of the improvement plan, in particular the meadow, will take a number of years to develop and mature, and will require specific maintenance regimes to ensure they are successful.

During 2015 a consultation exercise was held with the public to establish the desire for a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) declaration for the park. Approximately 1300 responses came back confirming the majority opinion that the whole of the site should be designated as a LNR. In 2016 a further consultation exercise was carried out with stakeholders to define the extent of the LNR boundary.

**3.6.3.2** Events and Activities - People wishing to hold an event on the site can find information and application forms on the council website: [www.basingstoke.gov.uk/eventapplication](http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/eventapplication). Small scale events such as orienteering have taken place in the Park, and a summer play/activity scheme has been held at the site for a few years. All activities and events have appropriate risk assessments in place, having gone through an events booking process before being authorised to go ahead. Additional litter bins and patrols are provided for major events. Through the Geocaching website, people are invited to find two geocaches which have been hidden in the Park since 2013, and at the time of writing 88 visits have been logged against them. (Geocaching is an international outdoor treasure hunt, with caches logged against their GPS coordinates and recorded on the website [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com)). In line with the LNR declaration, future events will be scrutinised in terms of their possible effects on biodiversity.

## **3.7 SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL PRACTICES**

### **3.7.1 Healthy, Safe and Secure**

The Park and its features are regularly inspected to ensure user safety although additional checks are carried out following ad hoc reports and as required. Appendix 9 shows current scheduled tasks and inspections that are carried out on site.

**3.7.1.1** Risk Assessments - Maintenance operatives are all appropriately trained in the correct use and maintenance of equipment, and risk assessments are undertaken and followed accordingly. All chemicals and fuel are stored securely according to COSHH guidelines.

- 3.7.1.2** Play Inspections - All play sites are inspected weekly by appropriately qualified personnel, usually alternating between a visual inspection for obvious damage and a more in depth operational inspection checking for signs of wear and defects. High usage areas or regularly vandalised areas are visited more frequently as required. Equipment is repaired or removed as soon as is practicable and when appropriate. Play area signage includes location of nearest telephones, as well as the council and Crimestoppers telephone numbers.
- 3.7.1.3** Trees - Safety surveys are carried out every five to six years, with work undertaken as necessary should any dead, dying or dangerous trees be identified. Ad hoc reactive work is carried out in the event of an emergency where there is risk to visitor and staff safety. Trees identified to be high risk receive extra surveys, approximately every three years.
- 3.7.1.4** Vehicular Access - Only authorised vehicles (maintenance operatives/contractors) are permitted to drive across the Park, with a 5mph speed limit and flashing hazard lights showing.
- 3.7.1.5** Reported incidents – Issues reported such as offensive graffiti, broken glass, and hazardous waste are dealt with as a priority, and operational policies outline time limits in which reports should be investigated. Reports can be made by phoning the council’s contact centre or by filling out an online form.

### **3.7.2 Clean and well maintained**

The day to day maintenance of the Park is carried out by the council’s Operations Team. The team is responsible for grass cutting, litter picking, play area safety checks and infrastructure repair.

- 3.7.2.1** Litter – The bins are emptied three times a week during the summer, and twice a week during the winter. The Park is also litter picked weekly. All bins are dual purpose, taking general litter as well as dog waste.
- 3.7.2.2** Management is undertaken with due regard to biodiversity. Special care is undertaken with regard to the timing and appropriateness of cutting and felling within grasslands and woodlands.

### **3.7.3 Sustainability**

There are a number of sustainable principles that the council considers in order to ensure that the management and maintenance of the Park reflects good practice and maintains the aims of the LNR declaration

- 3.7.3.1** Pesticides – In general pesticide use is kept to a minimum, and alternative methods are used wherever possible. Currently no pesticides are used at the Park, but if they were, policy states that all pesticide use is in strict adherence with the law, and following best practice.
- 3.7.3.2** Materials – Current council policy states that tropical hardwoods should be avoided, and all wood products used are certified by the Forestry

Stewardship Council as coming from sustainable sources. Recycled and local products will always be considered, while products such as peat are not used as a soil ameliorant – where required recycled material is used in its place.

**3.7.3.3** Waste Reduction and Recycling – Green waste production is kept to a minimum. It is reused on site wherever possible, by chipping and using as mulch where appropriate. There are a number of composting areas located around the site which are used for grass cuttings and smaller green waste; larger material is recycled by the council's approved waste management contractor.

**3.7.3.4** Water efficiency – No watering takes place on site. Planting takes place in the appropriate season and is mulched to eliminate the need. However, should an unseasonably dry period follow planting, watering would be undertaken by the council.

## **4. ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 ACCESS AND RECREATIONAL FEATURES**

#### **4.1.1 A welcoming place**

Seats, bins and signs are of natural materials, and create a coherent theme throughout the Park. Open entrances are accessible to all, but require more attention to ensure they are tidy and free of graffiti at all times. Bespoke signage and interpretation panels make the Park welcoming and contribute to design consistency, which will be retained in future as installations and replacements are required.

The boundary fencing has been damaged in places and should be repaired to ensure the area is seen as being well maintained.

Directional signage in the surrounding area would help to increase awareness of the Park, and signage should be considered as part of a wider strategic plan.



Obelisk name posts at Park entrances are not all prominently positioned, and therefore lack the potential impact they could create. Cutting back shrubby growth could improve the appearance at some of the entrances.

The entrance from the local centre at the south west of the Park has a bin installed in the centre of the path, presumably to

restrict unauthorised vehicular access. This obstructs the entrance for wheeled users, and should be replaced with a bollard and the bin repositioned. This path has a gravel finish and should be upgraded to allow easy wheeled access.

When the proposed LNR designation comes into force in 2017 it will be necessary to update on site signage with the new designation and information about what this will mean for the Park. New signage is also envisaged to protect breeding ground nesting birds such as Skylark during the nesting season.

Byelaws apply to the site to support and encourage appropriate use of the area, these can be viewed here: [www.basingstoke.gov.uk/byelaws](http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/byelaws). Pictorial references to the general play area restrictions are displayed on play area signage, and dog control signs are displayed at entrances into the Park. Other relevant bylaws are currently only available on the council's website and should be included on any future notice and interpretation boards. Bylaws and signage should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are up to date and relevant

### **Recreational Opportunities**

There is plenty of variety and opportunity for recreation at the Park, and the majority of activities are available to all. The informal and formal paths around the Park link up to provide circular routes which are appropriate for, and well used by walkers including those with dogs, runners and cyclists, and are accessible for everyone. In addition formal activities such as the outdoor gym equipment and the bike track are available for use.

Recreation within the Park will consider wildlife utilising the open space for nesting and feeding purposes for example ground nesting birds such as Skylark and meadow Pipit which utilise the wide open grassland areas.

Some of the edges of paths are starting to crack and lift, and will need to be assessed, monitored and repaired as necessary.

Although the Park is categorised as a Neighbourhood Park in the GI Strategy, the existing play area does not meet the standard of a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) as set out in the council's Guidance Notes and Standards for the Provision of Unsupervised Children's Play Facilities. As funding becomes available, additional equipment should be added to the existing play area, and as the need to replace gym and play equipment arises, provision and opportunities for disabled visitors should be retained.

The kickabout area includes a very basic wooden rebound wall. Enhancement of this area should be considered, and the park would benefit from an area for multi ball game use.

Value and popularity of items should be assessed to determine the need for individual items of equipment and ensure that formal recreation areas remain popular and stimulating for users.

There is opportunity to provide distance markers for running, walking and cycling, linking the Park to Old Down Park. Provision should be investigated in conjunction with provision at Old Down.

On the 2010 Improvements Masterplan and on the interpretation panel plans, an area to the east of the Park is highlighted as a seating area. Although there are a higher number of benches in this area, there is ample space to provide picnic benches here, as well as elsewhere in the Park, extending the picnicking season beyond that of dry ground.



#### **4.1.2 Community Involvement**

Public consultation informed the Improvement Masterplan which was then implemented over the period 2010-2013. Public opinion should continue to be sought as appropriate, where any new proposals are being considered.

ODBWG currently focus their attention on Old Down, but have led informative walks through the Park and have indicated they would like to be involved with work tasks at the Park if they have the time. They have their own website [olddownandbeggarwood.org.uk](http://olddownandbeggarwood.org.uk) which contains details of walks and work parties held on Old Down and Beggarwood, as well as some information on the parks. With the new proposed declaration as a LNR and the proposed community building it is hoped that the work parties and guided walks schedule will be better attended.

Included on the Improvement Masterplan was a proposed community building, which after public consultation is now in the early planning stages. Subject to planning approval, building works will be undertaken with consideration of protected species on site, and once constructed will be managed by the Hatch Warren Community Association, who are already responsible for other community facilities in the area.

#### **4.1.3 Stakeholder Engagement**

There is limited active involvement at present, although the Old Down and Beggarwood Wildlife Group, whose focus is on Old Down, have carried out some surveying work, and where consultation exercises have been carried out in the past,



response from local residents has been good. Stakeholder opinion should be sought in future as appropriate and as opportunities arise.

Surveys should be carried out to identify the needs of existing users, but also to target those not using the Park, to find out why.

ODBWG and Natural Basingstoke<sup>2</sup> have useful contacts with local knowledge and expertise. These useful information sources should be utilised where appropriate.

Operations team and volunteer workers maintaining the Park must be involved in the management review process, to enable appropriate changes resulting from species, habitat and user surveys, to be implemented effectively. This will also provide opportunity for maintenance operatives to highlight any maintenance issues.

## **4.2 CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE FEATURES**

### **4.2.1 Nature Conservation**

Identified important species and habitats have and will continue to inform future management of the site, along with recreational and access needs which will be further reinforced by the declaration of the site as an LNR in 2017. Maintenance regimes already take some habitat and species into account and encourage improvement of diversity.

The Council's GI strategy sets a target of creating 8.65ha of species rich grassland at the Park. The west end of the site is already richer in species than other areas, and all grassland is currently managed as meadow in order to increase the overall species diversity. Coltsfoot and orchids are also present in East Meadow, indicating potential improvements to diversity. The current grounds maintenance cutting schedule can be seen in appendix 10.

Regular monitoring of important species/habitats/features must take place, to establish what effects maintenance operations are having on achieving the aims for the Park.

Although Dormice are present within Lower Belt woodland, no active management currently takes place to specifically encourage this species. Restrictions throughout the breeding season are followed, with no work other than in an emergency, being carried out from June to October.

There is an issue with adjoining householders dumping garden waste over fences along the edge of the woodland, affecting the ecology of the habitat. It is proposed that a strip will be created to separate the woodland from the dwellings, protecting

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<sup>2</sup> Natural Basingstoke is an umbrella organisation of multiple community groups operating in the Basingstoke area.

what will become the new woodland edge, as well as allowing resident's access to maintain their property boundaries.

Coppicing of some species will help to thicken up the new edge and restrict access points, as well as providing a sustained food source as well as cover for the Dormouse. Some new planting may also be required.

Management of specific habitat types often involves detailed and sensitive management of areas, which is ideal project work for conservation groups and volunteers, and appropriate training should be made available where necessary.

Locations of important species are currently plotted on various external maps. These should be collated internally to provide an easy reference and inform future decisions. Plans to provide and retain appropriate habitats for identified important species should be developed and implemented.



The conservation and recreational aspects of the site sometimes conflict, like dog walking at skylark breeding time. Temporary signage, for example asking dog walkers to keep dogs on leads during this time, will be put in place. Measures will also be put in place to ensure users understand the aims for the area, to minimise any possible negative impact on the important existing features.

### **Culture and Heritage**

Signage was installed at the Park in 2012 when improvements were made. Two of these signs provide information on Lower Belt, the ancient woodland, while two others identify flora and fauna that can be found on the site (for sign graphics see appendix 11). Some of these signs are damaged and need repair, and more frequent cleaning may be required.

There is little visible evidence of the historical background of the area within the Park itself, and no reference to it on signage.

The archaeological remains can have a positive role to play within the enjoyment of the Park and potential for the provision of interpretation for areas of interest should be investigated. Remains should also be protected from damage, and the Park should be managed for the long term preservation of archaeological features.

Additional signage should consider the link between Old Down and Beggarwood showing the different facilities and features they offer, and provide a brief overview of culture and heritage of the sites without repeating information on both sites.

There is potential on site for additional specimen tree planting. It has been suggested that this could be done to create a heritage tree trail for the future. It has also been suggested that planting could be used to indicate layouts or locations of historic archaeology, similar to the ring of trees marking the Tumulus at Old Down Park. These ideas should be developed as a future project.

### **4.3 MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE**

#### **4.3.1 Issues and Reporting**

Visitors and staff are encouraged to report anti-social behaviour, damage or vandalism either to the police or the council, although currently this information is only available on the council's website. Contact details using a variety of methods (phone, email, and social media) should be made easily available on-site through inclusion on signage.

#### **4.3.2 Funding and costs**

Management of the Park is funded through existing council capital and revenue budgets. Opportunities for funding additional works within the Park, via developer contributions as part of Section 106 Agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy exist and should be utilised where opportunities arise.

Funding could also be supplemented through external funding sources, subject to eligibility and availability. Some external funding sources are only available to community groups, therefore to maximise opportunities for funding, ODBWG should be supported in their role, and assisted to complete applications where they are appropriate to the aim of the Park.

The costs of maintaining the Park and Local Nature Reserve to the Council are as follows:

Labour per annum including support services : £98,997.60

Plant/machinery/capital spend: £17,240.00

Total Spend: £116,237.60

#### **4.3.3 Publicity**

There is limited information publicly available on the Park, other than the signage and interpretation on site.

The council's website has a paragraph including a brief overview of facilities provided. There are some photographs and information supplied on [visitwoods.org.uk](http://visitwoods.org.uk), hosted by Woodlands Trust; an external website.

Website information should be updated to notify visitors of the new proposed LNR declaration of the Park once it has occurred in the summer of 2017.

An on line map of open space locations would help to promote the Park, and how it links to other nearby open spaces.

ODBWG have produced a number of leaflets mainly on Old Down Park, but also containing some information on Beggarwood. These are available from members of the group, but could be made available electronically with a link from the council website. These leaflets should be amended when the Park is declared an LNR to echo the Park's new identity.

#### **4.3.4 Additional resource**

ODBWG are looking to expand volunteer numbers, which could provide opportunities for work parties at the Park. Additional support may be required to help increase volunteer numbers.

Volunteer input can help achieve the more detailed aspects of maintenance particularly for sensitive conservation; therefore opportunities for partnership working with willing and able volunteers should be supported.

## **5. THE OBJECTIVES**

A number of objectives have been developed from the summary and assessment sections of the Plan. These will assist in ensuring that the future management of the Park/Local Nature Reserve is delivered in accordance with the desires of stakeholders and the local community, balanced with the interests of the natural environment and reflecting relevant policies including the Green Infrastructure Strategy:

1. Provide activities and opportunities within the Park/Local Nature Reserve that will ensure people from all sectors of the community will want to visit, and spend time there.
2. Protect, preserve and enhance the woodland, other habitats and historic features, for the benefit of wildlife and future generations.
3. Maintain all aspects of the Park/Local Nature Reserve, including the play area, maze and amphitheatre, to ensure they remain valued and appropriate to those who use them.
4. Carefully balance access to specific areas, to ensure recreational benefit is provided, but not to the detriment of important wildlife present on site.
5. Provide opportunities for learning, encourage visitors to develop an interest in and understanding of the site, and promote the value and benefits of the facilities on offer.
6. Be easily contactable and invite local residents' comments and opinions as appropriate and as opportunities arise, to ensure provision reflects requirements.
7. To declare the Park as a Local Nature Reserve in the summer of 2017 and to alter working practices in line with the requirements of this new designation.



## 6. ACTION PLAN

The following briefly outlines identified actions that are required in order to achieve the overall aim for the Park. Some of these actions are already being implemented. The lead for each project is shown in bold.

A number of actions, particularly those aiming to improve biodiversity, involve long term, detailed, specific management which will need to be revisited and updated periodically as progress is made.

Objective	ACTIONS	Priority	Who?	When (By)?	Funding	Complete	Outcome
1	Relocate bin at local centre entrance and replace with a bollard	H	Operations	2015	Existing Ops		Easy access for all
1	Upgrade surface of path from local centre	M	Community Services	As funds allow	S106		Easy access for all
1 & 3	Upgrade play facilities to meet NEAP specification	M	Community Services	As funds allow	S106		Appropriate facility for park and increasing usage
1	Enhance kickabout area and provide multi ball game opportunities	M	Community Services	As funds allow	S106		Increased opportunity for activity
1	Provide picnic benches	M	Community Services	As funds allow	S106		Increased opportunity for activity
1 & 4	Carry out surveys to gain visitors and non- user opinions	M	<b>BDBC/</b> ODBWG	Every 5 years (start 2015)	Existing CD&R		Better understanding of visitors and potential visitor needs
1	Assess need for disabled user opportunities	M	Community Regeneration & Design Team	As opportunities arise	Existing S106		Provision for disabled users if required
1	Develop and implement a plan for installation of distance markers for sport/recreation integrated with Old Down	L	Wellbeing & Community/ Community Design & Regeneration	Plan - 2016	S106 Existing		Additional recreational opportunities

Objective	ACTIONS	Priority	Who?	When (By)?	Funding	Completed	Outcome
1	Look into possibility of installing directional signage to the park	L	Community Design & Regeneration	2020	Existing		Increase in visitor awareness of site
1	Consider showing nearby open space on future signage	L	Community Development Officer	As opportunities arise	Existing Com Serv		Increase in visitor awareness of site
1	Develop Heritage tree trail project	L	Community Services	As opportunities arise	S106		Additional educational and interest feature for the Park
2	Protect archaeological features and manage the park to ensure their long term preservation.	H	Operations/Community services	On-going	N/A		Features preserved for future generations
2 & 3	Maintain as per maintenance plan (section 8) to retain existing important species	H	<b>Operations/</b> Biodiversity	On-going	Existing Ops		Appropriately and well maintained site
2	Develop and implement a 3 year rotation plan for hedge maintenance to include cutting and coppicing/ laying	H	<b>Operations/</b> Biodiversity	2015	N/A	2015	Co-ordinated approach to maintenance
2	Develop and implement a plan for the maintenance of grasslands, to promote plant diversity	H	<b>Operations/</b> Biodiversity	2015	Existing Ops	2015	Co-ordinated approach to maintenance
2	Develop and implement a plan for cyclical thinning, coppicing & (re)planting of appropriate areas - scrub / thicket / Woodland	H	<b>Tree team/</b> Operations/ Biodiversity	2016	Existing CD&R		Co-ordinated approach to maintenance

2	Undertake a chalk grassland establishment scheme over 480 square meters	H	<b>Operations/ Biodiversity</b>	2017-2020	Existing CD&R		Creation of an additional 480 square metres of chalk grassland habitat
<b>Objective</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When (By)?</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
2	Develop and implement a 15- 20 yr plan of hazel coppicing to enhance dormouse habitat, retaining a mature fringe to the woodland.	H	<b>Biodiversity / Tree Team/ Operations/ Volunteers</b>	2016	Existing CD&R		Co-ordinated approach to maintenance
2 & 5	Work closely with local volunteers/ experts	H	ODBWG/ BDBC	On-going	N/A		Better understanding of site
2	Ensure policies reflect best practises, and that they are adhered to	H	BDBC	On-going	N/A		Ensure maintenance practises remain appropriate
2	Provide a sustainable separation between woodland and dwellings.	M	<b>Tree Team/ Operations</b>	2016	Existing Trees		Better able to protect woodland edge
2	Retain some brushwood piles from coppicing for dormouse or other species hibernation	M	<b>Operations/ Tree team / volunteers</b>	On-going	N/A		Increased biodiversity
3	Carry out scheduled maintenance tasks to ensure the park is inviting, clean and safe at all times	H	Operations	On-going	Existing Ops		Positive visitor feedback, and no incidents

3	Carry out repairs to perimeter fencing and damaged interpretation signage	H	Operations	2015	Existing Ops		Well maintained facilities
3	Consult local community on refurbishment of play areas as necessary and opportunity arises	M	Community Design & Regeneration	As opportunities arise	Existing		Well used provision that is appropriate to users
<b>Objective</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When (By)?</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
3	Assess path edge damage and repair as necessary	M	Operations	2016	Existing		Well maintained facilities
4	Carry out regular surveys to determine important species numbers, locations and retention/expansion	H	HBIC / <b>BDBC officers</b> / ODBWG/ local volunteers/ experts	Every 5 years max. (start 2016)	Existing		Understanding of success/ failure to inform future decisions
4	Put up temporary signage to protect important species at times of vulnerability.	H	Biodiversity	As required	N/A		Visitor understanding of pressures on wildlife
4	Create an overarching map of important species	M	Biodiversity	2016	Existing		Easy to access information in order to protect
5	Regularly review information provided on signage and online	H	Community Services	On-going	N/A		Up to date information displayed
5	Support ODBWG to increase volunteers, expand work parties and promote training opportunities through Natural Basingstoke	H	<b>Community Development</b> / Community Services	On-going	Existing		Additional resource and increased knowledge

5	Publish the management plan on the website, so it is easily available to members of the public	H	Landscape and Horticulture Officer	2015	N/A		Easily available to anyone.
5	Development of further provision of interpretation for areas of archaeological interest.	M	<b>Community Development / HCC</b>	As opportunities arise	Existing		Added interest for a wider range of visitors
5	Publish a map of open space locations on the council website	L	Community Services	2016	N/A		Promote the site and the facilities and benefits it has to offer
<b>Objective</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When (By)?</b>	<b>Funding</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
5	Develop planting ideas to mark historic features or create heritage features for the future, to be implemented as funding allows.	L	<b>Community Development / ODBWG</b>	As opportunities arise	S106 Existing		Added interest into future
6	Include contact details on signage to ensure BDBC are easy to contact	H	Community development officer	As opportunities arise	N/A		Increase in visitor feedback
6	Annual progress meeting	H	<b>BDBC/ volunteers</b>	Annually	N/A		To ensure progress is made
All	5 yearly plan review	H	All stakeholders	2019 on-going	N/A		To ensure plan is relevant and continues to develop with the park.
7	Undertake process to declare the site as a Local Nature Reserve	H	All stakeholders	2017	N/A		To declare the whole Park as a Local Nature Reserve

**7. WORK PROGRAMME**

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Development	Develop a 15-20 yr plan of hazel coppicing (Nov-Mar)													
	Develop a plan for cyclical thinning, coppicing & replanting													
	Develop a plan for the maintenance of grasslands													
	Develop a rotational plan for hedge maintenance													
	Develop plan for installation of distance markers													
Maintenance	Coppicing / thinning			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	General site and furniture inspections and maintenance													
	Grassland paths													
	Hedgecutting	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	
	Litter picking and emptying bins													
	Meadow/grassland	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	33%	
	Planting	As per plan to be developed												
	Play area safety inspections and maintenance													
	Thickets			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Woodland			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			

**8. MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE**

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Weekly	Empty litter/dog bins	3 times a week in summer / twice in winter											
	Litter pick site						Weekly						
	Operational/Visual inspection of play equipment						Weekly						
Monthly	H&S check of play, report and act on findings												
	Cut informal grass routes/ path edges												
6 monthly	General site inspection												
Annually	General meadow areas, clearing arising's - see plan												
	Hedge cutting (1/3 each year) - see plan												
	Grassland edges & rides (1/3rd each year) - see plan												
	Thicket edges/buffers (% each year) - plan to be developed												
	Coppicing of hazel (% each year) - plan to be developed												
	Inspect furniture & maintain as required (seats bins signage)												
	External safety inspection of play												
Biannually	Thinning of thickets (% every other year) - plan to be developed												
3 yearly	Veteran / High risk Tree safety inspection												
6 yearly	General Tree inspection	last done in January, but could be anytime throughout the year											
	Replanting shrub/trees every 6th year (plan to be developed)												
Ad Hoc	Removal of graffiti / clean signs/frames/seats/bins												
	Removal of green waste/ tree guards/ fly tipping on request												
	Keep access routes clear of obstructions												

Winter – November to March; Summer April – October



**9. WOODLAND MANAGEMENT**

Year	Section	Management
1	1	In fill with Hazel, selectively coppice mature hazel, fell sycamore and treat stumps
2	2	Selective 5% coppice, fell sycamore and treat stumps, In fill replanting with hazel
3	3	Fell sycamore and treat stumps selectively coppice lime, In fill replanting
4	4	Fell sycamore and treat stumps, re-coppice poor cut hazel stools near fence line, In plant open areas with hazel
5	5	Fell sycamore and treat stumps, Fell dead and dying ash
6	6	Coppice hazel, in plant open areas with hazel, holly and lime, coppice poor straggly standards
7	7	Coppice old beech coppice stools, fell sycamore and treat, in plant with beech, hazel, holly and oak
8	8	Fell sycamore and treat in plant with beech, hazel, holly and oak

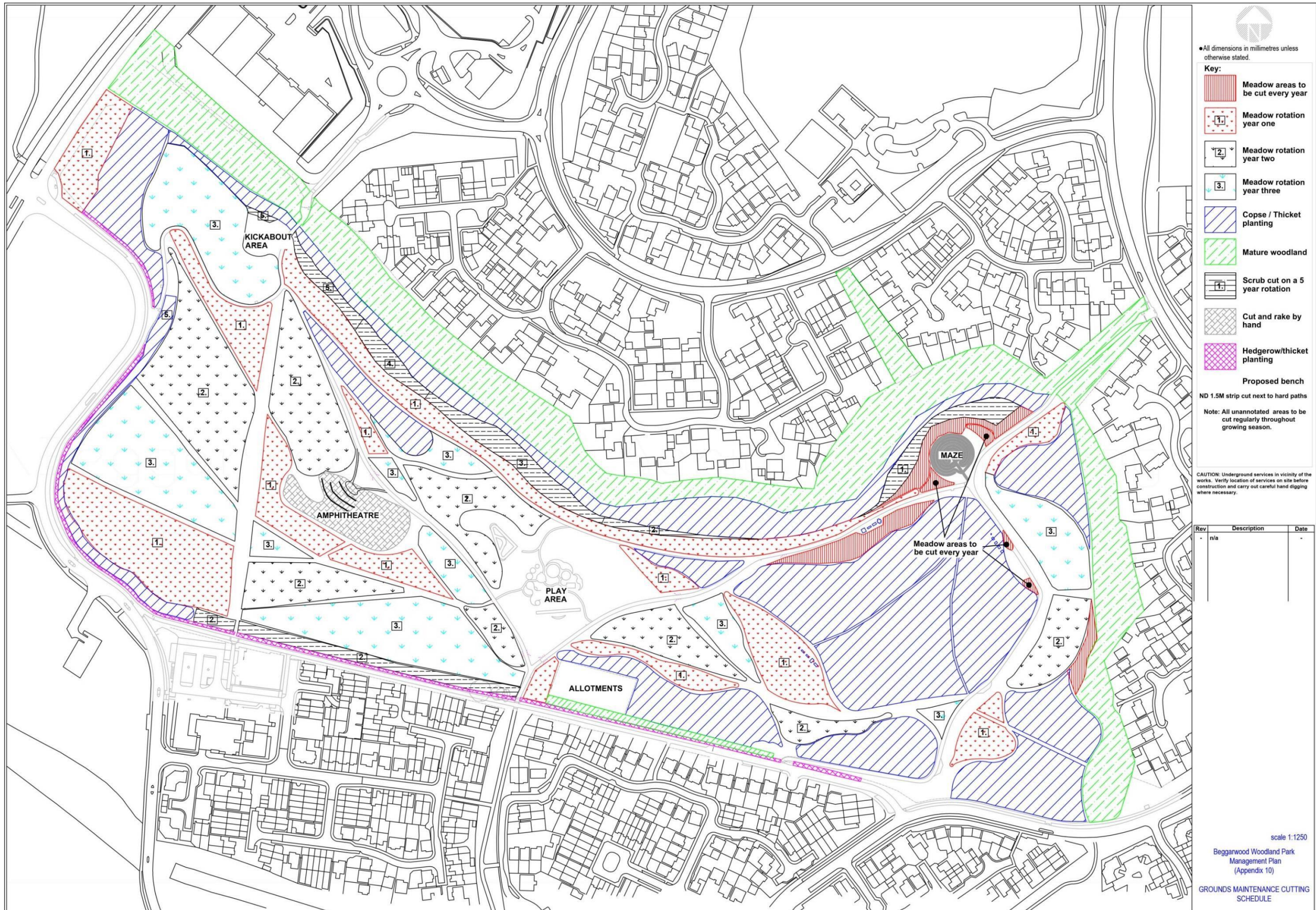
**10. SCRUB MANAGEMENT**

Section	Management
1	Non Intervention
2	Contain expansion of edge, thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic, establishment of scrub ecocline through coppicing and selective planting on interface with grassland
3	Contain expansion of edge, thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic, establishment of scrub ecocline, through coppicing and selective planting on interface with grassland
4	Contain expansion of edge, thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic, establishment of scrub ecocline, through coppicing and selective planting on interface with grassland
5	Contain expansion of edge, thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic, establishment of scrub ecocline through coppicing and selective planting on interface with grassland
6	Contain expansion of edge, thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic, establishment of scrub ecocline through coppicing and selective planting on interface with grassland

7	Contain expansion of edge, thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic, establishment of scrub ecocline through coppicing and selective planting on interface with grassland
8	Non intervention, contain expansion of edge, reduction due to expansion of allotment area
9	Thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic of thickets, glades and rides
10	Thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic of thickets, glades and rides
11	Thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic of thickets, glades and rides
12	Thinning to establish diverse woodland mosaic of thickets, glades and rides
13	Contain expansion of edge
14	Non intervention, open up bare banks on ditch for ground nesting invertebrates







scale 1:1250  
 Beggarwood Woodland Park  
 Management Plan  
 (Appendix 10)  
 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CUTTING  
 SCHEDULE

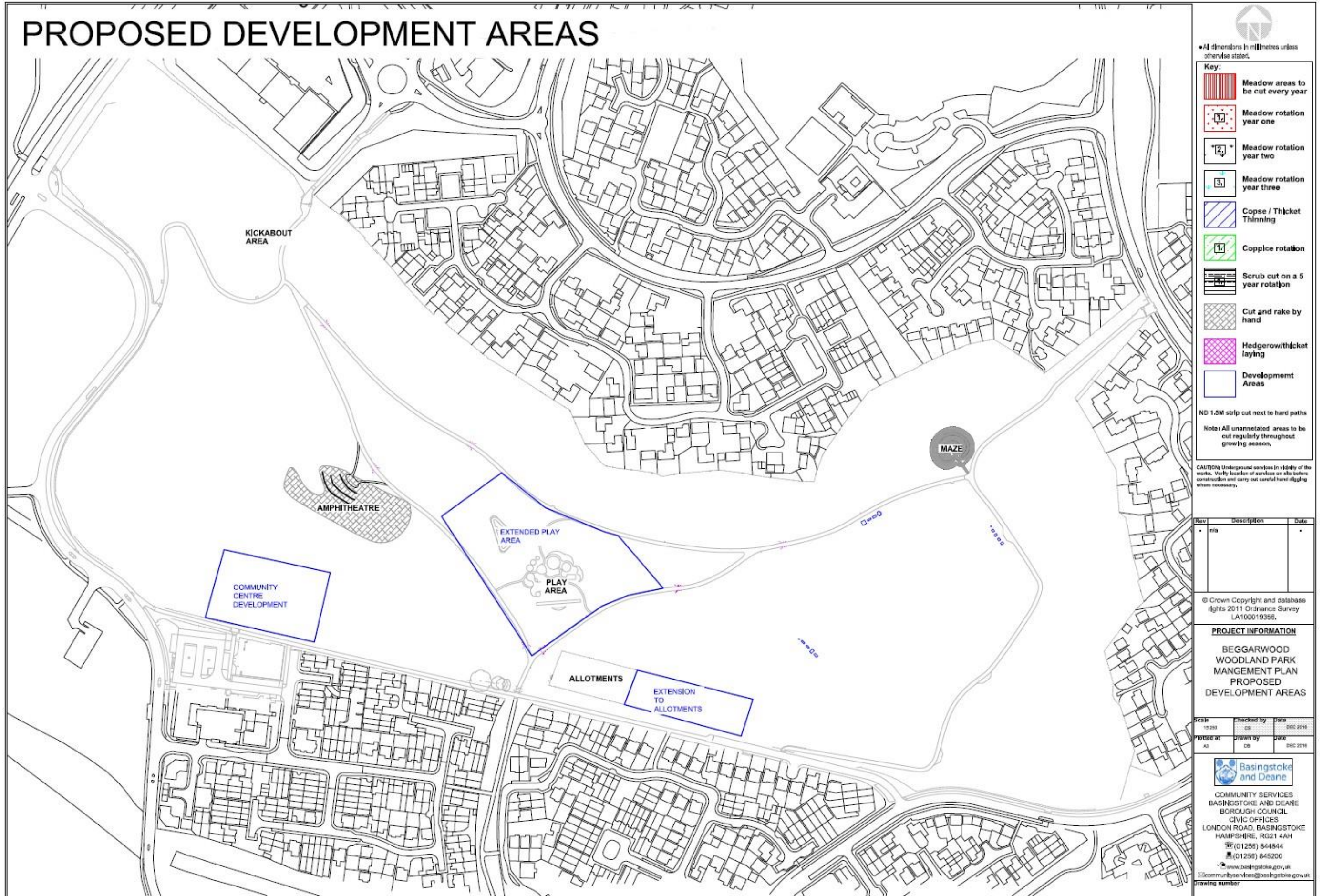






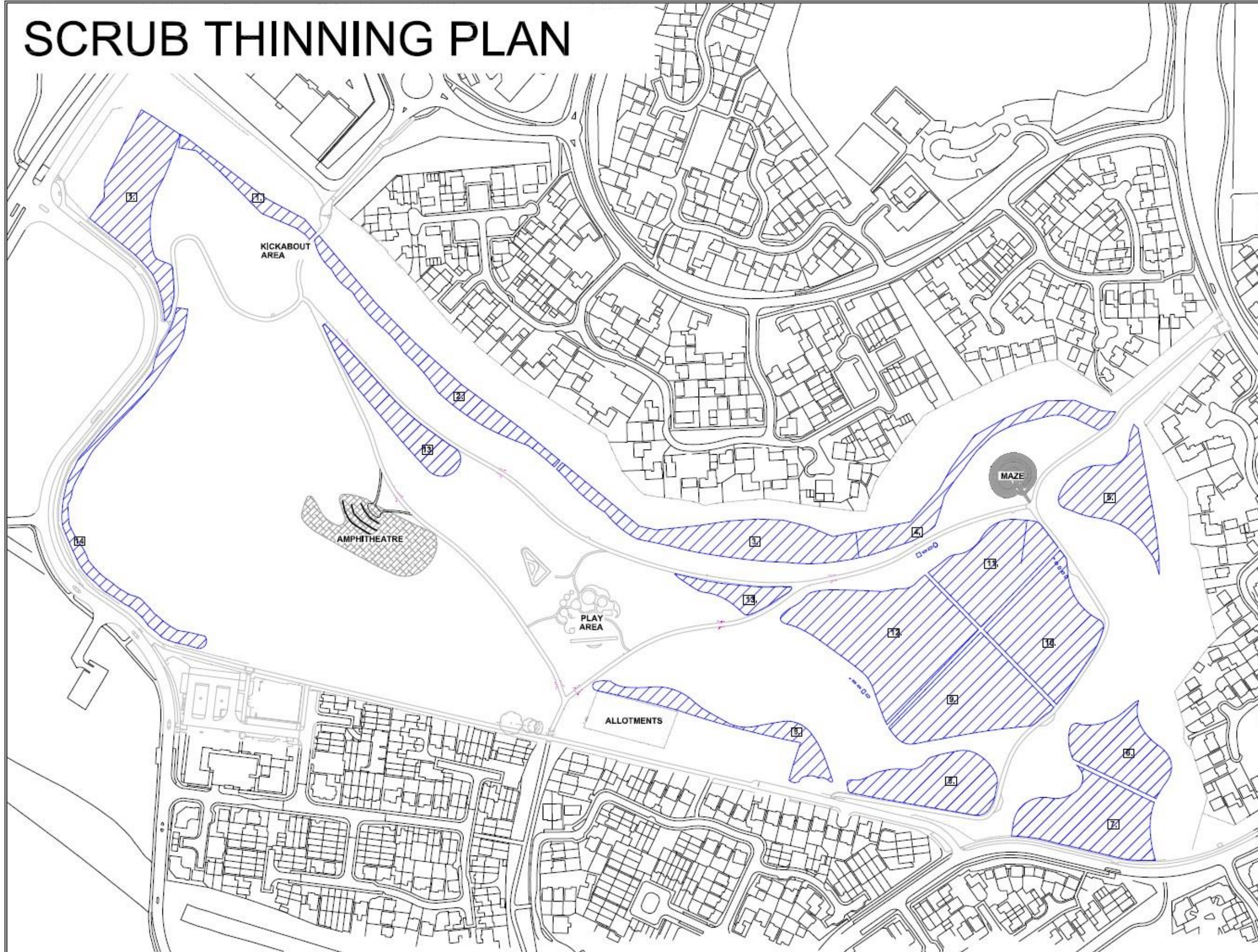








# SCRUB THINNING PLAN



• All dimensions in millimetres unless otherwise stated.

**Key:**

- Meadow areas to be cut every year
- Meadow rotation year one
- Meadow rotation year two
- Meadow rotation year three
- Copse / Thicket Thinning
- Coppice rotation
- Scrub cut on a 5 year rotation
- Cut and rake by hand
- Hedgerow/thicket laying
- Development Areas

ND 1.5M strip cut next to hard paths

Notes: All unannotated areas to be cut regularly throughout growing season.

CAUTION: Underground services in vicinity of the works. Verify location of services on site before construction and carry out careful hand digging where necessary.

Rev	Description	Date
•	•	•

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**PROJECT INFORMATION**

BEGGARWOOD WOODLAND PARK MANGEMENT PLAN SCRUB THINNING PLAN

Scale	Checked by	Date
1:1250	CB	DEC 2019

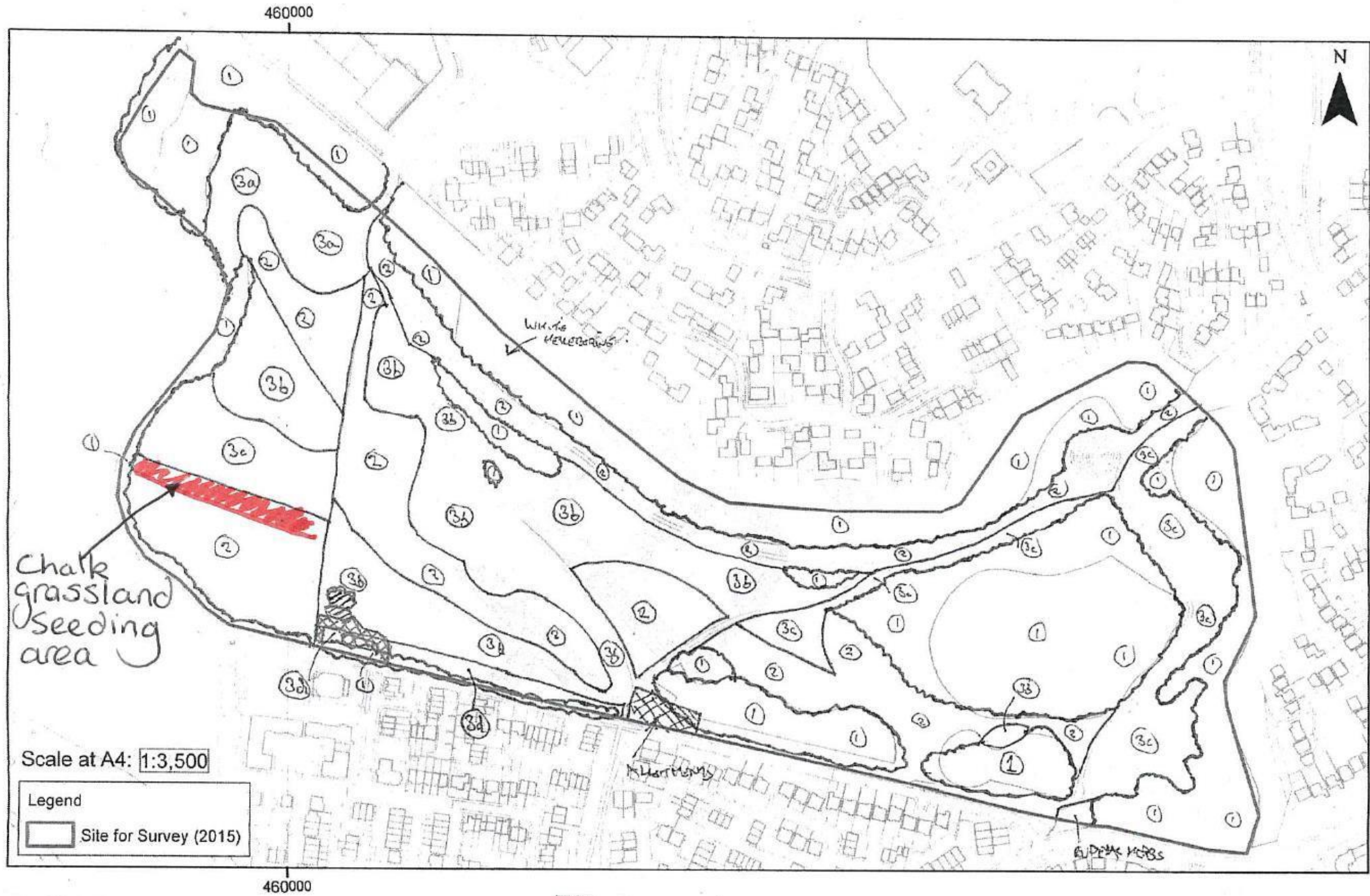
Plotted at	Drawn by	Date
A3	CB	DEC 2019

Basingstoke and Deane

COMMUNITY SERVICES  
BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE  
BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CIVIC OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD, BASINGSTOKE  
HAMPSHIRE, RG21 4AH  
☎ (01256) 844844  
☎ (01256) 845200  
www.basingstoke.gov.uk  
25communityservices@basingstoke.gov.uk

Drawing number





**11. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Monitoring	Annual progress review													
	Five yearly management plan review													
	General Tree inspection													
	Veteran / High risk Tree safety inspection													
	Species survey (formal survey every 5-10 years)		HBI C	As and when volunteers are able					HBI C					HBI C
	Woodland survey (formal survey every 20 years)										Due 2029			
	Hedgerow survey (formal survey every 5-10 years)													
	Visitor survey													

**Key**

BDBC
BDBC/volunteers
Volunteers
HBIC

In order to keep up with developing policies and legislation, as well as a better understanding of the changing needs and expectations of users, those responsible for implementing the Plan will review progress and achievements every five years. Amendments and additions will be made as necessary. These reviews will be informed by the annual meetings held between those monitoring the management plan and all those involved with delivering the maintenance operations. Amendments to the Plan have been undertaken in 2016 in order to facilitate the Parks proposed declaration as a Local Nature Reserve in 2017.

Many of the on-going phased and rotational schedules will inform future maintenance decisions beyond the scope of this Plan. Regular surveys and reviews should allow amendments to the Plan as necessary to ensure it remains current and appropriate for the site. They will also provide opportunity to extend the Plan.

A review of the impacts the management is having on the habitats should be included within every other management plan review; that is, every 10 years.

Survey results and progress will be shared with stakeholders as required, and the council will work in partnership with other agencies to ensure the long term aims for the park are achieved and maintained.

## **12. GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

- ODBWG** Old Down and Beggarwood Wildlife Group – a voluntary group, promoting biodiversity, and an understanding of local flora and fauna.
- SINC** Site of Importance for Nature Conservation – designated by the county council as a locally valued wildlife site assessed against detailed criteria, usually containing notable species or habitat.
- DDA** Disability Discrimination Act – works to protect people with disabilities from discrimination.
- HBIC** Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre – A partnership led initiative, established to bring together valuable information on Hampshire’s wildlife and natural environment, and to collate and manage this data.
- ECOSA** Ecological Survey and Assessment Ltd – Ecological consultant offering comprehensive ecology surveys and services
- GPS** Global Positioning System – A space-based satellite navigation system.

## **13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This plan was written with the help of:

Old Down and Beggarwood Wildlife Group

David Hopkins Hampshire County Archaeologist

Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC)



#### **14. LIST OF APPENDICES**

- 1** Policy Context
- 2** Street Furniture Layout and Walk 4 Life Route
- 3** Improvements Masterplan
- 4** HBIC Report
- 5** ECOSA Surveys
- 6** Good Woods Report
- 7** Protected Species and Status
- 8** Compartment Plan
- 9** Current Maintenance Schedule
- 10** Cutting Schedule
- 11** Interpretation Panel Designs