

CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2017

REDE COMMON – LOCAL NATURE RESERVE DESIGNATION

Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Housing and Community Services
Report from:	Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation
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Summary

The report seeks Cabinet consideration of 10 years of work to designation of Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) confirming the site's future as a wildlife and community asset. Designation is obtained through an agreement between Natural England and the Council (a declaration) and is subject to an agreed Management Plan (completed – see appendix 1) and Medway Council, via Cabinet, to make the legal declaration. Community support is essential and has been sought by both local Ward Councillors and the Friends of Rede Common.

The site's management plan acknowledges resource constraints and only promotes actions that can be delivered through the existing management means (Medway Norse) or by volunteers managed by the Friends of Group.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 A decision to declare Rede Common as an LNR is consistent with the Local Plan saved policy (BNE36) and will contribute towards the Council's long standing target of securing 1hectare (ha) per 1000 head of population (*Medway Wildlife Countryside and Open Space Strategy, page 41*).
- 1.2 The Rede Common LNR Management and Maintenance Plan's actions are realistic and achievable, and are sustainable within current budget allocations. Therefore, this is a matter for Cabinet.

2. Background

- 2.1 It has been a long standing local ambition to declare the Rede Common site as a Local Nature Reserve. Such an action responds to the sites local importance and the Council's and the Friends of Group's desire to maintain

and enhance the site's biodiversity and community interests. This ambition also contributes to the Council's target of 1ha of LNR per 1000 head of population.

- 2.2 Rede Common, known locally as 'Sandy Banks', is a green space in the very heart of Strood. It is a small open space and Doorstep Green, of 11 hectares, but it is a place at the heart of the local community and is the only semi-natural greenspace site serving this community.
- 2.3 The site is owned by Medway Council and is managed by Medway Norse in partnership with an active community group; the Friends of Rede Common, which was set up in 1998. Volunteers from this group carry out management tasks on the site, as well as holding events and fundraising.
- 2.4 The Medway Wildlife Countryside and Open Space Strategy promoted a target declaring a minimum of 1 ha per 1,000 population. It also noted that current provision falls short of this standard.
- 2.5 The Friends of Rede Common have been active for 10 years in promoting awareness and support of both the local public and Ward Councillors for the declaration of Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve. The Friends of Groups have held numerous events promoting the declaration of the LNR.
- 2.6 Greenspace Services have facilitated the writing of a Rede Common LNR Management Plan 2017 – 21, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 2.7 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) provides the legislative framework for the designation of LNRs but there is no national legal protection specifically for LNRs. However Local Nature Reserves are referenced in Local Plan saved policy (BNE36) Strategic and Local Nature Conservation Sites, which covers designated and proposed Local Nature Reserves and looks to restrict development that would materially harm the sites wildlife interests.

3. Options

- 3.1 The options for consideration by Cabinet are to either designate or not designate Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949).
- 3.2 A Cabinet decision to designate the site an LNR will be consistent with the Medway Wildlife Countryside and Open Space Strategy and the Local Plan saved policy BNE36. It will contribute to the target of designated 1ha of LNR per 1000 population, and will address the desires of the Friends of Group and local residents. The Strood South Ward Members have also recently reaffirmed their support for the designation of the site as an LNR. A possible disadvantage from a decision to designate the site as a LNR is that Policy BNE36 states that development would not be permitted unless there is overriding need. The LNR management plan supports a range of management prescriptions that will be delivered within existing partnership and budgets.
- 3.3 A Cabinet decision not to designate the site as a LNR will mean that on this occasion the Council is not contributing to the Medway Wildlife Countryside

and Open Space Strategy target. It would not meet the expectations of the Friends of Group and their 150 supporters. The site would continue to be managed via the Medway Norse with a focus on accessibility and grounds maintenance. The Friends of Group could still continue to undertake voluntary actions to maintain and enhance the site's wildlife and community value.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 The advice to Cabinet is to support the proposal to designate Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve. This will celebrate the last 10 years of community work to secure the designation and to raise the profile of the site as a local community and wildlife resource. It would contribute to the expansion of Medway's LNR coverage promoting a positive message on sustainable development and place making. The Friends of Group have a long and positive track record of looking after the site – a fact that removes concerns about sustainability of efforts.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 The following risks are associated with the designation of Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Friends of Group disband and are not longer able to support volunteer efforts to deliver the LNR.	As with all voluntary groups, there is a risk that the group lose key individuals and that the group disbands.	The Greenspaces Partnership post will provide on-going support to the group and its actions.	D2
There is an increase in the costs associated with managing the site as a LNR.	If the site management plan was promoting new management prescriptions which needed to be completed to meet LNR criteria then there would be a risk of increased spend.	Greenspaces have ensured that the actions promoted in the site management plan are consistent with current budgets and contracts.	D3
The LNR designation conflicts with a future need to develop all or part of the Local Nature Reserve.	The Local Plan saved policy BNE36 could restrict or challenge currently unidentified desire to physically develop the site for alternative uses.	In exceptional circumstance the Council can demonstrate a need to override such a constraint.	C2

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Friends of Rede Common have held events, open days, open meeting and committee meetings engaging local members and residents in discussion on the designation of the site as a Local Nature Reserve. All Stroud South

Ward Councillors have been contact during the drafting of this report and asked to confirm their on-going support for the LNR designation. All three did so without hesitation.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no substantive financial implications resulting from the LNR designation as all identified actions can be accommodated within existing Greenspace general ledger codes.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There is no legal protection for Local Nature Reserves. However, a declaration between Natural England and the Council is required, which declares that the said land is being managed as a Nature Reserve.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That Cabinet agrees the Rede Common Management Plan 2017-2021, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 9.2 That Cabinet declares Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to enable an agreement between the Council and Natural England to be entered into for the designation of the site as a Local Nature Reserve.

10. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 10.1 It has been a long standing local ambition to declare the Rede Common site as a Local Nature Reserve. Such an action responds to the site's local importance and the Council's and the Friends of Group's desire to maintain and enhance the site's biodiversity and community interests. This ambition also contributes to the Council's target of 1ha of LNR per 1000 head of population.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Rede Common Management Plan 2017 – 2021

Background papers

Medway Local Plan 2003 (BNE 36, page 94)

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/localplansandpolicies/medwaylocalplan2003.aspx>

Medway Wildlife Countryside and Open Space Strategy (2008 – 16)

http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/wildlife_strategy_08-4.pdf

Rede Common



Management Plan

2017 - 2021

January 2017

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Introduction

Rede Common – A Local Gem

Rede Common, known locally as ‘Sandy Banks’, is a green space in the very heart of Strood. It is a small open space and Doorstep Green, of only around 11 hectares, but it is a place at the heart of the local community and is the only semi-natural greenspace site serving this community.

The site is owned by Medway Council and is managed in partnership with an active community group; the Friends of Rede Common, which was set up in 1998. Volunteers from this group carry out management tasks on the site, as well as holding events and fundraising.

It is the intention of Medway Council to designate Rede Common as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which has also been a long-held ambition of Friends of Rede Common. This document has been produced to guide the management of Rede Common between 2017-2022 and to support the Local Nature Reserve designation.

This is therefore an exciting stage for Rede Common. An approach is required which both befits its position as a greenspace at the heart of Strood and which enables the site to fulfil its potential for both nature and for people. It must be an approach which acknowledges the site’s place in the local community and seeks to maximise the benefits it brings. Whilst it must be ambitious, optimistic and forward-looking, it must also be grounded in the reality of today; with current and ongoing severe pressures on resources. Above all the approach must be realistic and achievable; and it must be sustainable. There is no benefit in advocating management actions which cannot be implemented, or ‘grand projects’ which will deteriorate in a matter of years.

Crucially, the management of the site needs to be taken forward in true partnership, building on the existing strong base of community action. This importance of this cannot be over-emphasised. There is huge potential to set Rede Common on the path of continued improvement to serve the community, including to provide an accessible greenspace in an area of relatively poor health. However, resources are scarce and finite; in terms of Medway Council staff and budgets, in terms of volunteer time from the local community and in terms of the availability of funding sources. This needs to be recognised – gaining the funding required to implement projects will need all partners to work to a shared vision for the site. Implementation of this plan will require a ‘business-like’ approach; working through the actions, seeking funding and implementing tasks in the most effective way. There are likely to be funding sources which the Friends of Rede Common can access which Medway Council cannot and these need to be identified and progressed. The Friends may require additional support to access and implement these.

About this Plan

This plan aims to take a balanced approach, recognising both the amenity and nature conservation value of the site. The strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas are assessed, before management proposals are made. The access and amenity assessment follows

the categories used in the 'Green Flag Award',¹ providing a useful baseline should Medway Council or Friends of Rede Common seek to gain this award in the future. The five management categories of the award which have been used are as follows (see Appendix for more detail on each of these categories):

- A welcoming place;
- A safe and secure place;
- A clean and well-maintained place;
- Sustainability;
- Conservation and heritage.

Taken together, ensuring attainment against all of these five management categories (at a level appropriate for Rede Common) will ensure a high quality site which is meeting the needs of all visitors. A more in depth assessment of nature conservation than that required by Green Flag has been made to support the designation of the site as a Local Nature Reserve and to reflect the importance of the site for wildlife, as well as for local people.

Vision and Objectives

The following vision and objectives have been agreed by Medway Council and Friends of Rede Common.

VISION

That Rede Common is a well-managed and well maintained greenspace which benefits both local people and wildlife and which is protected for both into the future.

The over-arching objectives for Rede Common are:

- 1 To provide an open space which is accessible for local people to visit and enjoy for quiet recreation;
- 2 To manage and improve the nature conservation value of the site;
- 3 To secure the future maintenance of the site to provide a high quality site;
- 4 To continue and strengthen the partnership approach to management and maintenance between Medway Council and the Friends of Rede Common as representatives of the local community.

¹ <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/>

Previous Management Plans and Reports

A number of documents have been produced covering various aspects of management of Rede Common. The following documents have been consulted in the preparation of this management plan.

An 'Ecological Survey and Proposals' document was prepared for Rochester upon Medway City Council in 1992.

A management plan covering the years 2004-2009 was prepared in order to receive funding for the common to become a Doorstep Green.² The plan outlined improvements to access and nature conservation. The aims of the project were to:

- Improve accessibility and the infrastructure of the site for quiet informal recreation for all to enjoy;
- Improve the landscape and wildlife value of Rede Common;
- Raise public awareness and understanding and promote a caring and responsible attitude towards the common and encourage community participation.

The plan advocated a range of improvements for habitats and infrastructure. Some of the improvements which were implemented included the installation of motorbike barriers at some entrances, the surfacing of the path from the hardstanding area and the installation of benches and bins.

After the expiry of this management plan, Friends of Rede Common produced some interim recommendations:

- A report on Rede Common Entrances was produced in February 2010, authored by Janet Wickens and Margaret Salter (Friends of Rede Common);
- A summary of 'management ideas' was collated by Friends of Rede Common in 2011 after the expiry of the previous management plan;
- A 'Rede Common Plans 2013' document was compiled, which requested permissions to undertake some management actions, for example wildflower sowing and removing flytipping.

² Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, *Rede Common Creation and Management Plan 2004-2009*.

Summary of Site Information

Rede Common is located in Strood, immediately to the south of Watling Street (OS grid reference TQ 719 692). An overview of the site is shown in Plan 1.

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This management plan covers Rede Common, owned by Medway Council; • The site is a mixture of woodland and grassland.
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rede Common is approximately 11 hectares in size; • The grassland covers approximately 4 hectares; • The remainder is woodland and scrub.
Rights of Way and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no public rights of way across the common but there the entire site is accessible to the public for walking and quiet recreation • The Common is Countryside and Rights of Way Act Section 15 land which requires that there is public access on foot.
Access Points – Pedestrian and Vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian entrances from Thurston Drive, Watling Street, Columbine Close and Hyacinth Road; • Vehicle access for maintenance is restricted to Thurston Drive entrance; • Small siteing area for volunteers from Thurston Drive – not open to the public.
Byelaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Council bylaws apply.
Tree Preservation Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benches; • Litter bins and dog waste bins.
Statutory Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite its name, Rede Common is not registered common land; • The site is a registered Doorstep Green (ID 14222650). These were designated between 2001 – 2006 and were funded by the Big Lottery. This brings a degree of protection and legal advice from Natural England should be sought before the following actions relating to a Doorstep Green: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a new facility; • Grant an easement; • License a new partner; • Adapt legal and grant agreements; • Take part in another funding scheme.³
Non-statutory designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Council is currently working on a new Local Plan. Until this is adopted the Local Plan 2003 forms policy. Rede Common is covered by Policy L3 Protection of Open Space; • The site is not a Local Wildlife Site nor within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area; • Woodland on the site is listed by Natural England as Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat (England).

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/doorstep-and-millennium-greens-making-changes> Advice dated 2014. Natural England advises that it's legal support should be contacted before actions which might affect the future of the green.³

Plan 1: Overview of Site – Entrances, Paths and Habitats



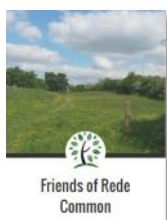
History

Despite its name, Rede Common is not common land. For much of its history it was part of the farmland to the east of Strood. This was a landscape of fields and woodland, which has gradually been subsumed by the eastward expansion of Strood.

The land which is now Rede Common was owned by the Diocese of Rochester prior to its sale in 1946 to the Medway Council, with its use for pleasure was stipulated at the time of sale. However there was pressure for post-war housing and gradually the town of Strood expanded. In the 1950's – 60's housing was built which surrounded the land on all sides. In 1997 fifteen further houses were built on the northern part of the site. At that time Medway Council agreed to preserve the rest of the land as a public open space, with the layout of the housing such that further development was prevented.

Management Arrangements

Rede Common is owned by Medway Council. Medway Council organises routine maintenance, including cutting of the meadows.



The Friends of Rede Common (FORC)⁴ also manage the common in partnership with Medway Council. This active local community group formed in 1998 and holds regular practical working days as well as events to raise funds. The local community is rightly proud of their common and are very active in ensuring that it is preserved and managed for the benefit of both wildlife and people.

The long-term aims of the Friends of Rede Common are:

- To create a conservation area both for the peaceful recreation of the community and as a safe environment for a growing diversity of wildlife.
- To preserve the land from further housing development, vandalism, fly-tipping and litter;
- To banish the riding of motorbikes on the land;
- To publish educational resource material for the use by schools and other groups, and thus promote an active interest in the land by younger members of the community;
- To manage the land and keep it in a healthy condition – to work with the community and Medway Council in partnership to ensure that Rede Common continues to support as diverse a range of plants, birds, animals and insects as possible;
- To enhance the value of the land as a wildlife haven and to improve its wildlife population to such an extent that the Council are able to register its status as a Local Nature Reserve, and secure it's safety for the foreseeable future.



⁴ <https://redecommon.wordpress.com/>

Geology, Soils, Landform and Hydrology

The north portion of Rede Common lies on the Thanet formation of sand, silt and clay. In contrast, as the site dips to the south, there is a smaller exposure of the Seaford chalk formation. There is a small superficial deposit of gravelly and sandy Head on the highest part of the site. The highest part of Rede Common is around 80m above sea level, forming a plateau in the centre and northern part of the site. From this highest point the site drops on all sides; to Watling Street in the north and to around 60m above sea level to the south. The elevated position provides views which extend to the isle of Grain, across the entire Medway towns and to the Kent Downs.



View from Rede Common

There are no streams, ditches or ponds on Rede Common.

Service and Easements

None known; checks should be made prior to groundworks which may have an impact on any services present.

Amenity and Public Access Assessment

Introduction

Rede Common is a semi-natural open space, not a formal site, but it is in a prominent location and is only semi-natural open space in Strood. Amenity and public access quality should therefore be a priority for the site. The Green Flag Award standards have been used for assessing the site, albeit slightly modified to reflect that it is a semi-natural space and not a formal park. The main access infrastructure is shown in Plan 2.

Assessment against Strategic Objectives for Quality Spaces

A Welcoming Place

A welcoming site draws people and makes them feel welcome through its appearance, facilities and maintenance. This includes the location of paths, provision of information, quality and position of entrances and signing.

There are many entrances to the site at which Medway Council had installed some signing in recent years; but these are very tall and therefore hard to read. There are two notice boards which are in fair condition. Overall the signing does not create a strong 'identity' for the site and does not reflect the partnership approach to management with the Friends of Rede Common. Consideration should be given to an overall identity for the site which reflects both the legal owners and managers and the partnership with the local community. While this is not an urgent issue to address and will be in competition for resources against other management priorities, the design of such signing could be discussed and developed in advance at an early stage so that this can be implemented when the opportunity for new signing arises. The designation as a LNR will require the installation of new signs at some point to reflect the site's new status and this could provide the opportunity to update the signing and interpretation, subject to funding. The site would also benefit from clear information about who to contact if there are problems.

Dog fouling is an issue on the site. The signing does indicate this is not acceptable and there is good provision of dog bins, yet these are ignored by some. Increased signing on its own is unlikely to bring compliance but increased signing could help to support a wider initiative to deter dog fouling (see also section – 'A Safe and Secure Place').



Notice Board



New entrance sign

Plan 2: Main Access Infrastructure



An example of a welcoming sign which could be adapted and customised for Rede Common is shown to the right.

There are waymarked routes which cross the site and several waymarking posts on the site. These are considered in the next section on physical access.

There is an interpretation board on the central grassland area, near to the hardstanding/volunteers' car park.



Example of a welcoming entrance sign on a community site

Table 1: Rede Common - Signing Assessment

	Assessment	Actions Required
Identity and Management	There is no clear identity for the site which indicates clearly the partnership approach to management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress with a design for clear, inclusive and welcoming signs which reflect the new LNR status and demonstrate the partnership approach under which the site is managed; Include contact details and who to contact if there are issues on site.
Entrance Signs/Naming Signs	There are new Medway Council installed entrance signs at the entrances at Watling Street and Hyacinth Road. There are notice boards at Watling Street and Columbine Close.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider smaller welcoming entrance signs at smaller entrances, bearing in mind previous point.
Dog Signing	There is signing at entrances indicating no dog fouling (however this seems to be ignored by a number of visitors).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current signing and presence of dog bins makes a clear statement that dog fouling is not acceptable; however it is clear this remains an issue. Consider further signing as part of a wider anti dog-fouling approach.
Style, Clarity and Maintenance	The Medway Council signs are new and in good condition but very tall and hard to read. The notice boards are in fair condition and have current notices posted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all new signing follows best practice in clarity and readability for all members of the community; Ensure messages on new signing are welcoming and friendly; Convey clearly that the site is managed in partnership by the community for the community.
Signing around the area	No signing in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this is a local site a sign from Watling Street would help to guide local people and may attract residents who do not know about the site.

Physical Access

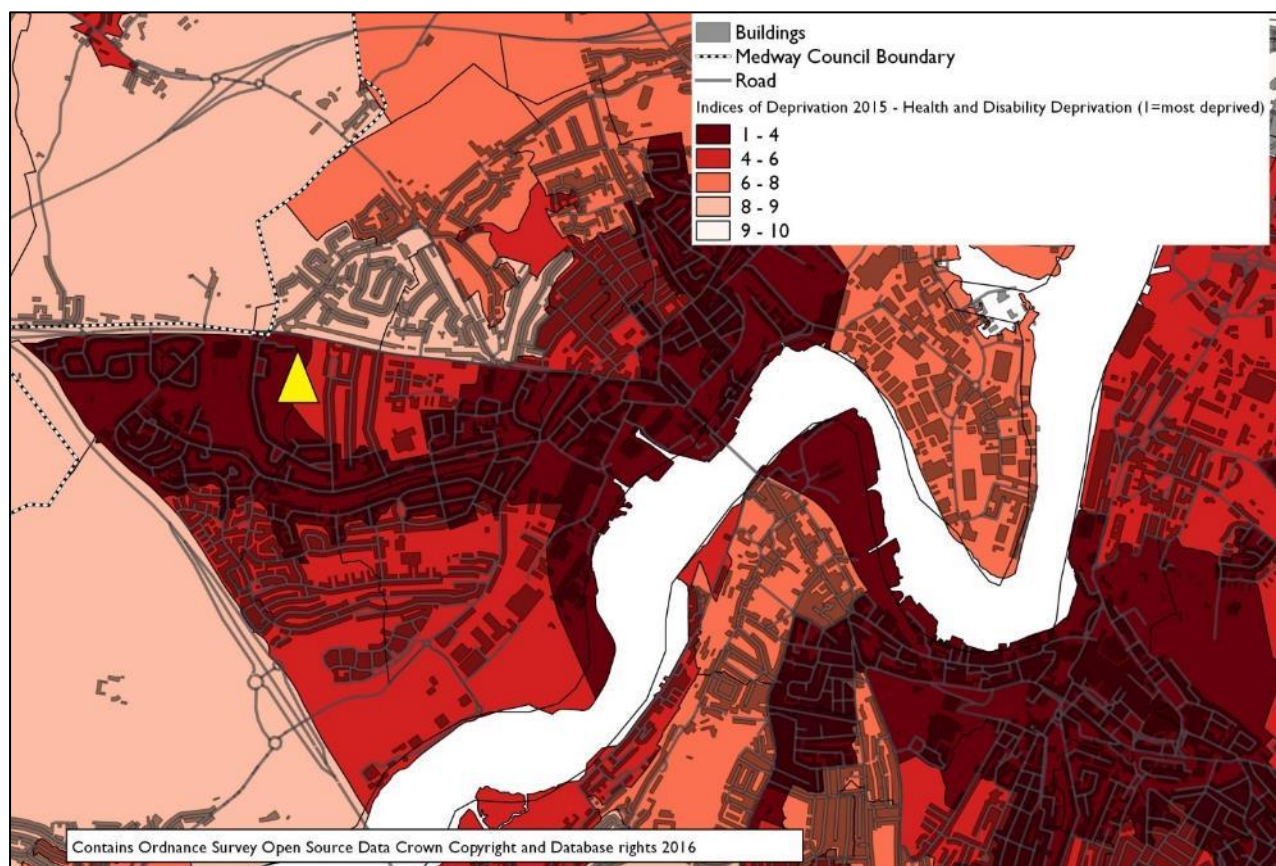
This assessment is based on the suitability of the site for all sectors of the community. The standard expected on Rede Common is not that which would be expected in a formal park, but its importance for the local community and its status as the only semi-natural greenspace in Strood means that a good standard should be aimed for.

The paths and access points are shown in Plan 2. Most of the paths are unsurfaced although there is a previously surfaced route linking the hardstanding/volunteers' car park with Watling Street entrance (eastern entrance). This surfacing is now worn and not in good condition. A new short section of path was installed at Columbine Close in 2015. There are steps at some entrances (see page 14).

Some of the paths through the woodland are narrow and overgrown and some are muddy in winter. These paths could be improved through opening them up to allow in more light to help them dry out. This will also increase the amenity value of the site and improve sight lines as well as adding to the diversity of the woodland flora along the edges of the paths. However, it would need to be carried out in a sensitive way without opening up the woodland too much. A maintenance hierarchy of paths is therefore proposed to rationalise the path network, which would allow some paths to be opened up while others only receive routine maintenance to keep them clear (detailed later). There are also several smaller 'desire line' paths. The reduction of these would be beneficial to nature and reduce disturbance. It is difficult to close such paths as visitors tend to continue to find routes and in doing so often make new paths. Improving the main paths will help to channel the majority of visitors to these paths as they will be more attractive and easier to use and through this the creation of desire lines should diminish.

Rede Common is situated in an area which has a higher level of health deprivation (see Plan 3). The connections between greenspace and health and opportunities for healthy living are widely documented, with broad agreement on the conclusion that the natural environment provides physical, mental and social well-being benefits. Rede Common is therefore an important site to provide access for healthy exercise and access to a natural space and use of the site by a range of people should be supported. The topography of the site undoubtedly creates a barrier to access which cannot be overcome, and some visitors with reduced mobility will find the slopes beyond their capability. The natural aspect of the site also means that the ground is uneven in places. Being a semi-natural site, surfaced paths across the entire site would change the aspect of the site to one which is far more 'formal'.

Plan 3: Health and Disability Deprivation (2015)



Future design of paths and other infrastructure should take into account best practice in this area and there is comprehensive guidance available to assist with this.⁵ Ensuring that all new works are carried out to a high standard for accessibility need not be prohibitively expensive or incongruous to the natural aspect of the site and will ensure that the site becomes more inclusive for all members of the community. Best practice in accessible design should be considered and implemented when any existing infrastructure requires replacing. Some of the existing infrastructure does not meet accessibility standards, for example the 'rustic' steps leading from Hyacinth 2 entrance (see right).



Steps on path above Hyacinth 2 entrance

⁵ A best practice guide is available for free download <http://www.fieldfare.org.uk/countryside-for-all/countryside-for-all-good-practice-guide/> and the Sensory Trust <http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/factsheets/index.html>

There are several areas in which simple improvements and thought given to design would make significant improvements to accessibility, for example:

- Include benches for resting at regular intervals – this helps those who are infirm;
- Make sure there are arms on some benches and that they are not too low – this helps less able and elderly people to get up;
- Ensure that steps follow best design – the treads are not too high and the steps not too narrow and that they are spaced evenly to prevent tripping;
- Make sure there are handrails on all steps and on slopes;
- The surface of the path which follows the route on more level ground installed following the 2004 management plan has proved to be insufficiently robust. Consider re-surfacing the path and extending this to the Watling Street (east) entrance. The gradient on the slope leading to Watling Street will need to be measured to ascertain whether it is sufficiently shallow (guidance suggests maximum 1:15 gradient, ideally 1:20).⁶. A tarmac path with 'blacktop' would be more hard-wearing but would be too intrusive on this natural site, but tarmac with rolled gravel would be less intrusive and could provide a compromise between longevity and aesthetic appeal. This will be a high capital item and will require a co-ordinated fundraising effort to deliver in the medium to longer term.



Path to Watling Street entrance (east) – potential to resurface with tarmac and rolled gravel to address gullying and improve accessibility.

⁶ <http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/factsheets/outdoor-access-1-paths.html>

There are several access points to Rede Common, see Plan 2. Levels of accessibility vary. Several have motorbike barriers due to past issues with illegal motorbike access. These are of an inverted-V design which still permits pushchairs to some degree.

- **Watling Street (west):** Flight of steps, two handrails;
- **Watling Street (east):** Gradual gradient, unsurfaced path, motorbike barrier half way on route;
- **Columbine Close:** Surfaced section of path (loose bound) linking road to motorbike barrier;
- **Hyacinth 1:** Grassy entrance track leading through scrub to the site. No steps and fairly level. Motorbike barrier some distance into site;
- **Hyacinth 2:** Set of steps leading up step slope, metal handrail on one side; motorbike barrier;
- **Carnation Close:**⁷ Entrance behind garages. Motorbike barrier.
- **Thurston Drive 1:** Main entrance to the site with vehicle gate and kissing gate;
- **Thurston Drive 2:** Kissing gate entrance;
- **Thurston Drive 2:** Kissing gate entrance.



Columbine Close



Hyacinth 2

⁷ There was an additional entrance from Carnation Road but this no longer serves a purpose and is overgrown. There is no benefit in reinstating this entrance.

There are two waymarked routes on the site (see Plan 4):

- **Strood Community Trail**⁸ crosses the site from south to north, entering the site at Hyacinth 2 entrance and leaving by Watling Street. The route is waymarked across the site. Some mosaic artwork was installed – the installation at Hyacinth 2 has been destroyed but the ‘Daisy waymarker’ at Watling Street remains.
- **Sandy Banks Circular Walk** follows a short circuit on the highest part of the site.



The waymarking on these routes needs to be maintained as waymarking plaques have been removed.

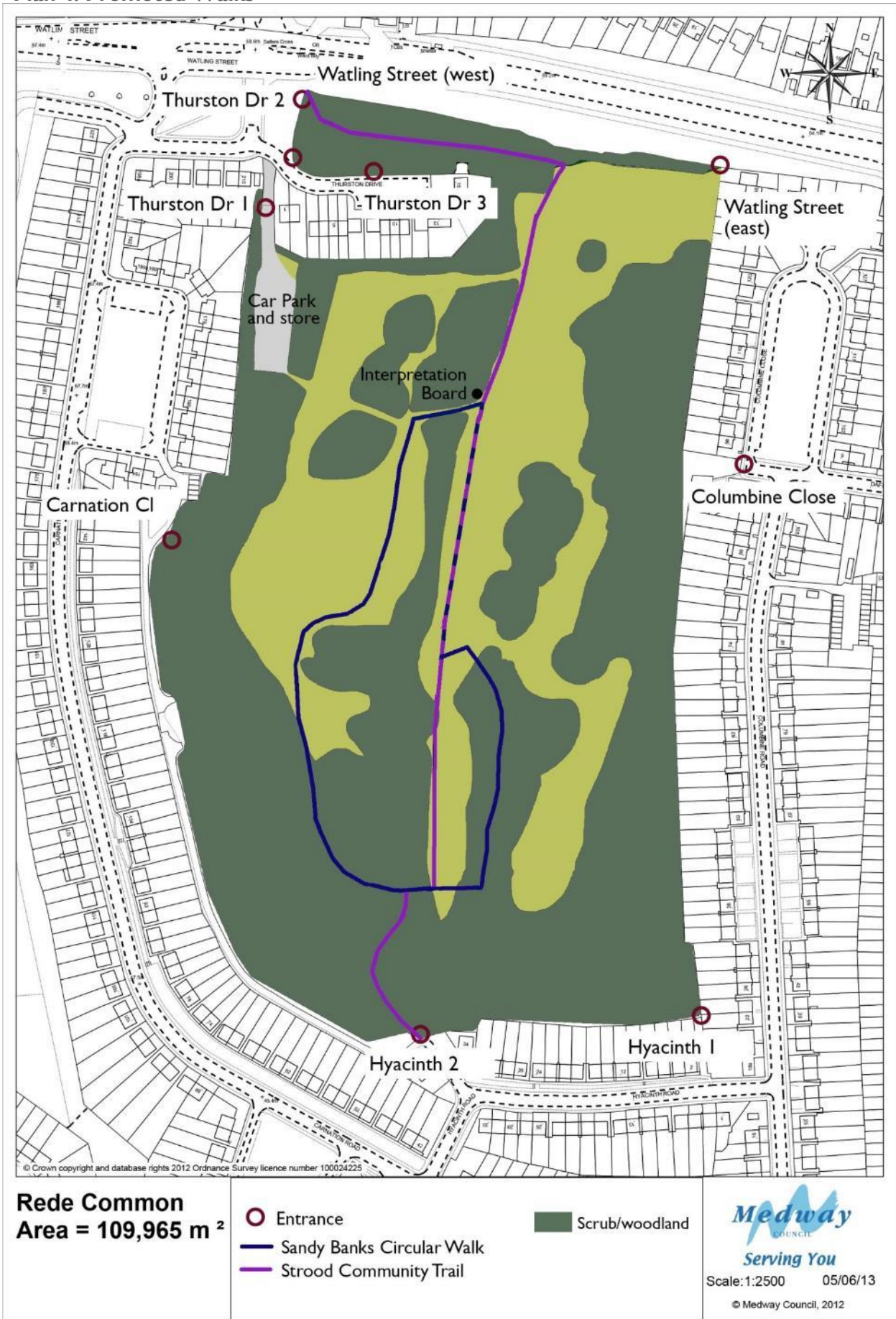
Table 2: Rede Common – Physical Access Assessment

	Assessment	Actions Required
Access to the site	<p><u>Public Transport</u>: Bus route along Watling Street with stops next to Rede Common.</p> <p><u>Road Crossings</u>: Common surrounded by quiet residential roads serving most access points. For visitors from north of Watling Street there is a Pelican crossing at Rede Court Road and small traffic islands at other points along Watling Street.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site serves local people from Strood and for these visitors access is good, with crossing points on the A2 to serve those living to the north of this main road.
Benches	<p>There are several benches on the site. These benches are of various types but are, nonetheless, functional. The number of benches is adequate for the size of the site, but consider including more as part of a plan to increase accessibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor condition of benches and replace as required; • Install further benches and resting places as part of improving accessibility; • Consider further benches to take advantage of views, as resources allow.
Car Parking	<p>There is no public car parking but a hardstanding parking area for volunteers which is accessed through the locked main entrance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None, car parking on site not required.
Paths and Access Routes	<p>There are several paths throughout Rede Common:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The path which links the hardstanding/volunteers car park to Watling Street (eastern entrance) has been surfaced in the past but the surfacing has deteriorated • There is a short section of surfaced path at the Columbine Close entrance; • The paths through the grassland are cut during the summer; • Some of the paths through the woodland are narrow and overgrown and some are muddy in winter. A maintenance hierarchy of paths is therefore proposed to rationalise the path network, for both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a maintenance hierarchy for paths to form a practical network. Concentrate improvement and maintenance on these paths, see Plan 5 in Summary of Actions section; • Carry out annual vegetation clearance on other paths; • Do not clear or maintain other desire lines.

⁸ <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Strood%20community%20trail%20leaflet.pdf>

	Assessment	Actions Required
	amenity and nature benefits.	
Access for Visitors with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is good access to Rede Common as there are footways surrounding the site; • There are no specific facilities for disabled people and access is restricted for disabled visitors due to the topography; • Some of the existing infrastructure could be improved, for example replacing steps, installing more benches etc. but will require specific fundraising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all new infrastructure is designed to be as accessible as possible as previously outlined; • Consider providing circular route for those less able. This would need to be designed to avoid gradients and follow best practice. It will require a co-ordinated fundraising effort; • Draw up a costed access for all plan and take a co-ordinated approach to seeking funding.
Entrance Points	There are many entrance points as previously described.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and maintain the main entrance points, working towards clear and welcoming signing, improving accessibility and keeping sight lines clear and open.

Plan 4: Promoted Walks



A Safe and Secure Place

A level of crime and anti-social behaviour takes place around Rede Common.

Fly-tipping and rubbish dumping is an ongoing problem and can be severe at times. This greatly detracts from the amenity of the site and adds to an 'air of neglect'. This is a particular issue along the access road behind Carnation Road with debris from both fly-tipping and from some houses. Friends of Rede Common and Medway Council have both attempted to solve this issue in the past but co-operation is urgently needed from the housing associations which are responsible for the houses. Unfortunately there are several associations involved and this issue has not been a priority for these companies.



Behind Carnation Road

Elsewhere on the site there is litter but this is at low levels, helped by the efforts of Friends of Rede Common to maintain the site.

The site itself is considered safe. However, low-level acts of vandalism are not unusual and include damage to gates, signs and waymarkers. This has resource implications both in terms of cost and time.

The centre of the site is open which provides for good sight lines. However, the woodland on the edge of the site, especially in the south, is quite dense in places. Whilst this provides a feeling of seclusion from the urban environment, the perception and actual safety of visitors could be improved through judicious widening of the paths. This was also proposed in the 2004 management plan but, if this did take place, the paths have overgrown once again. This proposal is further detailed in the path maintenance hierarchy and also supports the proposals for woodland management to benefit nature conservation.

There is also a high level of dog fouling, despite fairly clear signing that this is not acceptable and dog waste bins at most entrances. There are not sufficient resources for a staffed presence on site but, with the strong community spirit of the site, there is potential for a community-led approach. Such approaches have been very successful in other parts of the UK. For example the 'Green Dog Walkers' scheme which has expanded across Scotland,⁹ in which dog owners themselves encourage those who are not acting responsibly to improve their behaviour for the benefit of the community. The success of the scheme has been based on increasing the 'social shaming' element of not picking up. With the strong community involvement in the management of the site this is an approach which could be taken at Rede Common.

⁹ <http://www.greendogwalkers.org.uk/>

An inspection of trees is carried out monthly, with any dead or dangerous trees reported to Medway Norse to address.

Table 3 provides an assessment of safety and security.

Table 3: Rede Common - Safe and Secure Place Assessment

	Assessment	Actions Required
A Safer Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are severe issues with fly-tipping which are ongoing and detract from the amenity of the sites; • There are lower level issues of litter and graffiti which are well managed by Friends of Rede Common but drain resources which could be used for other tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Council will continue to seek co-operation from the housing associations of Carnation Road; • Continue with regular litter picking; • Instigate an annual community 'litter blitz' event to 'deep clean' the common once a year to ensure that litter does not become excessive. Make this a community event. Medway Council to supply the skips; • Widening of paths to improve sight lines.
Safe Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight lines are poor in some parts of the woodland and around some entrances; • Some steps are in poor condition (see also comments around accessibility); • Some slopes are muddy and slippery in the winter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open up some paths as detailed in the path maintenance hierarchy and through widening some paths into rides as detailed in the woodland management actions. • Improve path from Hyacinth 2 entrance, replacing poor quality steps which could be a trip hazard.
Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site would benefit from clearer signing that dog fouling is not acceptable. Although this is on the signs as a symbol and the presence of dog waste bins reinforces this, the message that this behaviour is not acceptable needs to be made more explicit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information that dog fouling is not permitted at all entrances when new and/or additional signing is installed (see previous section 'A Welcoming Place'); • Consider further community action – a dog walkers group could help to enforce positive behaviour.

A Clean and Well-Maintained Place

An external facilities management company now carries out routine grounds maintenance on Medway Council sites and also has direct control of the Greenspaces budget. Requests for works to repair broken infrastructure are passed to Medway Norse, who determine whether and when to carry out the works. Medway Norse is responsible for routine grass cutting to create paths and the annual haycut.



FORC carry out regular practical tasks © Friends of Rede Common

Friends of Rede Common meets on the third Saturday of the month to carry out small practical tasks such as litter picking, path clearance and repairs.

SWOT Analysis – Visitor Management

Table 4: SWOT Analysis – Amenity and Public Access

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very valuable greenspace in urban area, serving a need for the local community; • High amenity and landscape value; • Sense of seclusion from urban world, with outstanding views; • Highly valued by local community with a long-established management partnership with Medway Council already in place; • Essential infrastructure in place from past investment (litter bins, benches etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly-tipping is an ongoing problem despite attempts to solve it; • Paths in the woodland are muddy in winter; • The site is not readily accessibility for visitors who are less able-bodied. This is partly due to terrain, but also partly due to design and maintenance of infrastructure.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this management plan to agree a forward plan of action and use this to seek further funding for coming years; • Rationalisation of the path network, concentrating improvements on a few key routes, will increase the amenity and accessibility for all visitors and will ensure that the paths are maintained to a higher standard; • Clearance of denser undergrowth to improve sight lines and feeling of safety; • Seek a larger capital grant (Medway Council and FORC in partnership) to improve infrastructure – replace steps and install a surfaced path, along with a signing review; • Discourage use/allow desire lines to disappear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing pressure on resources means that replacement of infrastructure is unlikely to be routine, risking gradual degradation of the site and loss of accessibility; • Lack of resources to manage paths and access has led to a reduction in quality and there is a risk that this will continue; • Acts of vandalism and fly-tipping, if unchecked, will gradually erode the amenity value of the site, resulting in an ‘air of neglect’; • Lack of woodland management has led to a reduction in amenity and loss of sight lines in the woodland; • Ongoing maintenance must be achievable within current and future budgets and resources of volunteers.

Summary of Actions – Amenity and Public Access

A summary of main actions is provided here. A timetabled Action Plan is provided at the end of the document.

1. Hierarchy of Paths

Implement a hierarchy of paths across the site. The circuit of paths will enable visitors to enjoy all areas of the common; both the grassland and woodland areas (see Plan 5). Management will be concentrated on these paths to ensure that these are maintained at high quality, as expending effort on all of the paths dilutes the impact and renders them all sub-standard. The other paths should not be closed and visitors should not be actively deterred from using them, but these paths will not receive routine maintenance.

In the southern portion of the site the path network will need to be significantly widened by clearing scrub, including around the Carnation Close and Columbine Close entrances to improve sight lines. The increased light will improve biodiversity, creating woodland rides through the scrub, will improve sight lines and safety and will help to allow the paths to dry out. Once widened, these paths can be added to the grounds maintenance contract and flailed annually.

2. Surfaced 'Access for All' Path

Rede Common serves a population with high levels of health deprivation and therefore improvements to enable a wider section of the community to access the site would be beneficial. However, the landform severely limits route choice. There is already a surfaced path forming a small circuit from the hardstanding/volunteers' car park, but this is deteriorating.

Whilst it is not possible to create an 'access for all' path around the whole site due to the gradient, a circuit could be created in the northern part of the site. This would involve resurfacing the existing circuit and extending this to the Watling Street east entrance and to the Columbine Close entrance. Due to the gradient on the site, rolled tarmac with gravel will be the most hardwearing option and prevent the deterioration which has taken place on the existing circuit.

This project will be very costly. Progressing this will require funds to be raised from grants and other sources.

3. Infrastructure Improvements

Some of the infrastructure on site is deteriorating and will need to be replaced to improve accessibility, for example the steps from Hyacinth 2 entrance. Rede Common serves an area of health deprivation and therefore funding to improve infrastructure might be available.



Tarmac with rolled gravel is hardwearing and blends with the natural environment better than undressed tarmac.

Plan 5: Path Network Hierarchy of Maintenance and Path Improvements



Nature Conservation

Habitats of Rede Common

The main habitats of Rede Common are grassland, scrub areas and woodland areas (the latter both mature woodland and developing woodland which has developed from scrub). Neither the habitats or species are rare, but there is great wildlife value in the mosaic of habitats and the semi-natural aspect of the site within the surrounding urban area.

Grassland

The grassland of Rede Common is neutral grassland, most of which is likely to have been improved at some point. The species of the grassland are typical of those found on fairly nutrient-rich neutral soils. The growth of the grass is vigorous and lush, producing a tall sward in which flower species are largely overwhelmed. Nonetheless, this grassland is invaluable for wildlife including insects and small mammals, and the extent of the habitat in an urban setting is of great significance.

Previous management plans indicate that the northernmost area of grassland was once mowed short as amenity grassland. The management proposals of 1992 indicated some acid grassland species in the south west area (likely to be in the area of the gravel Head deposit), although this distinction was not evident in 2016).

Although there is not a high degree of diversity in the sward, there is also a fairly low incidence of potentially problematic weed species. Control of weeds such as hogweed and thistle will increase the likelihood that the grass can be used for hay.

The grassland is of such importance for nature conservation due to the current management regime of leaving the grass long, as this provides habitat and food sources for a range of species. Over time however, if not managed, the scrub and bramble will continue to encroach across this grassland, as it has done during the past decades, and the grassland will be lost. To prevent this the grassland needs to be cut regularly. It is also important to leave some areas uncut each year to provide a refuge for insects and mammals.



Expanse of lush grass



Buttercups and cow parsley in the spring © Friends of Rede Common

It is proposed that the grassland is cut annually and the grass removed as is carried out currently. Uncut margins should be left around the edges of the fields. These should be cut on rotation to prevent bramble and scrub encroaching, see Plan 7.

Trees and Scrub Woodland

Aerial photography shows that Rede Common was, until the later part of the 20th century open farmland, crossed by hedges. When farming ended, these hedges expanded and scrub developed on the slopes of the site. The scrub and woodland is therefore fairly recent in origin. The scrub woodland is most well-developed on the southern slopes of the site and the former hedge line which ran north-south across the site has now expanded into scrub. At the northern extent of the site, adjacent to Watling Street, is a band of more mature trees on the bank between the path and the road. There is a line of beech trees in the south western corner of the site within the woodland and another line of planted trees close to the Columbine Close entrance. Trees were planted along the southern and eastern boundaries of Thurston Drive.

The dominant species of the scrub woodland is hawthorn. The scrub woodland is comprised of mainly even-aged hawthorn with a few other species including ash, oak, birch and beech. There is a very sparse



Even-aged hawthorn scrub woodland

understorey comprising mainly of holly and elder. The hawthorn casts a very dense shade which also limits the ground flora, which is not very diverse and mainly consists of ivy with some bramble and nettle and occasional other flowering species.

The 1992 management proposals document predicted that the scrub would continue through the processes of succession to become woodland. While this is the case in some areas, in others the density of the hawthorn is now preventing succession and there is little seeding and regeneration of other species, despite c25 years having passed. The exception is holly (in some areas) which can tolerate the low light, and ash, which itself may not provide a long-lived canopy tree due to the predicted spread of ash dieback (*Chalara*).¹⁰ In contrast, the 2004 management plan proposed that the scrub in the southern section of the site should be coppiced on rotation to benefit any relic chalk grassland species which may be present. There have, therefore, been contrasting views on how the scrub woodland should be managed. A decision now needs to be taken on the appropriate management for the future.

The fundamental question is whether the scrub woodland should be viewed as developing woodland (1992 plan), or whether it should be viewed as part of a scrub mosaic (2004 plan). If the scrub woodland is to be managed as a scrub mosaic, this will require rotational coppicing of the scrub at regular intervals (c10 years). If succession to woodland is the chosen option this can proceed in two ways: 1) allowing succession to continue naturally and/or 2) intervening to aid the development of woodland with a mix of natural species.

It is proposed that option 2 is taken and that the woodland is allowed to continue to mature naturally. In places this will need to be supplemented by thinning and under-planting to encourage a range of species to develop and to improve both the nature conservation value and the amenity value of the woodland.

¹⁰ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/ashdieback>

Table 5: Factors in Decision on Scrub Woodland Management

Factor in decision	Option 1 - Succession to Woodland	Option 2 - Retention as scrub mosaic
Nature conservation improvement – increasing species and structural diversity would greatly improve the biodiversity value of the scrub woodland.	The woodland is succeeding naturally but at a very slow pace. In some areas the hawthorn is so dense that regeneration of other species is severely limited which lowers diversity. The selective thinning and under-planting of the hawthorn would encourage more diverse woodland of natural species to develop.	The 2004 plan recommended coppicing areas of the scrub on rotation and indicated that on the southern slopes there may be chalk grassland plants still remaining. No evidence of this was found, however, in the walk over survey in summer 2016. Coppicing the scrub would increase diversity of ground flora, but is very unlikely to be sufficient to encourage chalk flora to return, as the now long-standing presence of the scrub will have enriched the soils and there is unlikely to be a viable seedbank remaining.
Nature conservation – preserving rarer habitats and species.	The hawthorn scrub woodland is neither rare nor uncommon.	It is possible that there were once more rare species on the southern slopes but there is no evidence of this remaining (see above).
Practical implementation	Implementation would be staged over several years, with areas of scrub woodland thinned and under-planted. Although some of the thinning of hawthorn would be suitable for volunteers, it is likely that contractors would be required for larger trees and to provide sufficient resources. The tree planting would be a suitable volunteer project.	Implementation would be staged over several years, with areas of scrub woodland coppiced. Although some coppicing would be suitable for volunteers, it is likely that contractors would be required for larger trees and to provide sufficient resources.
Sustainability	After initial investment of time and resources, there would be no further maintenance requirements (other than removing tree tubes if used and keeping paths open).	This option would require an ongoing commitment as coppiced areas would need to be re-coppiced on rotation (i.e. every 7 – 10 years).
Impact on landscape	Tall trees could block some of the views. Succession to woodland in the southern part of the site would not impinge greatly on views. In other areas the growth of trees would need to be restricted to preserve important views (this is already the case as the existing scrub will block the views if unchecked).	The coppicing would open up areas of woodland which would make a significant short-term impact.

Scrub-Grassland Mosaic

This section describes the habitat across the rest of the site where there are isolated trees and bushes within the grassland, smaller clumps of trees and areas of bramble. These features occur across the entire open area of the site.

Single trees and small areas of scrub within the grassland can provide useful perching and nesting places for birds and add to the diversity of the site. However, if they are not controlled and are allowed to spread, these features will continue the inexorable loss of the grassland areas which are so important both for wildlife and for the open feel of the site.

Bramble is also prevalent on the site. It is clear from aerial photos and from descriptions within the previous management plans that this bramble is spreading. The area to the south of Thurston Drive, for example, is now almost completely bramble with some scattered trees and scrub, whereas this was described as being more open in character in the previous plans. Bramble also encroaches on some of the paths.



Expanding bramble patch south of Thurston Drive

The edges of the scrub woodland and bramble therefore need to be cut back hard at regular intervals. This would involve flailing the bramble and coppicing the hawthorn and scrub which forms the edge of the scrub woodland. The aim is to stop further encroachment and to provide a graded edge to the woodland.

Landscape and Views

Although not strictly an element of nature conservation management, the views from and within the site are a very important and attractive feature of Rede Common. Management proposals relating to woodland clearance or planting will potentially have an impact on these views – both positive and negative – and have therefore this aspect of the site has been considered in the proposals for woodland and scrub. A balance also needs to be struck between as the woodland around the site also creates the secluded feel of Rede Common and protects the centre of the site from visual and other intrusion. However, if not controlled, this woodland will gradually erode the long views to the distance.

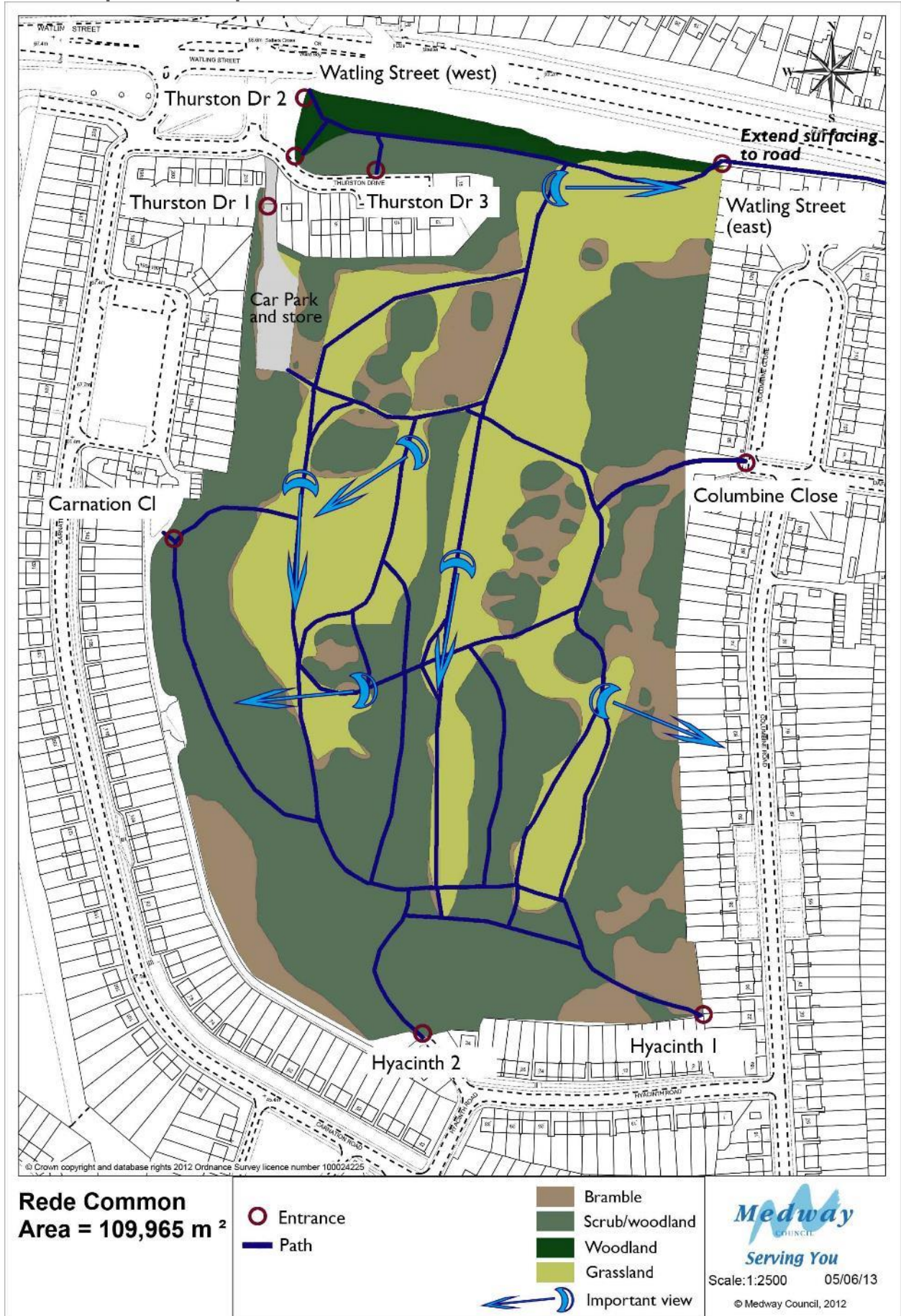
The open grass area in the centre of the site is also an attractive aspect of the site in amenity terms, providing a feeling of space and expansiveness.

Some of the important views from the site are shown in Plan 6.



Far-reaching views to the south

Plan 6: Important Viewpoints to Retain



Summary of Ecological Evaluation

Table 6: Summary of Ecological Evaluation

Criteria	Scrub Woodland	Grassland
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low diversity in canopy, understorey and ground flora. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not particularly diverse.
Naturalness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-natural secondary scrub woodland which has self-seeded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-natural which has possibly been improved at some time in the past when used as agricultural land.
Rarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not a rare habitat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not a rare habitat.
Fragility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not a fragile habitat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not fragile, although encroachment by scrub will continue to diminish the area of grassland if left unchecked.
Position in the Ecological Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rede Common is a stand-alone site. While this leaves the site unconnected from other sites, it also makes the site extremely valuable in the urban landscape. 	

Table 7: SWOT Analysis - Nature Conservation

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site of significant size in the urban area; • A mosaic of semi-natural habitats; • Lack of invasive species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of diversity in the scrub woodland.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve diversity of scrub woodland through selective thinning and underplanting; • Opening up rides through scrub woodland to improve diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encroachment of scrub over grassland; • Continued encroachment of bramble leading to loss of grassland.

Summary of Actions – Nature Conservation

A summary of actions is provided here. A timetabled Action Plan is provided at the end of the document.

1. Prevent Further Spread of Scrub

The scrub/grassland mosaic brings benefits to wildlife, but if left unmanaged it will continue to spread across the site, to the detriment of the grassland and to the amenity value of the site. The scrub edges should therefore be flailed on rotation, every three years. Half of the site should be flailed in each rotation to leave some areas uncut for the benefit of wildlife.

2. Promote Transition to Woodland

In the southern part of the site the transition to woodland should be assisted through selective thinning and underplanting. Contractors may be required to thin some of the scrub, but most of the tasks would be suitable for volunteers and would be good community project days.

3. Continue Haycutting Regime

The current haycutting regime, where the grass is cut and removed in late summer, has great benefits for wildlife, creating a nature oasis for the surrounding urban area. An improvement would be to ensure that uncut margins are left around the edge of the fields. These should be flailed under rotation in line with the flailing outlined in point 1 to prevent the further spread of scrub and bramble.

Plan 7: Flailing and Grass Margin Rotation



Plan 8: Priority areas for Thinning and Underplanting



Management Actions

Action Plan

Area of Site	Action	Year	Resources
Year 1 (2017)			
Carnation Close	Approach housing associations owning properties in Carnation Close to raise issues of litter and flytipping	1	Medway Council
Grassland	Late summer hay cut and remove	1	Medway Norse
Paths	Draw up costed plan for access for all path in northern part of the common, improved infrastructure (benches and steps) to support health and well-being improvements in the local community	1	FORC with support from Medway Council
Paths	Seek funding for access improvements	1	FORC with support from Medway Council
Scrub and Grassland Borders	Flail scrub and mow out grassland border indicated in Plan 7 (western and northern borders) (Years 1, 5, 9)	1	Medway Norse
Scrub Woodland	Thin and underplant in scrub woodland in area shown in Plan 8 (extent to be determined by resources available)	1	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Instigate community-led project to deter dog fouling.	1	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Monitor infrastructure and report defects	1	FORC, implemented by Medway Norse
Whole Site	Carry out 'litter blitz' community event to 'deep clean' the site	1	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Widen path through woodland (as indicated on Plan 5). One fifth to be widened each year.	1	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Flail sections of path which have been widened	1	Medway Norse
Year 2 (2018)			
Carnation Close	Approach housing associations owning properties in Carnation Close to raise issues of litter and flytipping	2	Medway Council
Grassland	Late summer hay cut and remove	2	Medway Norse
Scrub Woodland	Thin and underplant in scrub woodland in area shown in Plan 8 (extent to be determined by resources available)	2	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Continue with community-led project to deter dog fouling.	2	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Monitor infrastructure and report defects	2	FORC, implemented by Medway Norse
Whole Site	Carry out 'litter blitz' community event to 'deep clean' the site	2	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Widen path through woodland (as indicated on Plan 5). One fifth to be widened each year.	2	FORC with support from Medway Council

Area of Site	Action	Year	Resources
Woodland Paths	Flail sections of path which have been widened	2	Medway Norse
Year 3 (2019)			
Carnation Close	Approach housing associations owning properties in Carnation Close to raise issues of litter and flytipping	3	Medway Council
Grassland	Late summer hay cut and remove	3	Medway Norse
Scrub and Grassland Borders	Flail scrub and mow out grassland border indicated in Plan 7 (south eastern borders) (Years 3, 7, 11)	3	Medway Norse
Scrub Woodland	Thin and underplant in scrub woodland in area shown in Plan 8 (extent to be determined by resources available)	3	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Continue with community-led project to deter dog fouling.	3	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Monitor infrastructure and report defects	3	FORC, implemented by Medway Norse
Whole Site	Carry out 'litter blitz' community event to 'deep clean' the site	3	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Widen path through woodland (as indicated on Plan 5). One fifth to be widened each year.	3	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Flail sections of path which have been widened	3	Medway Norse
Year 4 (2020)			
Carnation Close	Approach housing associations owning properties in Carnation Close to raise issues of litter and flytipping	4	Medway Council
Grassland	Late summer hay cut and remove	4	Medway Norse
Scrub Woodland	Thin and underplant in scrub woodland in area shown in Plan 8 (extent to be determined by resources available)	4	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Continue with community-led project to deter dog fouling.	4	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Monitor infrastructure and report defects	4	FORC, implemented by Medway Norse
Whole Site	Carry out 'litter blitz' community event to 'deep clean' the site	4	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Widen path through woodland (as indicated on Plan 5). One fifth to be widened each year.	4	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Flail sections of path which have been widened	4	Medway Norse

Area of Site	Action	Year	Resources
Year 5 (2021)			
Carnation Close	Approach housing associations owning properties in Carnation Close to raise issues of litter and flytipping	5	Medway Council
Grassland	Late summer hay cut and remove	5	Medway Norse
Scrub and Grassland Borders	Flail scrub and mow out grassland border indicated in Plan 7 (western and northern borders) (Years 1, 5, 9)	5	Medway Norse
Scrub Woodland	Thin and underplant in scrub woodland in area shown in Plan 8 (extent to be determined by resources available)	5	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Continue with community-led project to deter dog fouling.	5	FORC with support from Medway Council
Whole Site	Monitor infrastructure and report defects	5	FORC, implemented by Medway Norse
Whole Site	Carry out 'litter blitz' community event to 'deep clean' the site	5	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Widen path through woodland (as indicated on Plan 5). One fifth to be widened each year.	5	FORC with support from Medway Council
Woodland Paths	Flail sections of path which have been widened	5	Medway Norse
Entrances	Install new entrance signs, notice boards and interpretation following LNR designation	subject to funding being secured	Grant aid required

Appendix

Protected Wildlife

Animals protected under law may be present on the site. Species which might inhabit the site which are given full protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are:

- All bats;
- Reptiles and amphibians.

Under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 an offence would constitute:

- Intentional killing, injuring, taking;
- Possession or control (live or dead animal, part or derivative);
- Damage to, destruction of, obstruction of access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection;
- Disturbance of animal occupying such a structure or place;
- Selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative);
- Advertising for buying or selling such things;

Bats and their roosts are and also included in Schedule 2 of the Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which defines them as "European protected species of animals". This makes it an offence deliberately to kill, capture, or disturb a European Protected Species, or to damage or destroy the breeding site or resting place of such an animal. If a management action is likely to result in breach of these regulations a licence must be applied for to Natural England.

Felling Licence

A felling licence will be required for felling of timber which totals more than 5 cubic metres in any year. This should be applied for through the Forestry Commission.

Strategic Objectives for Quality Spaces

In order to help assess Rede Common and to organise proposed actions, five management categories have been used, against which the site has been evaluated:

- A welcoming place;
- A safe and secure place;
- A clean and well-maintained place;
- Sustainability;
- Conservation and heritage;

Taken together, ensuring attainment against all of these five management categories (at a level appropriate to each individual site) will ensure high quality service delivery to meet the needs of all users to the site.

A Welcoming Place

Objective: That the overall impression of visitors is positive and that the site is inviting.

People visit sites for many reasons. A welcoming site draws people and makes them feel welcome through its appearance, facilities and maintenance. This includes location of paths, provision of information, entrances and signing.

Signing

Signing should have the following features:

- Signs should be easy to read;
- Signs should be well-maintained and clear of graffiti;
- Ideally should have a coherent design rather than a mixture of styles;
- Should serve a purpose – avoid over-signing a site and remove redundant signing;
- Messages should be friendly and welcoming. It is necessary to tell visitors clearly what can and can't be done, but avoid too much signing 'forbidding' activities;
- Information provided on opening and closing times;
- Information provided on who owns and manages the site;
- Up to date contact details, including 'helpline' telephone number, web and email as appropriate;

Physical Access

Considering physical access around the site and links to it can greatly improve the experience of visitors. Elements can include:

- Links with public transport;
- Safe access from surrounding roads including, for example, pelican crossings;
- Links with cycle routes;
- Safe and secure with facilities for those with disabilities;
- Limited access by vehicles to ensure safety (including maintenance vehicles);
- Attractive entrances, clear sightlines;
- Benches and seating around the site, also in quieter areas and overlooking views;
- Adequate control of dogs and dog fouling.

Good Design

Good design can make people feel welcome, can encourage them to explore and can visit more. Poor design can dissuade people from staying, visit less often or even compromise safety.

The adoption of a standardised form of design and style, for example in litter bins, benches and other furniture, can help to ensure that all sites belong to a 'family' and reach an adequate standard. However, individual features of some sites should also be respected in the design, for example heritage or natural features, which may require adjustment of this approach. A design standard is currently being developed.

A selection of some of the many elements which can be considered in design are:

- Choosing fixtures and furniture which are durable and have a low environmental impact;
- Screening working and storage areas;
- Creating interest and intimacy with tree planting, breaking up 'bleak' landscapes (for example sports pitches);
- Providing footpaths on the routes people wish to use;
- Choosing planting which can be maintained within available budgets, so that it remains attractive.

A Safe and Secure Place

Objective: To ensure that the sites are safe and secure places for all visitors to use.

People can be dissuaded from using greenspaces by safety fears. There are also a range of legal requirements which relate to the management of greenspaces, including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which encompasses those affected by what you do as well as those working for the organisation.

Some of the elements which can be considered include:

- Information on who to contact in an emergency on information boards;
- Tree planting to provide shade, especially around play areas;
- Consideration of sight lines and safe movement around the site;
- Emergency equipment where appropriate, e.g. lifebelts;
- High design standard for equipment and furniture;
- Child protection issues address in play policies and strategies;
- Risk assessments in place for staff and use of facilities;
- Encourage visitors to report problems and provide information on how to do this.

In addition, the control of dogs is an important issue in its own right. Fouling is unpleasant and can cause disease (toxocariasis) and dog aggression, or even simply dogs jumping up at visitors, can be off-putting to visitors.

Work across the country has successfully created behaviour change amongst dog owners without the need for confrontational or enforcement, but rather through understanding why dog owners make the decision to allow their dog to behave in an anti-social way or to not pick up after their dog.

A key part of this is social pressure; will others judge me or how will they react if I do (or don't) behave in a particular way? It is important to create an atmosphere of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the site.

The main factors influencing behaviour are, with the most effective first:

- Signing providing clear explanation for restrictions;
- Good behaviour by other dog walkers;
- Being seen by wardens/rangers/sites staff.

Signing and information provision therefore needs to be:

- Clear about what behaviour is expected of the owner and dog;
- Clear about why this behaviour is expected;
- Presented in an understandable and friendly way.

An example of such an approach has been developed in Dorset, where a 'Doggy Do' Code of Conduct has been produced.¹¹



The main Code of Conduct should be displayed on or near all main orientation boards. Smaller 'reminder' boards or waymarkers can then be installed around the site to reinforce the main message.



It is not considered feasible to implement a requirement for dogs to be kept on leads at the site. However, good behaviour should be expected and dog faeces picked up. All play areas should be dog-free zones.



A Clean and Well-Maintained Place

Objective: To ensure high standards of maintenance and cleanliness.

A clean and well-maintained site is obviously important for visitors, and reflects well on the Council. A poorly maintained site can lead to misuse and will deter visitors.

The elements to be considered include:

- Well maintained litter bins, thoughtfully positioned to encourage use and regularly emptied;
- Regular litter picks;
- High standard of horticultural maintenance;
- Consideration of ongoing maintenance requirements in the design of beds and planting to ensure that maintenance of a high standard can be implemented;
- Furniture and fixings should be maintained and repaired if broken or damaged;
- Buildings and structures should be well maintained;
- Graffiti, flyposting etc. removed;
- Paths and car parks swept and edges maintained;
- Regular inspections.

Sustainability

Objective: To ensure that environmentally sound maintenance practices are implemented.

Managing green spaces in an environmentally sound way includes elements such as the choice of materials, use of chemicals, energy conservation and waste recycling.

Sustainability includes:

- Limiting use of pesticides and chemicals to that which is essential;
- Avoid using peat and tropical hardwoods;
- Timber certified by the Forest Stewardship Council;
- Use recycled materials where possible;
- Reduce waste;
- Provide bins to enable visitors to recycle
- Consider the future watering, chemical and replacement input when designing beds and planting;
- Reduce pollution, for example through proper handling of fuels and chemicals and reducing nuisance from noise or smoke from bonfires;
- Implement water efficiency measures in site maintenance;
- Implement energy efficiency measures

Conservation and Heritage

Objective: To increase biodiversity in the sites and to protect, conserve and enhance the heritage components.

As well as often having a rich history themselves, all sites sit within a surrounding landscape which has particular cultural, ecological and landscape features. It is important when considering the design and management of a site to respect and incorporate these elements.

There are many benefits to enhancing biodiversity in sites. Maintenance of biodiversity habitats can be more cost-effective, for example through reducing the frequency of grass cutting. The wildlife which is attracted is not only beneficial in its own right, but will add interest to a site and enable visitors to experience nature. Moreover, local authorities also have a legal duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in their functions through Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

Elements to consider include:

- Improving biodiversity through linking with surrounding habitats, diversifying habitats on site and providing for species (e.g. through bird and bat boxes);
- Create new habitats where appropriate, for example wild flower meadows;
- Respecting and considering the historic character in design of the site;

- Where sites have specific and, in some cases, protected heritage features, ensure that management plans are in place to conserve these;
- Identify, protect and maintain elements of the built environment which are of historical or design importance.