



# **PISHIOBURY PARK**

## **GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN**

2024 – 2034



## OVERVIEW

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### Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

### Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held in November 2022 to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. The second stage of engagement on a draft GAP held in September and October 2023 enabled stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site.

### Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
0	14/09/2023	Draft GAP	RB	AT	RP
1	07/12/2023	Final GAP	AT	LT	RP

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

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### 1.1 Site Summary

Site Name:	Pishiobury Park
Site Address:	Harlow Road/ Newton Road Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 9HE
Grid Reference:	TL479139
Size:	39 hectares
Designations:	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)  Local Wildlife Site - Pishiobury Park (62/001) - Osier Beds (62/019) - Stort Meads (62/009)  Grade II Registered Park and Garden (part)  Scheduled Ancient Monument
Owner:	East Herts Council

### 1.2 Vision Statement

This plan will build on the successes of the last twenty years of management, which have brought the parkland into positive conservation management and dramatically improved visitor facilities. Our aspiration is to continue to restore and enhance Pishiobury Park's varied natural habitats and historic landscape, recognising the importance of the site's aging trees and promoting the future maturity of younger trees. Alongside this we will focus on celebrating the site's heritage, providing all visitors with a welcoming and accessible greenspace, and supporting the voluntary Friends of Pishiobury Park.

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

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### 2.1 Introduction

Pishiobury Park is located in East Hertfordshire, between the towns of Sawbridgeworth and Harlow. It is a significant greenspace for nature conservation, informal recreation, and cultural heritage, extremely popular and highly valued by local residents and visitors from further afield.

The park forms part of a grade II registered park and garden, which also includes areas to the south and southeast of Pishiobury Drive as shown on the constraints map below. The park also extends to the northeast beyond the area of historic parkland. Features of the estate grounds remain and provide evidence for 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape design likely attributed to Capability Brown. The rich history of Pishiobury Park also includes evidence for a neolithic causewayed enclosure, which is designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

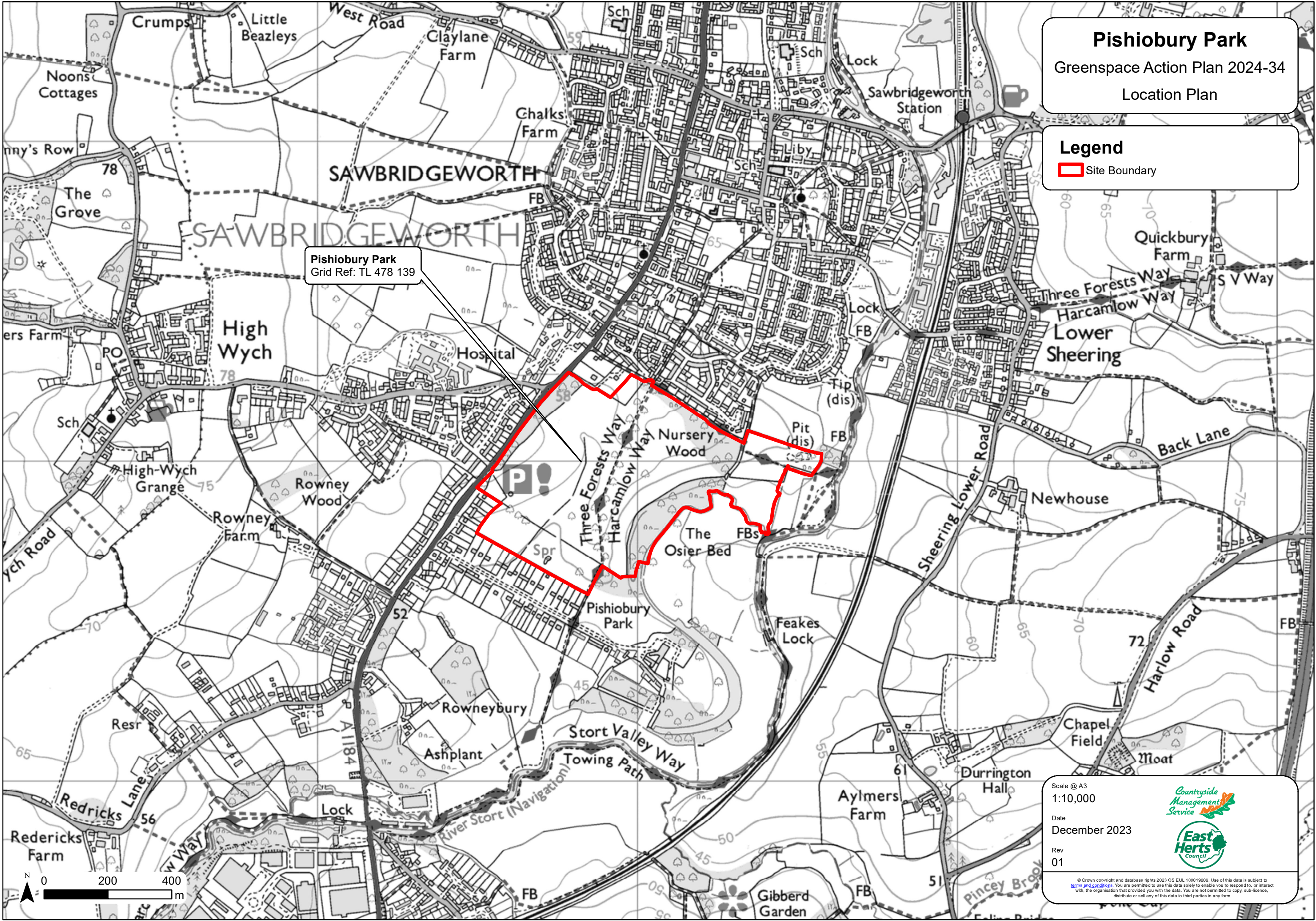
The 39ha site has been owned by East Herts District Council since 1981 and is managed in partnership with the [Countryside Management Service \(CMS\)](#) and a dedicated Friends Group. The [Friends of Pishiobury Park \(FoPP\)](#) are valued ambassadors for the park contributing greatly to the programme of volunteer works which include tree planting, scrub clearance, invasive species control, and running guided walks and public events.

There are several entrance points to the park from the surrounding communities, and a car park is situated to the west of the park which can be accessed via the A1184. There are several mown grass paths criss-crossing the site, allowing enjoyment by dog walkers, walkers, and ramblers. Furthermore, the site is frequented by local wildlife and history groups. There is a picnic area with regularly mown amenity grassland and some natural play which facilitates informal recreation.

The park is characterised by a mosaic of diverse and locally important wildlife habitats including neutral grassland, calcareous grassland, damp flood meadows, hedgerows, mature woodland belts, and wet woodland. The ecological significance of the site has been recognised with the park designated a Local Nature Reserve. It also comprises three Local Wildlife Site designations: Pishiobury Park (62/001), the Osier Beds (62/019) and Stort Meads (62/009).

Most of the park is grazed by rare breed cattle which maintain a diverse grassland sward. Several aquatic habitats are present across the site, including a pond, natural spring, and drainage ditch. The scattered veteran trees, hawthorn roundels, and two tree lined avenues (Oak Walk and Lime Avenue) provide living examples of the heritage value of this historic parkland, in addition to exemplifying the original landscape design. The river Stort (Navigation) borders the park to the east

connecting the parkland to the low-lying wet areas to the south, outside the park boundary. These wet areas feature an original serpentine lake.




# Pishiobury Park

Greenspace Action Plan 2024-34

Location Plan

**Legend**

 Site Boundary

Scale @ A3  
1:10,000

Date  
December 2023

Rev  
01

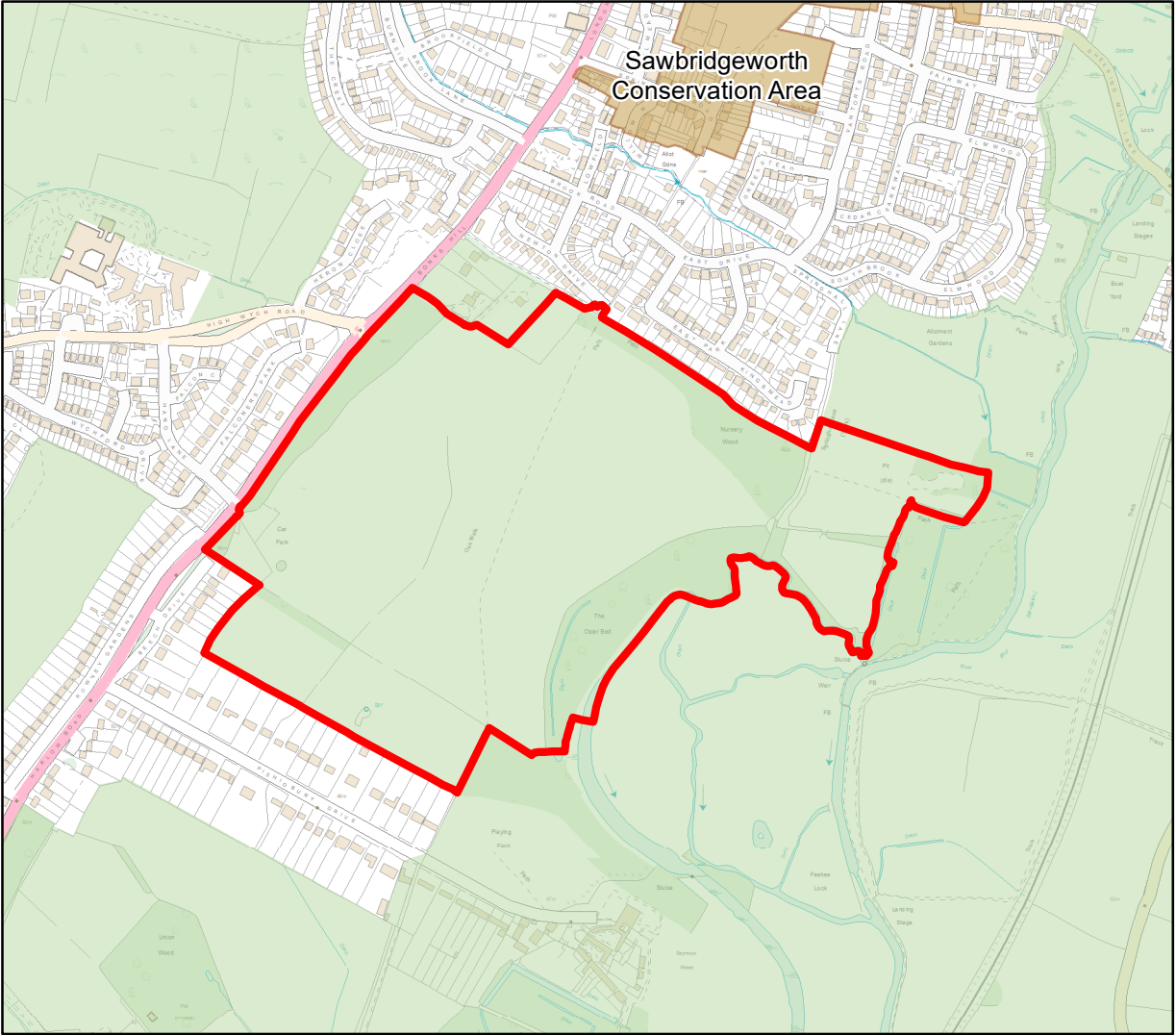
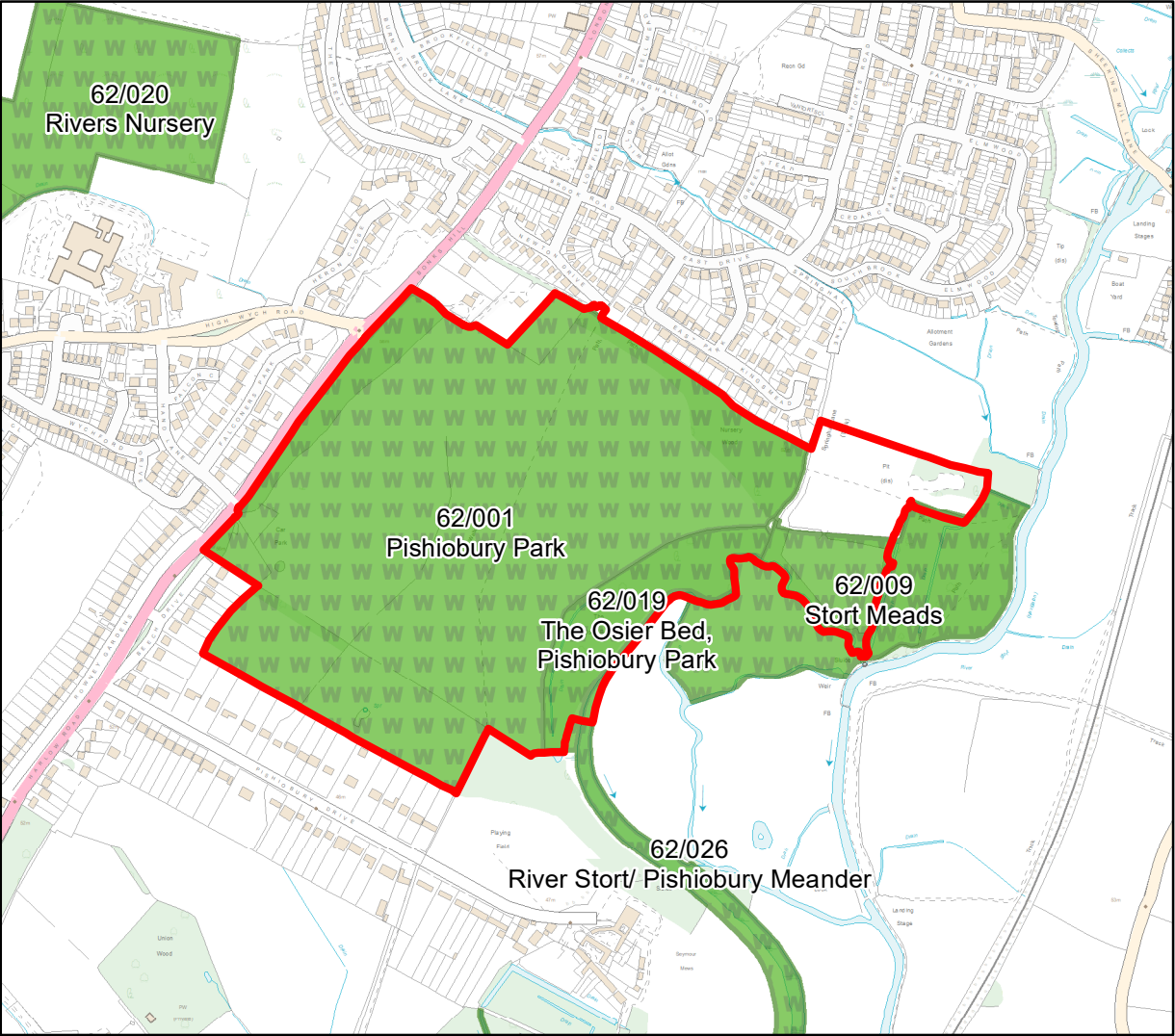
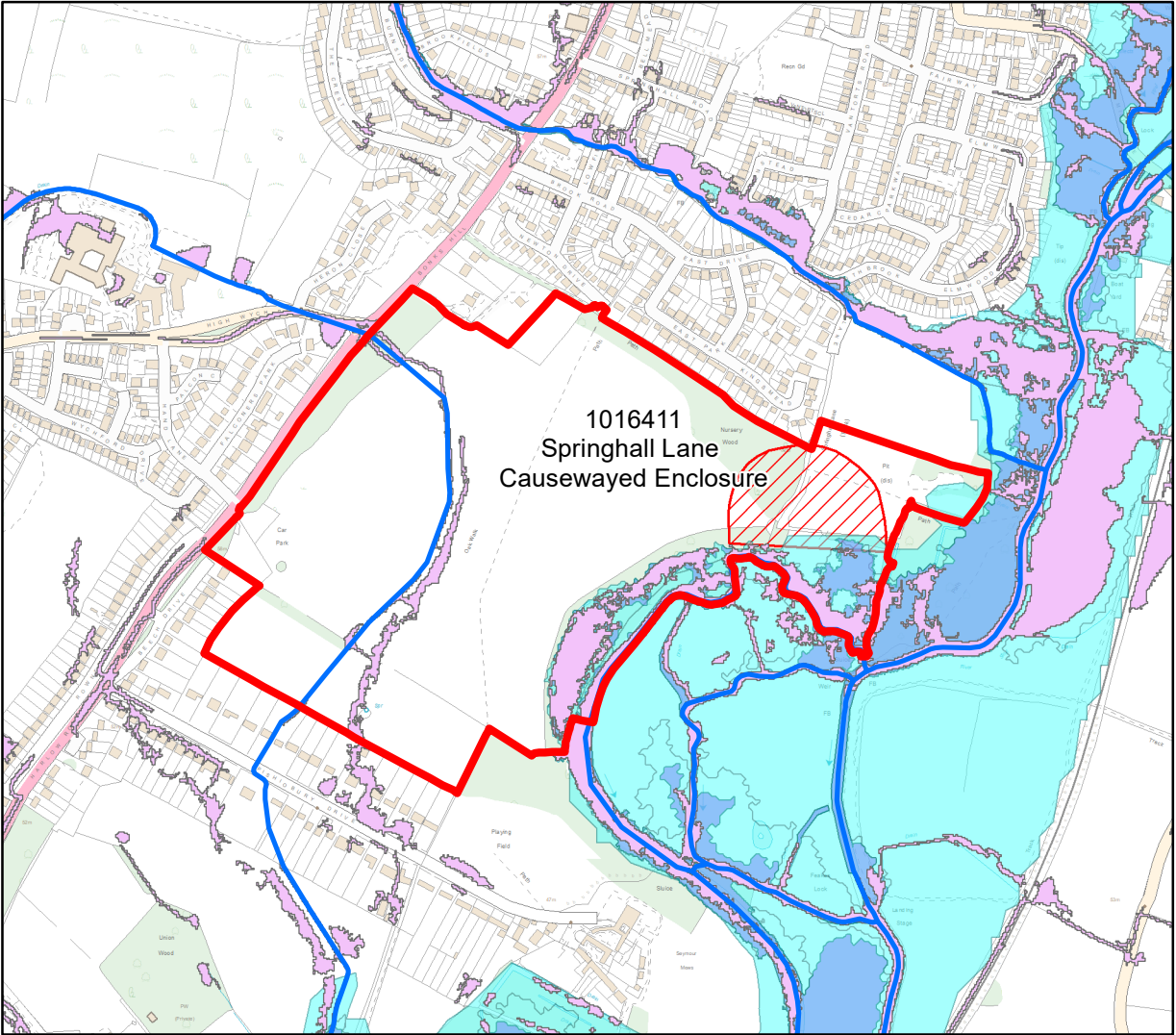
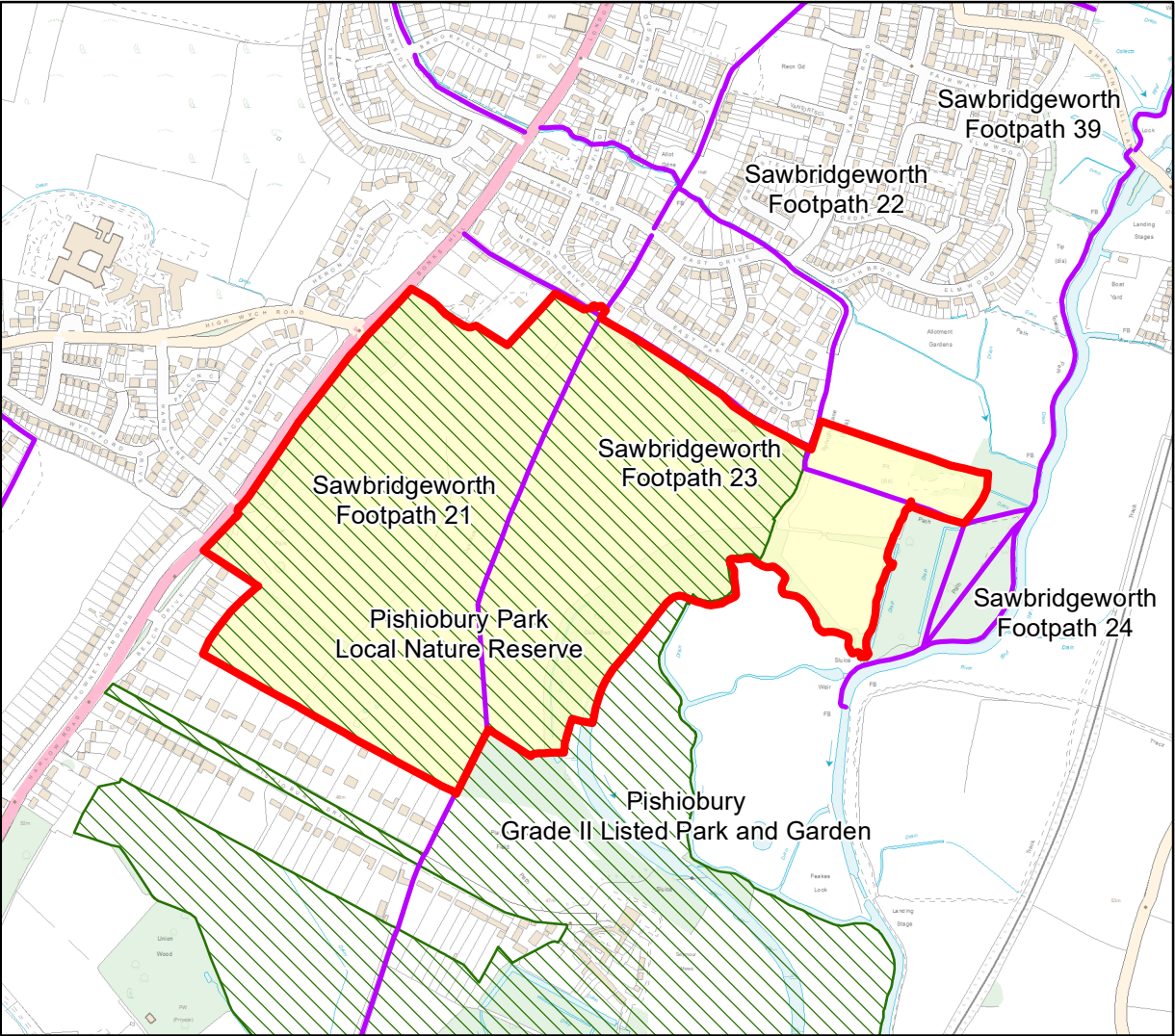
  


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**Pishiobury Park**  
**Greenspace Action Plan**  
**2024-34**  
**Constraints Plan**

**Legend**

- Site boundary
- Footpath
- Register of Parks and Gardens
- Local Nature Reserve
- Conservation Areas
- Local Wildlife Site
- Green belt
- Main River
- Flood Zone 2
- Flood Zone 3
- Risk of flooding from surface water - 1 in 100 year flood extent
- Scheduled Monument



Scale @ A3  
1:10,000

Date  
December 2023

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01



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# Pishiobury Park

## Greenspace Action Plan 2024-34

### Site Description

- #### Legend
- Pedestrian entrance
  - Vehicle access
  - Amenity grassland
  - Boardwalk
  - Car park
  - Cattle exclusion
  - Desire line
  - Grazed pasture
  - Oak walk
  - Roundel
  - Scrub
  - Wetland
  - Wet woodland
  - Woodland
  - Woodland walk
  - Mature parkland tree
  - Young parkland tree - guarded

**Woodland Walk**  
Boundary plantation of mixed native species of varied age. Previous planting in single species blocks. Woodland trail and scallops.

**High Wych Ditch**  
Main River

**Linear scrub belt**

**Picnic Area**

**Main Entrance**  
Car park

**Corral**  
Cattle handling facility

**Pond**

**Lime Avenue**

**Spring**

**Newton Drive entrance**

**Nursery wood**  
Formal plantation of mixed native species with planted hawthorn boundary hedge.  
Zone 1: Restocked to the north.  
Zone 2: Semi-mature re-stocking in the centre and several openings.  
Zone 3: Mature high forest to the south.

**Springhall Meadow**  
Grazed damp grassland/ flood meadow

**Plovers Mead**  
Grazed damp grassland/ flood meadow

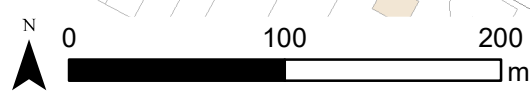
**Chalk bank**

**Osier Bed**  
Regionally rare wet woodland.  
Area 1: Native coppice overtopped by large planted hybrid poplars to the north.  
Area 2: Undisturbed area of high habitat quality in the central and southern area.

**Main Parkland**  
Grade 2 registered Historic Parkland containing extensive area of species rich neutral grassland with scattered mature tree planting, formal landscape roundels and tree lined avenues.

**Oak Walk**  
Follows the route of a former approach to Pishiobury House. Oak Walk became a major parkland feature in the late 1800s.

**River Stort towpath**



Scale @ A3  
1:3,500

Date  
December 2023

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01

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## **2.2 Geography and Landscape**

The park is nestled between the towns of Sawbridgeworth and Harlow on the Hertfordshire and Essex border. It is bounded to the northwest by the A1184, and the northeast and southwest boundaries back onto by residential properties. The southeast boundary (beyond the Osier Bed) consists of grazed fields, flood meadows and the River Stort Navigation. The original park covered a much larger area, some now retained as open land, but privately owned, and some developed for housing.

## **2.3 History and Archaeology**

This section summarises information contained in the [Pishiobury Park Restoration Plan \(2005\)](#), which should be referenced for further information on the history of the park and a sequence of historic maps.

### **2.3.1 Prehistoric and Roman**

The name Pishiobury may have been derived from that of 'Piso' a Roman captain who is said to have resided in the area. The earliest settlers in the Pishiobury area appear to be Neolithic people as there is definite evidence of a New Stone Age settlement just outside the northeast boundary of the historic parkland but within the current boundary of Pishiobury Park.

This monument includes a Neolithic causewayed enclosure located to either side of Springhall Lane. Although not visible on the ground, the enclosure's distinctive earthworks of concentric rings were revealed by crop marks evident from aerial photographs taken in 1962. Aerial photographs taken at this time clearly show three parallel lines of segmented ditches, about 10m apart, descending the slope of the spur in a broad curve continuing for approximately 160m.

Causewayed enclosures are amongst the earliest field monuments to survive as recognisable features in the modern landscape and are one of the few known Neolithic monument types. Due to their rarity, their wide diversity of plan, and their considerable age, all causewayed enclosures are considered to be nationally important. This area of the park is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which recognises its national importance. Causewayed enclosures were typically constructed over a period of 500 years during the middle part of the Neolithic period (c.3000 – 2400 BC) but also continued in use into later periods.

Evidence has also been found of the Bronze Age and Romano-British settlements adjacent to the boundary of Pishiobury Park. Discoveries of flint and iron arrowheads suggest there may be substantial unseen archaeology.

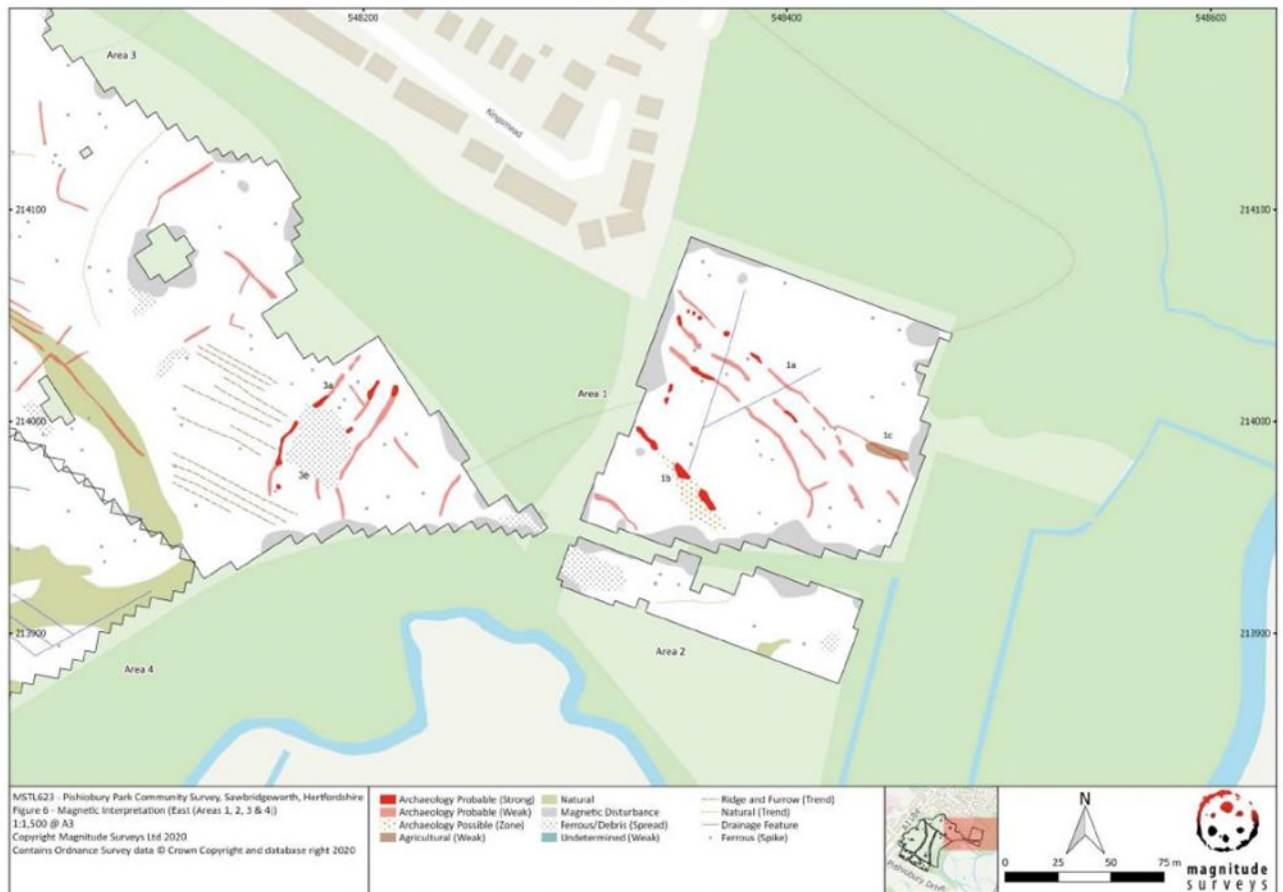


Figure 1 Magnetometry scan showing concentric rings of the Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure.

### 2.3.2 Medieval to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century

The original parkland was once six times its current size and formed the grounds of a manor house later to be known as Pishiobury Park House. The manor and associated parkland dates to 1294, and throughout the medieval period this parkland would have been a large, fenced enclosure, used to confine deer and in no sense ornamental. The estate passed through the hands of the most notable families in the area and was eventually granted to Anne Boleyn by King Henry VIII in 1534. The house stayed with the Crown until Queen Elizabeth I sold it to Sir Walter Mildmay in about 1576.

By 1700 the estate comprised, according to Chauncy, “A very neat and fair pile of building for the Manner House upon a rising ground in the vale near the River Stort, which courses about 20 acres of ground on the east side of the house, lately converted into a paddock for deer, adorned in front thereof with a fair bowling green raised about 5 foot high enclosed with a brick wall topped with stone balls upon it and 2 fair walks planted with trees, each walk extending about 4 furlongs in length from the house to the road”.

### **2.3.3 Mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to 1932**

Dury and Andrews' map of Hertfordshire shows that by 1766 the park had been laid out formally with four avenues of trees and various rectangular enclosures to the front and rear of the house.

The house was soon after destroyed by fire and rebuilt on the same site between 1782 and 1784 under the direction of English architect James Wyatt, and the park and grounds around Pishiobury House were landscaped in the style of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Brown was one of the country's most influential landscape designers and is reputed to have removed some of the avenues of trees, constructed the Serpentine Lake, and planted the woodland enclosures.

The county map of Hertfordshire published by A. Bryant in 1822 is the first representation of the park following these changes. All traces of the formality shown in the 1766 map have disappeared. A broad sinuous avenue enters the park near the northwest corner and snakes towards the house. Dense planting screens the north and west boundaries of the park, except where the avenue enters the park, and the decorative lake is shown for the first time.

In subsequent decades a degree of formality reappeared in the park with a new drive approaching the house from the west and a further avenue entering the park from the north, assumed to be the beginning of what is now the Oak Walk. This is represented in an OS map for the first time in 1879, when the Oak Walk had matured into a major parkland feature and internal boundaries divided much of the park into fields which were used for grazing cattle.

### **2.3.4 1932 to the present**

The sale of the estate in 1932 commenced its break-up which has resulted in the fragmented ownership and loss of visual unity that are apparent today.

The first aerial photograph of the park dates from 10<sup>th</sup> October 1946. This shows the beginnings of development along the main drive. The lime avenue remained a major landscape feature but was now adjacent to the gardens of the houses on the north side of the drive. The Oak Walk also appeared as a strong landscape feature and the parkland retained a significant cover of specimen trees. The regular layout of the osier bed suggests that the willows had been regularly managed.

By the time East Hertfordshire District Council acquired 39 hectares of the park in 1980, it was clear that the integrity of the whole park could not be restored. Planting to the north of the house and the growth of poplars and willows in the osier bed had visually sealed off the house from its parkland to the north, and the housing along the main drive had isolated the remaining parkland to the south. Only the land to the north now managed by EHDC has retained any sense of the original parkland landscape, and as public land allows full access, giving a sense of place to this historic landscape.

## **2.4 Habitats and Wildlife**

The park is characterised by a diverse array of habitats including neutral grassland, calcareous grassland, damp flood meadows, hedgerows, mature woodland belts, and wet woodland, and this is recognised through three Local Wildlife Site designations, for Pishiobury Park, the Osier Beds and Stort Meads (see constraints map in section 2.1). Several aquatic habitats are present across the site, including a pond, natural spring, and drainage ditch. The site is dominated by a central raised spine running north to south, Oak Walk, which contributes to the treescape and is lined with a range of tree species. To the southwest boundary of the park there is also a planted double avenue of limes. The scattered veteran trees, hawthorn roundels, and two tree lined avenues provide living examples of the heritage value of this historic parkland, in addition to exemplifying the original landscape design. The river Stort (Navigation) borders the park to the east connecting the parkland to the low-lying wet areas to the south, outside the park boundary. These wet areas feature a serpentine lake, which was part of the 'Capability' Brown-style landscape design.

### **2.4.1 Grassland**

The historic parkland at Pishiobury provided an essential soft landscape of pasture and planting, serving as a foil to the more intensive experience of the formal pleasure grounds and ornamental gardens around the main house. More than just ornamenting views from the country house and gardens, it served an important functional role in supporting the estate through the grazing, hunting, forestry and fishing uses it enabled. It also extended the influence of the landowner and stands out in stark contrast with the wider agricultural landscape surrounding it.

Today the park supports a range of recreational uses, providing an ideal setting for walking and the enjoyment of landscape and nature, and it continues to be managed through grazing.

The park is comprised largely of semi-improved extensive neutral grassland. The addition of damp flood meadows adjacent to the river Stort, a transition from neutral to calcareous (chalk) grassland along the north-east facing slope, and a wet flush to the south, add considerable diversity. In particular, the east facing slope extending from Oak Walk down to the boundary of the Osier bed comprises a diverse grassland sward.



Figure 2 The north-east slope from Oak Walk, awash with springtime flora.

#### 2.4.1.1 Conservation Grazing

Pishiobury Park has historically been grazed in some form for hundreds of years and the Council has continued this tradition. Grasslands managed in this way have long been recognised as having high nature conservation value, typically comprising a great variety of plant species native to the UK. Grazing enhances the diversity of wildflowers and results in a variety of grass heights, which in turn supports a vast array of insects providing a healthy food supply for many mammals and birds.

We have for some time used traditional rare breed cattle such as English Longhorns at Pishiobury Park. Since the re-introduction of cattle, improvements in overall floral diversity have been seen. Under previous management plans the stocking density of cattle was increased to create the right conditions for improving the ecological quality of the grassland. The park is currently under a 10-year Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement with Natural England (2014-2024), which supports and enables the continuation of grazing and sets targets for grassland management. Livestock density is reviewed annually to ensure that stock levels continue to create the desired ecological conditions required to achieve the targets set within the HLS agreement.

It is also important that the impact of grazing on aspects of the site's heritage is fully considered, as grazing of the scheduled monument by cattle can create issues of wear-and-tear, poaching and erosion. Evidence of such impacts is visible in aerial photographs.



Figure 3 English Longhorn cattle which graze the grassland compartments.

#### 2.4.1.2 Invasive Weeds

Certain weeds if left unchecked have the tendency to spread and become dominant in the landscape. Grazing alone is not always effective at keeping these weeds at bay, especially those that are woody, spiky or unpalatable, properties which a high proportion of invasive weeds have. The Weeds Act 1959 requires the Council to control certain “injurious weeds” including Common Ragwort, Creeping and Spear Thistle. So far, we have successfully controlled the cover of these species, and will continue to do so. Where necessary, the weeds must be controlled by other means to ensure their cover is less than 5% within each grassland compartment (unless stated otherwise).

#### 2.4.1.3 Mechanical Grass Cutting

Mechanical cutting of grass in the park is kept to a minimum and is restricted to entrances, access points and the picnic area, as part of the grounds maintenance contract. The cattle’s grazing has been effective in controlling grass levels across the main park. This has reduced the need to mechanically mow the grass to achieve a desirable sward height. A late summer ‘cut and lift’ has been undertaken in recent years when drought has left the grassland with little nutritional value to the cattle however, this is not an annually scheduled operation and is carried out on an ad hoc basis. There is a small meadow to the east of the site, adjacent to a gravel pit, which can become encroached by blackthorn and bramble. Scrub management is undertaken here by volunteers to maintain the space as an open glade.

### 2.4.2 Woodland

Pishiobury Park comprises a diverse treescape, consisting of mature woodland, tree plantation belts, tree-lined avenues, scattered veteran trees, hedges and hawthorn roundels. These features contribute to the overall character of this historic park and provide a variety of opportunities for wildlife.

The majority of the treescape was originally planted as part of the designed landscape for Pishiobury House. The Pishiobury Park Restoration Plan (2005)

assessed the historical context of the site and describes the significance of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscape design that formed the template of the park as we see it today.

Historically the perimeter woodland enclosures were planted to screen the designed parkland from the surrounding area. The perimeter woodlands and the parkland trees dotted and grouped across the park were an important feature of the designed landscape and were crucial in the designer's aim to recreate the 'English Landscape'. Management has focused on re-establishing the footprint of the designed landscape by preserving the remaining features and recreating others that have been lost or depleted over the years. For example, parkland trees have been replanted across the park to replace those which had been lost. This management plan will ensure that previous work to re-establish the footprint of the designed landscape continues to be successful. Tree and woodland cover should be reviewed regularly to ensure that important designed views are maintained and where possible restored.

#### 2.4.2.1 Nursery Wood

The most established mature area of woodland in Pishiobury Park is located to the north of the site and is called Nursery Wood. Management of this woodland is guided by a zonal strategy, whereby the woodland compartments are managed rotationally. The focus of the work has been to restore the historical footprint of this woodland area. It was evident from historic aerial photographs that the footprint of the wood had shrunk over time and the boundary had been degraded. Tree loss through Dutch elm disease had been particularly severe, particularly within the north-western section of the woodland. The management for each zone is described below:

**Zone 1 - Planting Maintenance:** The north-western section of the woodland has been re-stocked with a mix of native and locally appropriate tree and shrub species. The woodland walk and central open glade have been retained. Ongoing maintenance is required to ensure the planted trees continue to establish well, and the zone will eventually require thinning. The first row of planted trees adjacent to the residential/woodland border is coppiced on rotation.

**Zone 2 - Active Woodland Management:** The central section of the woodland has been previously restocked with a mix of native species and has established well. This area should now be thinned to create space and light for retained trees to grow and mature and encourage natural regeneration. Work continues to increase light levels within the woodland through selective small-scale coppicing. Rotational coppicing allows pockets of light through the canopy, encouraging the growth of woodland flora and natural tree regeneration, creating an understorey of small shrubs and trees.

**Zone 3 - Minimal Intervention:** The mature south-eastern portion of the woodland with its established high canopy will not be managed actively. Works to mature trees

will be undertaken only where this becomes necessary to maintain the safety of park users or adjacent residents. When trees require safety works, all efforts will be made to retain dead wood habitat, both standing and on the woodland floor. Where trees are removed, appropriate native species will be planted in replacement.

#### 2.4.2.2 Re-stocking Regime

The historical screening function of the perimeter woodland enclosures is still important today, particularly when considering the proximity of the surrounding residential properties, which do not provide a historic contribution to the parkland landscape. We do sometimes receive calls about our woodlands blocking views and reducing light to our neighbours' gardens. We routinely advise that there is no legal obligation for the Council to prune or remove trees to offer light. Whilst our woodlands are crucial to the landscape and environment in many ways, we do however minimise their impact to our neighbours where possible. For instance, after restocking Nursery Wood some years ago we created a maintenance strip of 2m between the boundary fence and the newly planted trees and we periodically coppice the first row of trees.

Through these actions residents are still able to enjoy the park on their doorstep, along with other visitors, and benefit from the attractive backdrop that the woodland provides. In time woodland canopies will lift as the trees mature providing some vision through to the park. Furthermore, at Pishiobury our ongoing management operations provide temporary visual windows into the parkland without losing the internal screening effects of the woodland enclosure.

#### 2.4.2.3 Woodland Edge

To maintain the formal design element of the woodland, an established rotational management regime is in place for the planted woodland edge hedgerow. This hedgerow has been allowed to grow on and mature to reach a size suitable for laying. Traditional hedge laying has since been implemented on a rotational basis. Sections of the hedgerow will continue to be layed (layered) to create a dense stock proof barrier. This temporarily lowers the height of the hedgerow, encouraging the development of dense regrowth (a valuable nesting habitat for birds) whilst providing visual windows into and from the parkland. Regular and rotational management of these boundary hedges should in time negate the need for unattractive internal fences. The requirement for internal stock proof fencing shall be reviewed following hedge laying. The external boundary fences will remain in place to make sure that cattle cannot escape the park.

#### 2.4.2.4 The Woodland Walk

The perimeter woodland that runs parallel with Bonks Hill (A1184) consists of a variety of native species including hazel, ash, field maple and elm. The woodland comprises trees of varying ages and stages of management, but also has some of

the oldest trees in the park, with an assortment of hornbeams that are thought to be 250 years old.

A woodland trail leading from the main entrance and car park moves north through the woodland, where it joins up with an existing access point off A1184 and opens out by the Newton Drive Entrance. The woodland walk provides the opportunity for visitors to experience the perimeter woodlands, enabling people to gain a different perspective on what Pishiobury Park has to offer.

In previous years, temporary open glade areas were coppiced along the route of the woodland trail providing lighter habitats for insects, particularly butterflies. Management involved thinning areas of ash, creating more space for healthier specimens. Tree safety works were also coupled with enlarging existing glade areas, increasing their suitability for tree planting. Due to the lack of natural tree regeneration within the woodland belt, due in part to heavy browsing by deer, tree planting has been essential to ensure a variety of age stands are present. All re-stocking requires effective protection from browsing, and tree aftercare to prevent competition from weeds.

Hazel coppice coupes have in the past experienced differing levels of regrowth due to heavy browsing by deer. As a result, deer baskets have been employed to prevent deer from being able to reach the young shoots.

#### 2.4.2.5 Parkland Trees

Newly planted parkland trees have not always been successful, particularly along Oak Walk. Tree replacement planting with native broadleaf tree species will continue when needed, with only English oak planted along Oak Walk. Additional watering is likely to be needed to aide their survival through increasingly frequent periods of drought.

Traditional parkland guards in association with rare breed cattle have contributed substantially to the restoration of a designed landscape and parkland visitor experience. The parkland guards have and will continue to be gradually replaced as they come to the end of their life.

#### 2.4.2.6 The Tree Avenues

Pishiobury Park has two very distinct tree lined avenues, Oak Walk and Lime Avenue. Oak Walk is a focal point of the park that runs along a raised ridge of land from north to south, with pedestrian access points at either end. This walk has historic significance as it follows the route of a former approach to Pishiobury House, north drive. Maintaining this important feature has been a key objective in the management plans for Pishiobury Park and it will continue to be in this ten-year plan and further into the future. The lime avenue is comprised of mixed tree species, and

any tree losses along the extent of the oak walk will be replaced with native oak species.



Figure 4 Planted parkland trees in the foreground, with standing deadwood and Oak Walk in the background.

Lime Avenue is a planted double row of predominantly lime trees that echoes the existence of a former lime avenue that has since been incorporated within the gardens of the houses on Pishiobury Drive. Despite this, some of the planted limes are old trees, and as with Oak Walk, we will continue to maintain the integrity of these trees and replant losses as required.

#### 2.4.2.7 Tree Risk

The trees within the Council's parks and opens spaces are inspected by a specialist Arboricultural Consultant as part of our Tree Risk Management Programme. Potential tree health issues are also identified through these inspections. Those works recommended by the survey for Pishiobury Park are implemented on a rolling programme dependant on the priority of the works specified.

#### 2.4.2.8 Veteran Trees

A historic park like Pishiobury has its fair share of veteran trees. These specimens are an important part of the English countryside and represent living legacies of the site's heritage. They provide an ideal habitat for wildlife and can offer potential for bat roosts. These trees are therefore managed specifically as veterans with slightly different management techniques.



Figure 5 One of many veteran parkland trees on the park, now fenced to allow the natural process of decay to occur safely.

#### 2.4.2.9 Roundels

The broadleaved tree groups or ‘roundels’ are important features in the park and contribute to the park’s historic character. A long-term management strategy is in place to conserve and protect these features. Previous work has attempted to establish a curved hawthorn edge around the recently planted roundels, converting square woodland planting to rounded planting to achieve a consistent definitive style based on historic precedent. This has had various levels of success, primarily due to shading from the surrounding trees.

#### 2.4.2.10 Hedgerows

There are a number of hedgerows across the park, the majority of which line the woodland and meadow boundaries. The boundary hedgerows were planted to reinforce the historic footprint of the park. As they continue to mature, they create a graduating woodland edge habitat which supports a variety of wildlife. These boundary hedgerows are laid on a rotational basis to create a dense stock proof barrier which will seek to maintain the historic footprint whilst maximising their contribution to biodiversity. Hedgerows were also planted along the boundary of Springhall Meadow and the adjacent Plovers Mead.

Two hedgerows of mixed broadleaved species run across the park and are maintained without active restoration. These sporadic, gappy hedges provide clear

linear features through the park and reflect those which are found in the farmed landscape beyond. Whilst they do now have the appearance of hedgerows, it is thought that they were not originally planted as hedgerows. Restoration, which would require additional fencing and result in strengthened straight lines and formality, would not be appropriate in an open parkland landscape.

#### 2.4.2.11 The Osier Bed

The Osier Bed is an area of wet woodland habitat, which extends along the south-eastern boundary of Pishiobury Park towards the River Stort.

Historically the Osier Bed was an area of wetland situated adjacent to the low-lying wet areas that featured the original serpentine lake and a natural stream. The Osier Bed was planted with osier willow to provide woodland materials, for a range of crafts and uses, through rotational coppicing. Over time these uses became widely obsolete and the woodland has been left over many years to develop and overgrow. The tree species began to diversify and the habitat in time changed to what we now describe as “wet woodland”. Wet woodland is a regionally rare habitat that sits at the top of the sequence of vegetative succession and is known as a ‘climax’ habitat. If wetlands are unmanaged, they succumb to scrub and eventually become woodland. Most wetlands are specifically managed to prevent this from happening, as wetlands themselves support a variety of important and rare wildlife. The Osier Bed has developed to a point where it would be very difficult for it to be returned back to wetland. Wet woodlands are regionally rare habitats, and as such the Council aspires to maintain this habitat under favourable management, ensuring the safety of park visitors and the sustainability of the woodland.

The Osier Bed comprises two distinct areas which vary in habitat quality. The management for each area is described below.

**Area 1 – Active Management:** The northern section is relatively disturbed and comprises native coppice, overtopped by large planted hybrid poplars. These poplars are not characteristic of this historic landscape. Appropriate management could enhance the habitat value of this area, increasing suitability for supporting water vole and otter.

In previous years, management in this area has aimed to reduce the risk associated with unsafe trees (mainly the large hybrid black poplars), which the Council inherited when acquiring management responsibility of the Osier Bed. This tree safety work involved a combination of height reduction, removing dead branches, and felling. This area of the Osier Bed is regularly inspected to ensure the safety of park users. The Osier Bed has the potential to provide valuable habitat for wildlife, such as bats, and this is carefully planned for when managing the trees.

The tree work created gaps in the woodland canopy, increasing light levels reaching the woodland floor, which in turn encourages the growth of woodland flora. These

openings were planted with osier willows to reinstate the Osier Bed as a designed landscape feature and to improve the habitat quality of this area of the wet woodland.

A boardwalk was installed through the northern section of the Osier Bed, enabling visitors to experience and enjoy this regionally rare wet woodland habitat which was previously closed from public access. It offers another interesting visitor attraction to the park which links into the existing circular walks. The route also provides glimpses of what remains of the serpentine lake, which was a unique feature of the English Landscape, as created by Capability Brown and his contemporaries. Following the installation of the boardwalk, interpretation was installed to inform visitors about the habitat, and its value for wildlife. Fencing was realigned along the northern boundary of the Osier Bed to prevent the collection of cattle at this pedestrian access point.

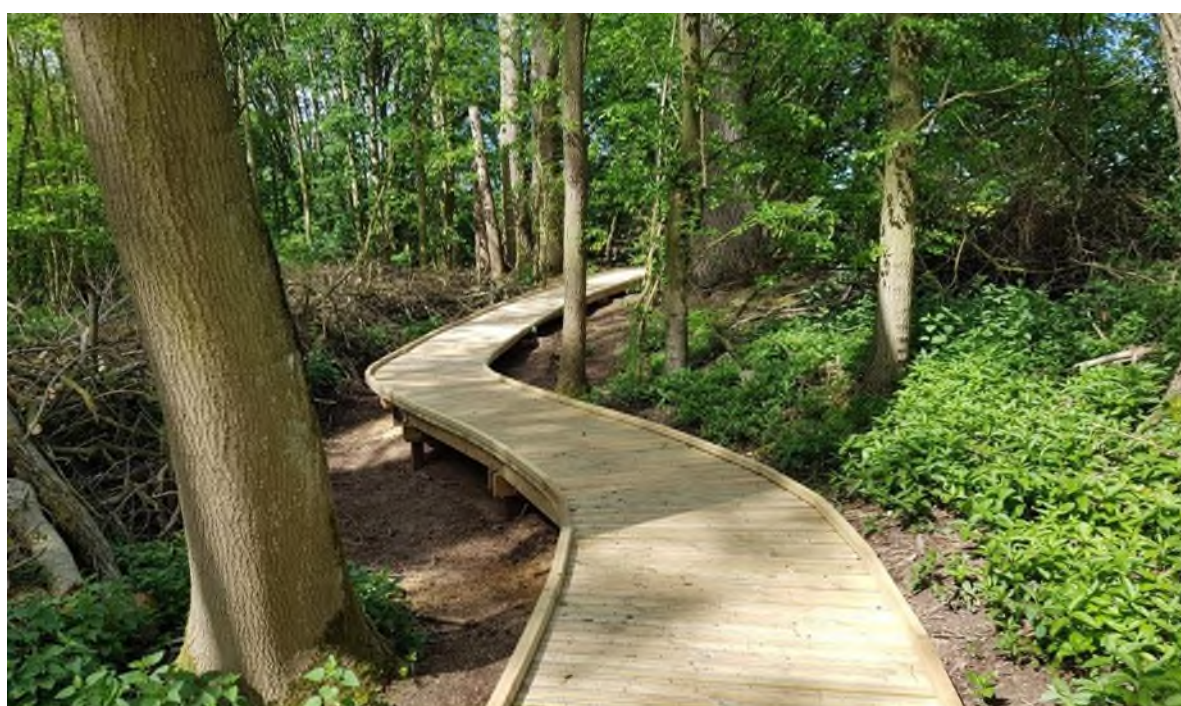


Figure 6 The boardwalk, installed in 2018, extends through the northern section of the Osier Bed. The boardwalk was extended through Plovers Mead thanks to a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant in 2020.

**Area 2 – Minimum Intervention:** The remaining area is characterised as having high habitat quality for supporting otters and water voles. This area remains undisturbed through non-intervention management, with the exception to tree safety work in proximity to the park boundary and the location of the boardwalk. Works to mature trees will be undertaken only where this becomes necessary to maintain the safety of park users or adjacent residents. If, and when, trees require safety works, all efforts will be made to retain dead wood habitat, both standing and on the woodland floor. Where trees are removed, canopy openings will encourage natural regeneration, and new growth will be initiated from fallen or felled stems. The

Friends of Pishiobury Park created an otter holt in this habitat using some of the material generated from the woodland management work.

### **2.4.3 Water**

The water features in Pishiobury Park consist of ditches, a pond and a natural spring. The presence of water in the park provides additional interest to park users, an invitation for wildlife, and provides a connection with the surrounding water-based habitats including the river Stort and the Osier Bed. Work is required over the next ten years to improve these areas and encourage the establishment of diverse wildlife communities.

#### **2.4.3.1 Spring**

Several measures have been taken to improve the ecological quality and accessibility around the spring. This has included installing a boardwalk, clearing dense vegetation, constructing a conservation bund and the installation of stock proof fencing. A 4m gap for the growth of marginal vegetation was left between the spring and the fence line, and several wood piles were stacked to encourage invertebrates. Work in this plan will continue to enhance the habitat suitability of this spring for supporting aquatic invertebrates and amphibians.

#### **2.4.3.2 Pond**

Several actions have been attempted over the years to improve the ecological quality of the pond. Actions have included de-silting and clearing encroaching dominant vegetation. A dipping/viewing platform also exists to encourage visitor appreciation of this water feature. However, despite these efforts the pond is characterised by murky water and a lack of underwater plants. Silt at the bottom of a pond may prevent aquatic vegetation from establishing and lowers the water quality. These features are indicators of poor quality, and as such the pond is unlikely to support valuable wildlife.

The pond is fed from a drainage ditch which runs through a local village before entering the park. As such, the water supply to the pond is affected by rainwater runoff from urban and arable land, in addition to road runoff from the A1184. The water quality of the pond is therefore poor, containing high nutrient levels and low-level pollutants and sediments. In previous years, the Environment Agency investigated options to improve water quality of the pond, however suggested improvements were, and continue to be, outside the scope of the management of the park. Management to improve the ecological quality of the pond would require regular silt removal, combined with measures to reduce pollution input further upstream. Due to the in-line nature of the pond, the intermittent water supply and poor water quality, efforts to improve it as an ecological feature are unfeasible.

#### 2.4.3.3 Ditches

The Council has a riparian responsibility to keep ditch banks clear and to prevent obstruction to the water flow. The wet ditch which extends through Plovers Mead has become overgrown with vegetation and requires clearance on a rotational basis.

#### 2.4.3.4 The river Stort

The river Stort (Navigation) is a canalised river that starts north of Bishop's Stortford and runs past the eastern side of Pishiobury Park, separated by a series of back waters and the Osier Bed. Now due to the recent boardwalk extension, visitors have the opportunity to enjoy views and wildlife of the river Stort whilst walking through the park.



Figure 7 View of the river Stort backwaters from the viewing platform in the Osier Bed.

The river Stort is popular with local people who use the river and tow path for a variety of pursuits including running, cycling, walking, boating and fishing. Access to and from the river into Pishiobury Park is available via the boardwalk that runs through Plovers Mead and the Osier Bed, and the boardwalk which links to Springhall Meadow.

## 2.5 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

Pishiobury Park is extremely popular and highly valued by local residents and visitors from further afield. There are several entrance points to the park from the surrounding communities, including an entrance from the residential street, Newton

Drive. A car park is situated to the west of the park, which can be accessed via the A1184. There are several grass paths criss-crossing the site, allowing enjoyment by dog walkers, walkers, and ramblers. Furthermore, the site is frequented by local wildlife and history groups. There is a picnic area with regularly mown amenity grassland which facilitates informal recreation.

There are entrances from the main A1184 road, Springhall Lane, Pishiobury Drive and Newton Drive. Following recommendations from the Pishiobury Park Restoration Plan (2005), the location of the Newton Drive entrance was previously modified to maximise the visual impact of Oak Walk as visitors enter the park. As a result of the designed landscape, the tree plantations either side of the entrance way extend at an outwards angle to provide a natural frame that opens up the landscape of Pishiobury Park before your eyes. This attractive view will require management in the long term by maintaining the angle of the linear edge of the tree plantations.

Access for all is important in our parks and open spaces. Getting the balance between hard surfaces and natural access routes is vital in terms of visual impact and need. This is particularly important for a park like Pishiobury where maintaining the natural beauty and historic character leads the management priorities. Several walking routes across the park provide opportunities for visitors to experience the variety of habitats which the park has to offer, including grass paths that guide walkers through the grazing compartments and the woodland trail which extends through the perimeter woodlands and provides a connection between the main car park and picnic area, the Newton Drive entrance, Oak Walk and Springhall Meadow. The Osier Bed boardwalk links into this existing circular walk, providing access to a unique habitat for visitors to enjoy. The boardwalk was recently extended through Plovers Mead, providing an all-weather connection alongside the River Stort between Public Footpath 39 and the park. Oak Walk, a surfaced path, follows the route of Public Footpath 21 and connects the communities of Sawbridgeworth and Old Harlow with the park. Oak Walk remains dry throughout the year and provides an opportunity for disabled access through the park. Lastly, Public Footpath 23 crosses through Springhall Meadow, providing a connection to the river Stort (Navigation).

## **2.6 Community and Events**

Pishiobury Park is regularly used by a variety of user groups including walkers, dog walkers, bird watchers, conservation volunteers and runners. The park also serves as a local resource for activities that enhance health and wellbeing, including orienteering, dog training and fitness training.

The [Friends of Pishiobury Park](#), first established in 2010, is an active local group of volunteers who participate in practical conservation and the running of public events. The Friends are valued ambassadors for the park, contributing greatly to the programme of volunteer works. The Friends of Pishiobury Park is supported by the

Council and CMS through a structured approach involving annual meetings and health and safety check-ups. Through these meetings, annual work programmes are established, and ongoing training provided. This approach has been independently assessed and accredited to the nationally recognised 'Investing in Volunteers' standard.

The Friends' extensive knowledge of the park's habitats and wildlife is invaluable, both in supporting the management of the site and in engaging with the local community to share their knowledge and passion. The Friends regularly run free events and activities, ranging from a 24 hour 'BioBlitz', subject talks such as 'Wonderful Worms' and 'Dating the Trees', and guided walks including bat walks, historical walks and 'meet the cattle'.

The group are also very interested in the history of the site and have run "Big Dig" events in the past, which attracted a lot of interest and public participation. Previous investigations by the Friends have uncovered some interesting finds to add to the various recorded archaeological finds from the site, including cattle sheds, a brick cobbled floor, and remains of a possible ornamental bridge relating to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century parkland design.

In addition to the valuable contribution from the Friends Group, management is also delivered by CMS working parties, made up of volunteers from across the district. CMS have also supported corporate away days on site. Large tasks and projects have been undertaken by the CMS working parties, and have included stock fencing, pond restoration, woodland management, tree planting, hedge laying and ongoing works within the grassland.

Each summer, East Herts District Council organises free family events to celebrate Love Parks Week, an initiative created by Keep Britain Tidy. Pishiobury Park hosts an all-day event each year, celebrating the great outdoors with the local community, as well as recognising the efforts of volunteers and workers to maintain and protect local greenspaces.

## **2.7 Constraints**

There are several conservation designations across Pishiobury Park which guide appropriate management and restrict certain activities. The special historic interest of Pishiobury Park has been recognised through its designation as part of a grade II registered park and garden by Historic England. Furthermore, the site comprises a Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure, which is located towards the north-east of the park and is designated as a Scheduled Monument. The ecological significance of the site has also been recognised with the park's recent declaration as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), providing the park with statutory protection and Council obligation to ensure that the special interest of the site is maintained. The park also comprises three Local Wildlife Site designations.

Additionally, there are a number of constraints which require consideration when managing Pishiobury Park, and these are listed below:

- **Public footpaths** – definitive footpaths need to be kept clear and accessible as per the Highways Act 1980.
- **Drainage ditches** – the ditches in Pishiobury Park are owned and managed by the Council. The drainage ditch which runs through the main grassland compartment is classified as a main river. Permission is required from the Environment Agency to carry out any works within 8 m of the bank.
- **River Stort** – Classified as a Main River, permission is required from the Environment Agency to carry out any works with 8 m of the riverbank, for example boardwalk installation.
- **Services** – Pishiobury Park has two water supply points in the main park and a bore hole in Plovers Mead. These require consideration when carrying out extensive ground works.
- **Historical design features** – features such as the treescape, grassland and woodlands provide a well-researched historical basis for current management.
- **The original park boundary** – it is important to retain an understanding of the wider areas of the original park that have been lost to development in previous years.
- **Protected species** – under the Habitats Directive, the known presence of protected species (e.g. bats and reptiles) legally requires their consideration when undertaking management operations, most notably tree works.
- **Nesting birds** – protected by law under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. All tree and hedgerow related works should, wherever possible, be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season.

Table 1. Statutory and non-statutory designations associated with Pishiobury Park.

Level	Designation	Detail
Statutory	Local Nature Reserve	Local Nature Reserves are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities. LNRs are for people and wildlife, possessing geological or ecological features that are of special interest locally. Pishiobury Park was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2021.
Non-Statutory	Local Wildlife Site	Local Wildlife Sites are “critical natural capital”, and guide work to

		maintain the ecological health of the park. The site comprises three Local Wildlife Site designations; Pishiobury Park (62/001), the Osier Bed (62/019) and Stort Meads (62/009).
Statutory	Grade II registered park and garden (part)	The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England was set up under the provisions of the National Heritage Act 1983. Registration is a 'material consideration' in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on the landscape's special character. There is no specific consenting regime as is the case for listed buildings and scheduled monuments.
Statutory	Scheduled Monument	Scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) due to national archaeological importance. The designation restricts excavation at this location. Management operations may require consent from Historic England.

### 3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

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The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

#### **Aims**

Pishiobury Park is a valuable greenspace for nature conservation, informal recreation, and cultural heritage within a significantly built-up part of Hertfordshire. It is rich in wildlife and offers visitors an opportunity to enjoy a unique landscape. The primary aims for management of the park are therefore to restore and enhance its varied natural habitats and historic landscape character, celebrate its heritage, and provide all visitors with a welcoming and accessible green space which retains a feeling of naturalness.

#### **Objectives**

##### **A. A welcoming place**

A1 Maintain inviting and informative entrances.

A2 Maintain access infrastructure to a safe and effective standard.

##### **B. Healthy, safe and secure**

B1 Routine safety inspections carried out with identified actions implemented.

B2 Respond to reports of misuse or antisocial behaviour.

##### **C. Clean and well maintained**

C1 Ensure the standard of general site maintenance is upheld and relevant throughout the site.

C2 Maintain a high standard of amenities with a focus on cleanliness and health and safety.

##### **D. Sustainability**

D1 Secure external funding to assist the viability of capital projects.

D2 Ensure that ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.

D3 Retain material from woodland works on site where possible for use in habitat creation.

##### **E. Conservation and heritage**

E1 Conserve, enhance and restore both the important biodiversity and historic landscape character of the site, in keeping with the site's relationship to the wider landscape.

E2 Continue to support and promote grazing as a crucial management tool in managing the historic environment and enhancing the diversity of

wildflowers, the sward structure, and the overall biodiversity value of the grassland habitats across the park.

- E3 Continue to control scrub encroachment to conserve the historic environment and maintain the areas of grassland available for wildflowers, balancing this with the need to retain a network of scrub for invertebrates and small mammals.
- E4 Continue with the careful management of Pishiobury Park's woodlands, adopting traditional management strategies such as coppicing alongside usual woodland management practices, to conserve both its biodiversity and its historic environment.
- E5 Continue to implement long-term management strategy for roundels.
- E6 Continue to manage existing boundary hedgerows to maximise their contribution to biodiversity whilst maintaining the historic footprint of the park.
- E7 Continue to maintain woodland enclosures.
- E8 Review and develop a long-term vision for the sustainable management and protection of veteran trees across the park and continue to recruit the next generation of parkland trees.
- E9 Undertake sensitive management of the ponds to enhance the habitat for aquatic invertebrates and amphibians.
- E10 Ensure that the conservation needs of the scheduled ancient monument continue to be met.
- E11 Improve understanding of recreational pressure on the Park and manage its impacts.

## **F. Community involvement**

- F1 Continue to promote, recognise, and support volunteer activity; give guidance to the Friends of Pishiobury Park and CMS volunteers in delivering the GAP.
- F2 Promote and develop volunteer involvement with Pishiobury Park to support health and wellbeing of local residents.
- F3 Encourage a broad volunteer-led practical conservation and monitoring programme.
- F4 Support volunteers to organise events to spread awareness and increase community involvement.

## **G. Marketing**

- G1 Make the new Pishiobury Park site leaflet easily accessible online to promote the Park further.
- G2 Promote the site across a variety of media and events such as Love Parks Week to encourage new visitors to Pishiobury Park.

## **4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS**

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The management prescriptions described here form the basis of the actions proposed on the following action plan maps and tables.

### **4.1 A welcoming place**

Major improvements have been achieved to the welcome offered at Pishiobury Park in recent years. The site has excellent parking, a network of walking routes, interpretation, and furniture. The next step in this process is to continue to maintain Pishiobury Park as a welcoming place, maintaining the positive experience of using the site for all regular users and visitors.

Walking routes should continue to be well maintained to provide multiple inviting options for exploring the park's various features. There are a variety of pedestrian access points into the park from the surrounding communities which should continue to be made inviting.

Improved interpretation on site, including the recent addition of a self-guided audio trail, will help to promote the different walking routes available to users, and also engage visitors with the surrounding habitats and history of the site. All signage and interpretation should be maintained to a good standard and regularly inspected for signs of damage. Temporary interpretation at the river Stort viewing platform should now be removed.

### **4.2 Healthy, safe and secure**

Visitors to Pishiobury Park should feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times, and in all areas of the site. The site is popular among local residents and as such is well monitored by the public and does not suffer from any particular issues with misuse. Visitors should continue to be encouraged to report damaged property, concerns about grazing cattle and any anti-social activity.

Tree safety work is undertaken through a periodic tree safety survey, which recommends any necessary works. If issues with trees are encountered at other times by staff, or reported by the public, reactive tree works will be carried out. Safety work is restricted to areas where there are relatively high levels of public use, and wherever possible trees are allowed to go through the natural cycle of decay.

### **4.3 Clean and well maintained**

Pishiobury Park should be maintained to a good standard, with the level of maintenance proportional to need and to level of use. The site is regularly visited and inspected by the Council, the Countryside Management Service and grounds maintenance contractor staff. Day to day operations such as litter picking, emptying of litter and dog bins, maintenance of entrances and access points and repairs to fencing and park structures all contribute to the overall impression of the park. It is

imperative that the maintenance is delivered in a timely fashion as it demonstrates to park visitors that the park is well cared for and contributes to the overall visitor experience.

General maintenance should continue to be monitored and any adjustments required be implemented in an informed and responsible manner so that the impact on the park is a positive one.

Furniture around Pishiobury Park, including seats and interpretation boards should be kept in good condition, maintaining as and when required. There is an aesthetic requirement for consistent and appropriate design of park structures and furniture within our parks and open spaces. Bespoke oak benches, picnic tables and sculptures have been designed specifically for Pishiobury Park by a local specialist. Any future replacement of furniture should follow this principle.

The site requires annual vegetation management around gates, benches and along the boardwalk. The boardwalk will be inspected four times a year by the Council and the decking will be cleared of any build-up of organic matter. The overgrowth of vegetation surrounding the viewing platform within the Osier Bed will be strimmed twice a year, and the route of the boardwalk will be kept clear from overgrowing or overhanging vegetation.

All the gates in the park should conform to BS5709:2018. When gates are replaced across the park, they should meet this standard. All gateways and access points will be kept clear through regular monitoring and maintenance.

Some changes to the general management of the park will be reactive to specific circumstances that cannot be accurately programmed or predicted, for example vandalism, increased visitor usage and weather conditions. However, where specific projects are planned for the park, it is important to be aware of the impact these will have on the general maintenance operations both visually and financially. Through continued well planned maintenance regimes and projects, we aim to achieve this not just for the next ten years but well into the future for Pishiobury Park.

When events are held in the park, additional inspections will be made prior to the event to ensure that the park is ready, gates and access points are clear, any protrusion or trip hazards are rectified, any event related structures are safe, and that measures for additional parking such as temporary fencing are in place and secure.

#### **4.4 Sustainability**

EHDC is committed to the environment and environmental sustainability and recognises the impacts its operations have on the environment. This is reflected in the [Council's Climate Change Strategy 2022-26](#).

Natural regeneration should be utilised for restocking wherever appropriate: it is low cost, dynamic, it adapts to local conditions, and reduces the risk of importing pests

and diseases to the woodland. Replanting should be considered where appropriate, and if natural regeneration does not achieve the required stocking levels, presenting an opportunity for some species diversification, with the aim of improving the resilience of the woodland against pressures from a changing climate and pests and diseases.

Pishiobury Park is now within its final year of a ten-year Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement (2014-2024) with Natural England. Funding provided by the HLS scheme supports the management of the park through two means:

- Revenue: this has contributed to the costs of the grazing regime and provides financial backing to continue managing the grassland in this way, in addition to supporting the maintenance and enhancement of the perimeter woodland enclosures.
- Capital: this has contributed to improvements in fencing, grazing support infrastructures, hedgerow restoration and tree planting.

An application should be submitted to Natural England for a new Countryside Stewardship agreement which would start in January 2025. This should be supported by a review and update of the Restoration Plan for Pishiobury Park from 2005.

The Park has also recently benefitted from a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) which has supported delivery of historic investigations, interpretation, and access improvements including archaeology studies and excavations, new signage and interpretation boards, and the new boardwalk through Plovers Mead.

Additional external funding should be sought to ensure the viability and financial sustainability of actions under consideration within this plan.

## **4.5 Conservation and heritage**

An enormous amount has been achieved over the last twenty years at Pishiobury Park, through successful partnership working by the Council, CMS, the Friends of Pishiobury Park, and other volunteers. The management focus in previous years has been on restoring the historic landscape character and footprint of the site, and many of the 2005 Landscape Restoration Plan objectives have been achieved. This has been complemented by improved public access to the site, and the continuation of a successful grazing regime. Over the next ten years we aim to maintain this success.

### **4.5.1 Historic environment**

Management of the Park should continue to be informed by the 2005 Landscape Restoration Plan. This document will be reviewed and updated in support of a new Countryside Stewardship application. Recommendations contained in the updated version of this document should be implemented where possible.

#### 4.5.2 Conservation grassland

The quality of the grassland habitat is important to the County's biodiversity. The ecological quality of the grassland sward has continued to improve since grazing density was increased. Therefore, the objective for the next ten years is to continue with the existing grassland management regime, and to promote grazing as a crucial maintenance tool to improve the ecological quality of the grassland habitat. The ecological value of the grassland will be monitored annually to ensure that grazing arrangements remain appropriate to create the desired ecological conditions and achieve the targets set within the HLS agreement.

The park will continue to be grazed by traditional cattle breeds annually between May and October. It is important to promote understanding of the presence of livestock and maintain public safety whilst grazing, particularly when considering the increased popularity of the park. Grazing cattle have been a feature of Pishiobury Park for many years, therefore regular visitors to the site are well used to this traditional management practice. Visitors to Pishiobury Park will continue to be provided with guidance on their own safety responsibilities when visiting the countryside.

The ecological importance of grazing should continue to be promoted, to maintain and increase understanding and acceptance of the presence of livestock. The council has produced a brief guide on ['Grazing Animals in our Parks'](#), which provides detailed safety guidance for visitors and provides additional information on environmental stewardship and ecology. On-site interpretation specific to grazing will be maintained throughout the year, which provides safety guidelines for dog walkers, as well as information on the benefits of grazing for wildlife. Furthermore, events such as 'meet the cows' will be held annually as part of the 'Love Parks Week' event, to spread awareness and understanding. We will also investigate the feasibility of holding livestock awareness training events for dog walkers.

#### 4.5.3 Invasive weeds

Methods that will be implemented to control the invasive weeds in Pishiobury Park are described below.

**Bramble/scrub:** Although bramble provides a great habitat for wildlife it can encroach very quickly and move into the grassland areas. Management is required to prevent successional change in vegetation from grassland to scrub and eventually woodland. Vegetation succession leads, in the short term, to an increase in nutrient levels in the soil and a decline in species diversity. Managing scrub cover will maintain the area of grassland available for wildflowers, and the conservation value of this habitat. Bramble that has encroached too far will be controlled by sectional rotational cutting predominately through volunteer activities. This will be balanced with the need to retain a network of discrete patches of scrub for invertebrates and

small mammals, occupying an area of no more than 10% of the grassland compartment.

Scrub control is particularly important within the Scheduled Ancient Monument, where optimum management would be as open grassland. The area of trees and scrub should not exceed the historic extents of woodland blocks associated with the designed landscape and the alignment of hedgerows recorded on historic mapping.

**Thistle:** Creeping thistles and spear thistles are very hardy plants that spread and seed vigorously. Effective control should always be implemented before the thistles seed. If large areas of thistle become established a contractor will be despatched to top and collect up the thistle before seeding. For small patches of thistle, the Friends of Pishiobury Park have been supplied with a tool specifically designed to remove individual thistle plants. This labour-intensive method, if timed correctly, can prevent the establishment of large areas and the need for large scale removal operations. CMS may also bring in volunteers from other groups to assist. However, care must be taken to ensure that any areas of scarce dwarf thistle, found mainly on the chalk slope, are effectively identified and avoided during these works.

**Ragwort:** Whilst an important constituent of the grass sward, providing habitat and food for invertebrates, common ragwort is poisonous if consumed by cattle. Consumption is most likely to occur when ragwort is pulled and left in situ as it becomes more palatable after drying. Ragwort levels are regularly monitored, and it is periodically hand pulled by volunteers and the Friends Group and disposed of appropriately by our grounds maintenance contractor. Pulling after heavy rainfall when the ground is soft often gives the best results, but this should be done before seed has set. It is always advisable to wear gloves when dealing with ragwort.

#### **4.5.4 Woodland and parkland tree management**

Management will continue to focus on ensuring the sustainability of the woodland, allowing both enhancement of the woodland structure and conservation of historic features. This will be achieved by retaining and protecting veteran trees, increasing the diversity of the understorey, and enabling the regeneration of future feature trees. The woodland comprises many elm trees which are now at the end of their life. Healthy elm will be retained wherever possible for the benefit of white-letter hairstreak butterflies, which require elm as a larval food plant. Veteran trees will be retained wherever possible and protected.

Oak Walk and Lime Avenue are important features of the park. Maintaining them has been a key objective in the management plans for Pishiobury Park, and this will continue to be the case into the future. Oak Walk is comprised of mixed tree species, any tree losses along the extent of the walks will be replaced with native oak species. Losses along the extent of Lime Walk will be replaced with native small-leaved lime. Creation of additional linear features should be considered to maximise

wildlife corridor potential and commuting and foraging opportunities for birds and bats, particularly in areas where woodland blocks may be separated by grassland habitat.

Veteran trees will be managed sensitively, in line with advice provided by the Woodland Trust and the Ancient Tree Forum. A balanced management approach that protects the trees themselves, associated wildlife and the people visiting the park to enjoy them will continue to be implemented. Where possible, larger dead wood removed from veteran trees will be made safe and remain in situ. Dead and rotting wood provides ideal habitat for invertebrates but also creates aesthetic natural tactile elements for the pleasure of park users, both young and old.

Where necessary and with consideration given to the visual impact of fencing, veteran trees will be fenced off around their dripline (the area directly below the outer most circumference of branches) to allow the process of natural decay to occur safely, and to create undisturbed habitat for wildlife. These areas may require occasional management by the Friends of Pishiobury Park to maintain grassland diversity and prevent grasses and other ruderal species becoming dominant.

Significant trees within the Park will be identified for inclusion within the [Ancient Tree Inventory](#) to raise awareness of their value.



Figure 8 Decaying wood from veteran tree has been left in situ, providing important habitat for invertebrates and fungi.

Some of the trees within the roundels are of substantial age and size and should be managed in line with the veteran tree management strategy above. In some instances, heavy top limbs may need to be removed to prevent wind blow, and

forked stems may need to be used to prop up leaning stems. Stock fencing surrounding the roundels is in largely in good condition. Where the planted hedgerows are mature enough to protect the enclosed trees, fencing can be removed when it deteriorates. Where hedges still require protection from grazing, fencing should be replaced as and when needed.

Bat boxes could be installed within the woodland areas to create additional roosting features within the park. Boxes should be orientated to the south when possible, but can be placed in a variety of orientations in order to avoid artificial lighting. The boxes should be placed at least 3m above the ground. To maximise uptake of bat boxes, they should be situated in areas of high levels of activity. Based upon recent bat surveys, the woodland to the south of the site and adjacent to waterbodies would be most appropriate.

#### **4.5.5 Tree thinning**

Thinning within Nursery Wood will target the removal of unhealthy and crowded trees, ash and oak in particular. Attractive, well-formed oak trees will be selected to grow on to maturity and may receive some formative pruning. Tree thinning will provide the remaining trees with more space, allowing the development of a broad crown, and provide light for natural regeneration, improving age diversity within the plantation woodland.

#### **4.5.6 Rotational coppicing**

The areas of hazel coppice within Nursery Wood should continue to be rotationally managed. To encourage good regrowth (tall and straight), the stocking density of the coppice coupe will be monitored and adjusted where appropriate. In order to protect re-growth from browsing by deer, any coppicing should be protected by sufficient fencing, or through the creation of deer baskets. Consideration will be given to the effective re-use of arisings from these operations on-site, for example, hazel coppice poles for bindings along sections of laid hedge or provision of stakes. Larger round wood will be retained in long lengths and stacked to increase available deadwood habitat within the woodland.

#### **4.5.7 Tree and hedge planting**

Where trees have been planted and weather conditions do not provide enough water, there may be the need to organise watering through the grounds maintenance contract. Planted trees will be regularly checked and maintained for a period of three years post planting to ensure success. This will involve weeding, mulching and watering when required.

Any tree or hedge planting at Pishiobury Park should take place early in the tree planting season, between November and December, to give trees the best possible chance of establishing themselves and address the high failure rates seen on the site.

## 4.5.8 Waterbodies

### 4.5.8.1 Spring

The re-encroachment of dominant marginal species around the spring will be monitored and managed when necessary. Marginal vegetation should be removed to prevent the cover across the entire water surface, ensuring that a fringe of marginal and emergent vegetation is retained around at least half of the water's edge. In particular, the growth of reedmace should be controlled, and excess floating and submerged vegetation regularly thinned, to prevent the progressive build-up of nutrients, such as nitrates and phosphates. To enable this ongoing management, gates should be added to the fences surrounding the spring.

In addition to this ongoing maintenance, the area of the spring should be desilted to establish a small pond here. Work should take place in the winter to avoid any impact on protected species such as great crested newt, should they occur.



Figure 9 Northern side of spring-fed pond is heavily vegetated, dominated by reedmace.



Figure 10 Southern side of spring-fed pond is more open in character but will still benefit from vegetation management.

#### 4.5.8.2 Pond

Creation of a new, well-designed pond in a more suitable location, with a source of clean water, should be considered. The existing pond could be left to build up with silt, raising the pond floor. Over time the pond would eventually turn into marsh, and emergent vegetation will cover the entire pond floor drying out the open water. Succession of the pond should be monitored over future plan periods and management may be required to hasten this natural process. The existing viewing platform adjacent to the pond should be removed and re-used elsewhere onsite.

Waterbodies provide ideal foraging habitat for important species like bats, by increasing prey availability within the local area. Therefore, it would be beneficial to offset the loss of the pond and improve the quality of the park's water features by creating a new pond complex. A suitable location would be within Plovers Mead near to the river Stort (Navigation), which is an area of low-lying wet meadow. The location selected for pond creation should take into the account the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, where such excavation/disturbance should be avoided, and be agreed in consultation with the East Herts conservation officer.

Subject to this consultation and investigation of suitability through trial pits, the pond complex could be situated adjacent to the existing stock proof fencing, likely in the southern corner of the field, so it can be viewed and enjoyed by visitors walking past this field and be fenced to protect from disturbance by dogs entering the water. The

pond complex would be left to be colonised naturally by aquatic vegetation and invertebrates.

#### **4.5.8.3 Ditch**

The main supply ditch to the existing pond is lined with overgrown hawthorn hedgerow. The internal hedgerows bordering the supply ditch should be managed to senescence, and trees removed upon their death, providing new opportunities to improve the marginal vegetation within the supply ditch.

#### **4.5.9 Guidance on Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) control**

Pishiobury Park is within the OPM buffer zone as set out by the Forestry Commission. If a potential OPM sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, action should be taken according to the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) control process detailed in the appendix (see 7.1).

#### **4.5.10 Recreational pressure**

Pishiobury Park is a sensitive site with a great range of features of interest, from its scheduled ancient monument to its historic landscape to its valuable habitats and wildlife. Current visitor numbers do appear to be manageable with little evidence of misuse and only minor detrimental impacts on the park, for example physical wear-and-tear within the scheduled area at the link from the east park to the meadows between Nursery Wood and the Osier Beds.

The Gilston Villages development will eventually bring 10,000 new homes to an area only two miles from the park, and with it the potential for increased recreational pressure on the site and a higher risk of misuse. Over the ten-year period of this plan it would be helpful to monitor any changes in the usage of the site and to understand if the level of impact from visitors is increasing. A formal visitor survey would establish a baseline for visitor numbers against which future changes can be measured and could be supported by the Friends of Pishiobury Park. Visitor numbers and impact should also be monitored informally, led by council officers and supported by observations from the Friends.

Recreational pressures are already being managed proactively, for example through the new signage, new boardwalk and better designed entrances all installed as part of the recent National Lottery Heritage Fund project. The extensive positive community engagement described in 4.6 below is also of great value in ensuring the park continues to be treated respectfully by visitors.

Where new pressures on the park are identified, funding should be sought from developers to help manage these pressures, but it is essential that if this funding does become available, it is directed towards improvements which will benefit the park without causing irretrievable damage to its important landscape character. Any

improvements should be informed by the forthcoming review of the 2005 Landscape Restoration Plan to ensure they are sensitive to the landscape of the park.

Surfaced tarmac footpaths around the park would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape and are not appropriate for Pishiobury Park. It is similarly essential to avoid over-developing the park, for example with formal play facilities, poorly-sited parking or by creating gaps in the enclosure which impact the park's sense of place.

There are several options which could mitigate the need for surfaced paths and other over-development:

- Further engagement with the local community and careful consideration of signage and interpretation which communicates the environmental and heritage implications of excessive wear-and-tear, advising visitors to stick to paths and (potentially) avoid badly-affected areas at certain times of year.
- Grass reinforcement at main entrances and pinch points (such as that already installed close to the gate from the car park).
- Boardwalk construction in any further sensitive or wet areas which are identified.
- Create a permanent overspill car park in the area immediately south of the main car park which is currently used as a cattle corral. Retain the facility to use this area as a corral when cattle are brought into or taken away from the park, and constructing an alternative corral for when cattle need to be contained during the grazing season.
- Upgrade the car park to a resin-bonded or tarmac surface and, subject to planning permission, extend into the wooded area between the car park and the road while ensuring the enclosing effect of the woodland is not lost. This would help manage increased usage without additional cost to the council and minimise the health and safety risk of traffic queueing into the road at busy times.
- Provide aesthetically appropriate opportunities for natural play close to the picnic area, for example timber sculptures in the style of the existing carved cattle.
- Install further timber seating, following the existing style, along existing grass paths, to provide more resting points and improve accessibility of the park.

None of these actions can be met by existing council budgets. All would be subject to appropriate external funding being identified and subject to the recommendations of the review of the 2005 Landscape Restoration Plan.

## **4.6 Community involvement**

Pishiobury Park benefits from an active local community who take an interest in the management of the site. The park is regularly used by local people for informal exercise, such as walking, dog walking, bird watching and running, and serves as a local resource for activities that enhance health and wellbeing.

The Friends of Pishiobury Park organise monthly working parties which are welcome for all to join. The Friends provide a valuable contribution to the management and conservation of the park throughout the year and are well placed to draw management issues to the attention of EHDC and CMS. It is extremely important that they should continue to be supported in their promotional activities, and where suitable, assisted with recruitment of new members to strengthen and support the team further.

CMS volunteer tasks will continue to take place here several times a year and will work towards achievement of the objectives set out in this plan.

Over the past few years, the Council have been running a community event as part of Love Parks Week. The event has proven successful with local people coming to the park to engage with various activities and attractions, including talks by the conservation grazier. We aim to continue to run annual events in the park linking local and national events and occasions. In addition, the Friends enjoy celebrating the park and the work they have contributed to its management. The group run events and activities for park users including guided walks, wildlife surveys, activities for local children, and veteran tree surveys. They are heavily involved in the annual Love Parks Week event day and have also held stalls and information stands at local community days in Sawbridgeworth to promote the park and the group.

## **4.7 Marketing**

The Pishiobury Park site leaflet should be utilised in both its printed and digital format to promote the site.

Occasional guided walks could be organised as a tool to promote the new GAP and management practices. Pishiobury Park is also suited to special interest walks, in particular archaeology, heritage and woodland and grassland habitats and wildlife.

Monthly e-newsletters circulated by both East Herts District Council and Hertfordshire County Council should include promotion of planned management activities and achievements at Pishiobury Park and across other greenspaces. Opportunities to engage with the development of new management plans are promoted online and through site notices. Significant projects to improve the site and engage the community will be shared with local Councillors and celebrated as appropriate.

## 5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

### 5.1 ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Maintain pedestrian access points into the park to remain inviting	A1	Ongoing	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.2	Maintain all interpretation and signage to a good standard, and regularly inspect for signs of damage	A1	Ongoing	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.3	Maintain vegetation in fenced path around Springhall Meadow	A2	Oct-Feb	EHDC	EHDC/ CMS	GM budget/ volunteers			
0.4	Maintenance of park furniture	B1	Ongoing	EHDC	EHDC/ FoPP	GM Budget		1	
0.5	Undertake periodic tree safety surveys and carry out reactive works if required	B1	Oct-Feb	EHDC	External contractor	GM budget			
0.6	Encourage visitors to report damaged property, concerns about grazing cattle, and any anti-social activity	B2	Ongoing	EHDC	EHDC/ FoPP/ CMS	Officer time			
0.7	Boardwalk inspection and maintenance	C1	Quarterly	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.8	Undertake core site maintenance inc. litter picking, emptying of litter and dog bins, repairs to fencing and park structures	C1	Ongoing	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.9	Undertake additional inspections prior to events being held in the park e.g. Love Parks Week	C2	Ongoing	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.10	Seek external funding opportunities	D1	Ongoing	EHDC/ CMS	EHDC/ CMS	Officer time			

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.11	Monitor health of newly planted trees and hedge plants. Replace any losses along Oak Walk with native oak species	E1	Oct-Feb	EHDC/ CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Officer time/ volunteers		4	
0.12	Monitor condition of parkland tree guards and maintain or replace as appropriate	E1	Ongoing	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Site budget/ volunteers			
0.13	Strim nettles adjacent to boardwalk/ viewing platform	E1	Twice annually	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.14	Continue to monitor extent of creeping and spear thistles, taking action to control spread where needed and appropriate	E1	Jun/Jul	FoPP	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Officer time/ volunteers			
0.15	Pull ragwort in Springhall Meadow	E1	Jun/Jul	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Volunteers			
0.16	Manage grassland vegetation within veteran tree enclosures i.e. pull invasive weeds, cut and collect grassland to maintain diversity	E1/ E8	Sep	CMS	FoPP/ CMS volunteers	Volunteers			
0.17	Plovers Mead: monitor seasonal water levels	E1	Quarterly	FoPP	FoPP	Volunteers			
0.18	Plovers Mead: Clear marginal and overhanging vegetation along 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of the ditch	E1	Sep	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Volunteers		5	
0.19	Graze the site with traditional cattle	E2	May-Oct	EHDC	External contractor	HLS/ Countryside Stewardship	£3000		

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.20	Conduct botanical assessment of grazing compartments to monitor effectiveness of grazing arrangement, adjust regime where required	E2	May-Oct	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.21	Review and maintain cattle grazing signage as appropriate	E2	April	EHDC	EHDC	Officer time			
0.22	Arrange cut and lift of grassland if drought forces cattle off site earlier than scheduled	E2	Sep-Oct	EHDC	EHDC	GM budget			
0.23	Control scrub encroachment in grassland areas	E3	Oct-Feb	CMS	FoPP/ CMS volunteers	Volunteers			
0.24	Nursery Wood: Continue coppicing regime. Coppice 1/3 of hazel, replant with hazel to increase density (if required) and construct deer baskets/ fence the area	E4	Biennial Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Volunteers		3	
0.25	Monitor condition of roundel fencing and maintain or remove as appropriate	E5	Ongoing	EHDC	External contractor	Site budget			
0.26	When necessary, construct fencing around veteran trees showing significant signs of decay	E8	Ongoing	EHDC	External contractor	Site budget			
0.27	Dig out reedmace and remove ½ of marginal/emergent vegetation from spring	E9	Sep/Oct	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Volunteers		6	
0.28	Promote the FoPP and encourage and support opportunities to recruit additional members	F1	Ongoing	EHDC/ CMS	EHDC/ CMS	Officer time			

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.29	Promote site management and the Friends at all events held at Pishiobury Park, including Love Parks Week	F2/G2	Ongoing	EHDC/CMS/FoPP	EHDC/CMS/FoPP	Officer time			
0.30	Promote site via distribution/circulation of site leaflet (both printed and digital)	G1	Ongoing	EHDC/CMS/FoPP	EHDC/CMS/FoPP	Officer time			
0.31	Promote school activity pack to local schools	G2	Ongoing	EHDC/CMS/FoPP	EHDC/CMS/FoPP	Officer time			

## 5.2 YEAR 1 2024-25

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Remove temporary interpretation from the Osier Bed	A1	Apr	EHDC	EHDC	Site budget			
1.2	Repair fencing alongside boardwalk in the Osier Bed	A2	Apr-Jul	EHDC	External contractor	Site budget	£1000		
1.3	Restore meadow adjacent to gravel pit: clear bramble and coppice scrub around meadow	E1	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Officer time			
1.4	Restore meadow adjacent to gravel pit: clear bramble and coppice scrub along path linking Springhall Meadow and river Stort to a minimum width of 3m.	E1	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Volunteers			
1.5	Restore meadow adjacent to gravel pit: grub out blackthorn around entrance from Springhall Meadow	E1	Oct-Feb	CMS	External contractor	Site budget	£3000		
1.6	Continue restoration of hedgerow to east of Springhall Meadow by coppicing shrubs and planting in gaps	E1	Oct-Feb	CMS	FoPP/CMS volunteers	Volunteers			
1.7	Tree planting aftercare – Woodland Walk, Nursery Wood, Oak Walk, hedge plants	E1/ E4/ E7	Spring/ summer	CMS	FoPP/CMS volunteers	Volunteers			
1.8	Confirm suitable location for pond creation in Plovers Mead	E1/E9	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
1.9	Investigate feasibility of holding livestock awareness training events for dog walkers	E2/ F4	Apr-Aug	EHDC	EHDC/ external	Officer time			
1.10	Nursery Wood: undertake thinning in central compartment	E4	Oct-Feb	CMS	External contractor	Site budget	£4000		

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.11	Install bat boxes through woodland to the south of the site and adjacent to waterbodies	E4	Oct-Feb	CMS	FoPP/CMS volunteers	Site budget/volunteers	£500		
1.12	De-silt spring (if required and recommended following professional survey)	E9	Nov-Jan	CMS	External contractor/CMS volunteers/FoPP	Site budget/volunteers	£1000		
1.13	Install pedestrian gates in fences surrounding spring for maintenance access	E9	Apr	EHDC	External contractor	Site budget	£500		
1.14	Prepare and submit application for new Countryside Stewardship Agreement	D1/D2	Apr	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
1.15	Update Pishiobury Park Restoration Plan (2005) to inform future management and support Countryside Stewardship application	D1/D2	Apr	CMS	Consultant	Countryside Stewardship	£4000		
1.16	Commission formal visitor survey to establish baseline for visitor use and impacts	E11	Spring/summer	CMS	Consultant/FoPP	Countryside Stewardship	£3000		
1.17	Identify trees for inclusion within Ancient Tree Inventory	F3	Sep	CMS	FoPP	Volunteers			

### 5.3 YEAR 2 2025-26

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Implement recommendations of updated Pishiobury Park restoration plan, where possible	D1/D2	Ongoing	EHDC/ CMS	EHDC/ CMS	Countryside Stewardship			
2.2	Create new pond complex in Plovers Mead	E1/ E9	Sep	EHDC/ CMS	External contractor	Site budget	£3000	7	
2.3	Install fencing around new pond complex in Plovers Mead	E1/ E9	Sep	EHDC/ CMS	External contractor	Site budget	£2000		
2.4	Remove pond viewing platform structure	A2	Oct	CMS	FoPP/ CMS volunteers	Volunteers			
2.5	Monitor establishment of new pond complex in Plovers Mead. Record wildlife sightings.	E9	Oct-Mar	CMS	FoPP	Volunteers			
2.6	Tree planting aftercare – Woodland Walk, Nursery Wood, Oak Walk, hedge plants	E1/ E4/ E7	Spring/ summer	CMS	FoPP/ CMS volunteers	Volunteers			

#### 5.4 YEAR 3-10 2026-34

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Lay hedgerow adjacent to main car park	E6	Year 4, Oct-Jan	CMS	CMS volunteers/ FoPP	Volunteers			
3.2	If necessary, three years after pond creation, modify the shape of the new pond complex according to observed water levels and undertake delicate shaping of margins and shallows as required.	E9	Year 5, Sep/Oct	CMS	External contractor	Site budget	£1000		
3.3	Tree planting aftercare – Woodland Walk, Nursery Wood, Oak Walk, hedge plants	E1/ E4/ E7	Year 3, spring/ summer	CMS	FoPP/ CMS volunteers	Volunteers			
3.4	Monitor establishment of new pond in Plovers Mead. Record wildlife sightings.	E9	Annual, spring/ summer	FoPP	FoPP	Volunteers			
3.5	Undertake five-year review of plan		Year 5	EHDC	CMS	Officer time			
3.6	Informal review of visitor numbers and recreational pressure	E11	Year 5	EHDC	EHDC/CMS/ FoPP	Officer time/ volunteers			
3.7	Write new greenspace action plan 2034-39		Year 10	EHDC	CMS	Officer time			
3.8	Informal review of visitor numbers and recreational pressure	E11	Year 10	EHDC	EHDC/CMS/ FoPP	Officer time/ volunteers			

### Task Responsibility

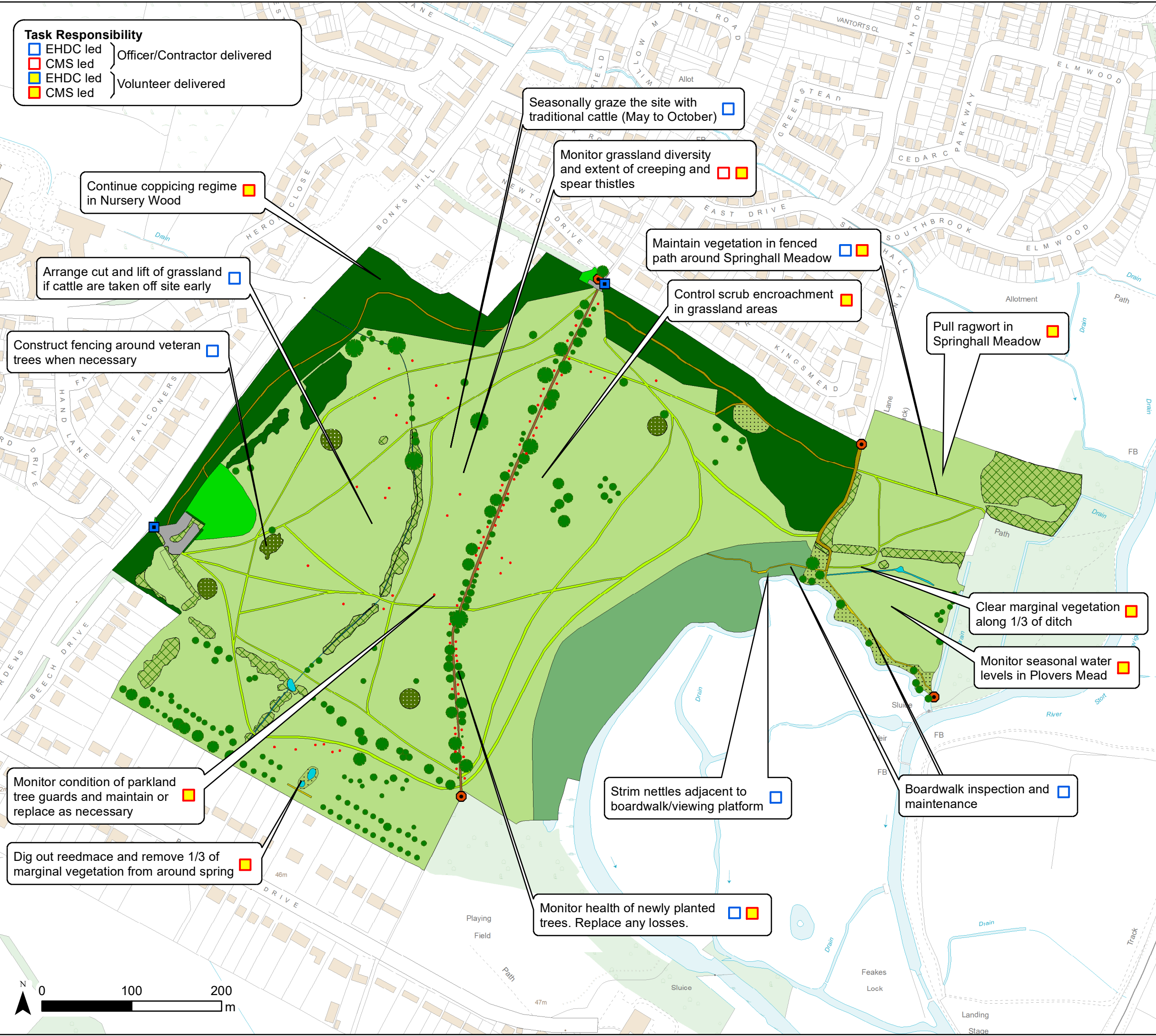
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| EHDC led | Officer/Contractor delivered |
| CMS led  |                              |
| EHDC led | Volunteer delivered          |
| CMS led  |                              |

## Pishiobury Park

### Greenspace Action Plan 2024-34 Annual and Regular Actions

### Legend

- Amenity grassland
- Boardwalk
- Car park
- Cattle exclusion
- Desire line
- Grazed pasture
- Oak walk
- Roundel
- Scrub
- Wetland
- Wet woodland
- Woodland
- Woodland walk
- Mature parkland tree
- Young parkland tree - guarded
- Pedestrian entrance
- Vehicle access



Continue coppicing regime in Nursery Wood

Arrange cut and lift of grassland if cattle are taken off site early

Construct fencing around veteran trees when necessary

Seasonally graze the site with traditional cattle (May to October)

Monitor grassland diversity and extent of creeping and spear thistles

Maintain vegetation in fenced path around Springhall Meadow

Control scrub encroachment in grassland areas

Pull ragwort in Springhall Meadow

Clear marginal vegetation along 1/3 of ditch

Monitor seasonal water levels in Plovers Mead

Boardwalk inspection and maintenance

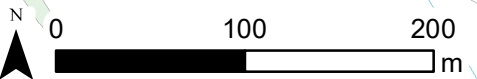
Strim nettles adjacent to boardwalk/viewing platform

Monitor health of newly planted trees. Replace any losses.

Monitor condition of parkland tree guards and maintain or replace as necessary

Dig out reedmace and remove 1/3 of marginal vegetation from around spring

- Maintain pedestrian access points
- Maintain interpretation and signage
- Maintain park furniture
- Undertake periodic tree safety surveys and carry out reactive works if needed
- Encourage visitors to report damaged property, grazing concerns, anti-social behaviour
- Core maintenance: Litter picking, emptying of litter and dog bins, fencing repairs
- Undertake additional inspections prior to events (e.g. Love Parks Week)
- Seek external funding opportunities
- Manage veteran tree enclosures
- Monitor condition of roundel fencing and carry out appropriate reactive works
- Review and maintain cattle grazing signage
- Promote the Friends of Pishiobury Park and support member recruitment
- Promote site at events and via the leaflet and schools activity pack



Scale @ A3  
1:4,000

Date  
December 2023

Rev  
01



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# Task Responsibility

- EHDC led } Officer/Contractor delivered
- CMS led }
- EHDC led } Volunteer delivered
- CMS led }

## Pishiobury Park

Greenspace Action Plan 2024-34

Year 1 Action Plan

### Legend

- Amenity grassland
- Boardwalk
- Car park
- Cattle exclusion
- Desire line
- Grazed pasture
- Oak walk
- Roundel
- Scrub
- Wetland
- Wet woodland
- Woodland
- Woodland walk
- Mature parkland tree
- Young parkland tree - guarded
- Pedestrian entrance
- Vehicle access

Undertake thinning in central compartment of Nursery Wood ■

Restore small meadow: clear path to minimum width of 3m ■

Restore small meadow: grub out blackthorn around entrance from Springhall Meadow ■

Continue restoration of hedgerow by coppicing shrubs and planting in gaps ■

Restore small meadow: clear bramble and coppice scrub around meadow ■

Confirm suitable location for pond creation in Plovers Mead ■

Remove temporary interpretation ■

Repair fencing alongside boardwalk in Osier Bed ■

Install pedestrian gates in fences surrounding spring for maintenance access ■

De-silt spring ■ ■

Tree planting aftercare ■

Investigate feasibility of livestock awareness training for dog walkers ■

Install bat boxes through woodland to the south of the site and adjacent to waterbodies ■

Prepare and submit application for new Countryside Stewardship agreement ■

Update Pishiobury Park Restoration Plan (2005) ■

Commission formal visitor survey ■

Identify trees for inclusion within Ancient Tree Inventory ■

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Date  
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01



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### Task Responsibility

- |          |                              |
|----------|------------------------------|
| EHDC led | Officer/Contractor delivered |
| CMS led  |                              |
| EHDC led | Volunteer delivered          |
| CMS led  |                              |

## Pishobury Park

Greenspace Action Plan 2024-34

Year 2 Action Plan

### Legend

- Amenity grassland
- Boardwalk
- Car park
- Cattle exclusion
- Desire line
- Grazed pasture
- Oak walk
- Roundel
- Scrub
- Wetland
- Wet woodland
- Woodland
- Woodland walk
- Mature parkland tree
- Young parkland tree - guarded
- Pedestrian entrance
- Vehicle access

Remove pond viewing platform



Install fencing around new pond complex in Plovers Mead



Create new pond complex in Plovers Mead



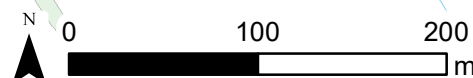
Monitor establishment of new pond complex



Implement recommendations of updated Pishobury Park restoration plan, where possible



Tree planting aftercare



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Rev  
01

Countryside  
Management  
Service



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**Task Responsibility**

- |          |                              |
|----------|------------------------------|
| EHDC led | Officer/Contractor delivered |
| CMS led  |                              |
| EHDC led | Volunteer delivered          |
| CMS led  |                              |

**Pishiobury Park**

Greenspace Action Plan 2024-34

Year 3 - 10 Action Plan

**Legend**

- Amenity grassland
- Boardwalk
- Car park
- Cattle exclusion
- Desire line
- Grazed pasture
- Oak walk
- Roundel
- Scrub
- Wetland
- Wet woodland
- Woodland
- Woodland walk
- Mature parkland tree
- Young parkland tree - guarded
- Pedestrian entrance
- Vehicle access

Tree planting aftercare (year 3)



Undertake five year review of plan (year 5)



Informal review of visitor numbers and recreational pressure (year 5)



Write new greenspace action plan 2034-39 (year 10)



Informal review of visitor numbers and recreational pressure (year 10)



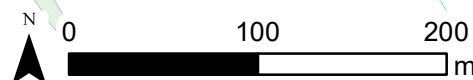
Lay hedgerow (year 4)



Monitor establishment of new pond (annual)



Modify pond shape if required (year 5)



Scale @ A3  
1:4,000

Date  
December 2023


Rev  
01

Countryside  
Management  
Service



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## 6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

	<b>1. Picnic Tables &amp; Benches</b>
Design Specification	<p>The specification for the picnic table and each picnic bench consist of the following materials and specifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic Table - 3m long x 1.4m wide (4 no. 150mm x 150mm legs, 2 no. 300mm x 75mm and 2 no. 350mm x 75mm tops, 4 no. 100mm x 75mm rails).</li> <li>• Small bench - 1.3m long</li> <li>• Larger bench - 2m long</li> <li>• Note: The timber is of a good grade and locally sourced, each piece personally selected by the craftsman and of English Oak.</li> </ul> <p>The specification for the park benches consist of the following materials and sizes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 no. tapered 150mm x 100mm uprights sunk into the ground up to 600mm and surrounded in post mix concrete</li> <li>• Seat supports – 2 no. tapered 150mm x 100mm seat and back boards</li> <li>• 3 no. back boards and 3 no seat boards, both in 150mm x 75mm</li> <li>• Note: All the above timber is construction grade air dried oak planed all round finish with sanded corners.</li> </ul> 
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Installation by CMS volunteers and/ or the Friends Group.</li> </ul>
Future management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring the condition of site furniture will be conducted by the FoPP. When a bench reaches the end of its life, a decision should be made as to whether it should be replaced or removed.</li> </ul>

	<b>2. General prescriptions relevant to all woodland management operations</b>
<i>Habitat Retention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significant <b>veteran/ specimen</b> trees to be retained and managed sensitively, in line with advice provided by the Woodland Trust and the Ancient Tree Forum.</li> <li>▪ Retain standing and fallen <b>dead wood</b>. Review all available options to ensure that retained standing deadwood is safe, prioritising wherever possible options which minimise the requirement for tree surgery, such as excluding public access (via fencing), relocating footpath/ benches etc.</li> </ul>
<i>Visitor Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Members of the public should be kept a safe distance from active tree works with signs, and/or, banksmen. Access routes may require temporary closure.</li> </ul>
<i>Timing</i>	Unless otherwise stated, all habitat management work will be undertaken between 1 <sup>st</sup> October and 28 <sup>th</sup> February.

	<b>3. Coppicing Hazel and Re-stocking</b>
<i>Purpose</i>	<p>The coppicing of hazel trees is a traditional and sustainable woodland management technique which involves the cutting of trees at ground level which generates the growth of several small diameter rods from the cut stool. Traditionally these rods would be harvested for crafts and woodland products.</p> <p>Within Nursery Wood the coppice area is split into three discrete coupes, with one coupe coppiced at a time. One coupe will be coppiced every other year (year 1, 3 and 5). To ensure good regrowth, stool density should be between 1250 and 2000 stools per ha. Low stool densities reduce yield and quality of the crop and can also facilitate the dominance of invasive plants like bramble and coarse grasses. Once suitable stocking density is achieved the coppice coupes at Pishiobury Park should be cut on a rotation of 6 – 10 years.</p> <p>Rotational coppicing creates temporary clearings which allow pockets of light to reach the woodland floor. Increased light levels facilitate the development of a diverse ground flora, scrubby margins, and the regeneration of trees. The result is a diverse woodland structure (a variety of aged trees) which supports a wide variety of plants, birds and invertebrates.</p>
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each stem is to be cut at least 10 cm above the existing stool to retain a collar of healthy bark. All cuts shall slope upwards towards the centre of the stool to aid water shedding. No other trees should be cut or damaged.</li> <li>▪ Coppice coupe is to be re-stocked with hazel trees to achieve recommended stocking density of between 1250 and 2000 stools per ha. New plants are to be protected by guards and stakes.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plants will be supplied to conform to BS3936 and BS8545. Plants are to be grown in the UK and to be of UK provenance, sourced from Seed Provenance Zone 402 (with Zones 405 and 406 also acceptable), and below Elevation Zone of 300 m.</li> </ul>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers</li> </ul>
<i>Arisings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakes approx. 1.5 m in length and 2.5 – 5 cm in diameter should be separated from the cut material and stacked to the edge of the coppice coupe, away from the footpath. Brash which is less than 3 cm in diameter, should be stacked at the edge of the coppice coupe, away from the footpath. This material will then be used to create fencing to protect the stools and the newly planted trees from browsing.</li> <li>Brash greater than 3 cm in diameter is to be scattered under existing trees, avoiding the newly opened areas.</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor re-growth of stools and planted trees</li> <li>Planting area to be kept weed free within 1 m of each plant, and stakes and guards to be maintained.</li> <li>Establish a suitable rotation length.</li> </ul>

	<b>4. Tree Planting</b>
<i>Purpose</i>	Tree planting is to be considered when replacing tree losses across the park; Oak Walk, Lime Avenue, Woodland Walk, Nursery Wood and the Osier Bed.
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plants will be supplied to conform to BS3936 and BS8545. Plants are to be grown in the UK and to be of UK provenance, sourced from Seed Provenance Zone 402 (with Zones 405 and 406 also acceptable) and below Elevation Zone of 300 m.</li> <li>If applicable, Woodland Walk and Nursery Wood should be planted with the following species; hazel, oak, hawthorn and hornbeam.</li> <li>Trees to be planted in diagonal rows at 2 m spacing for access to mow between lines.</li> <li>New plants are to be protected by 1.2 m tree guards and stakes.</li> <li>Spread a 1m<sup>2</sup> layer of bark chip mulch (at least a year old) at depth not less than 50mm around each tree.</li> </ul>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planting area to be kept weed free within 1 m of each plant, and stakes and guards to be maintained.</li> <li>Mulch to be reapplied as required.</li> </ul>

	<b>5. Ditch clearance – Springhall Meadow</b>
<i>Purpose</i>	Vegetation, such as rushes and reeds which grow from the bottom of the ditch accelerate silting and prevent the growth of aquatic

	plants such as pondweeds. Rushes and reeds, in addition to surrounding banks side scrub will be cleared back, on a rotational basis to reduce shade and prevent the build-up of organic debris. Cutting and thinning vegetation on a rotational basis will create a varied age structure and diverse range of habitats along the length of the ditch, ranging from recently cleared short open grassland through to more established undisturbed habitat.
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate the suitability of ditch habitat for supporting water voles; seek advice from Natural England if necessary.</li> <li>▪ Thin and cut back vegetation along 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the ditch every other year.</li> <li>▪ Manage ditch in an upstream direction, to help wildlife return to the disturbed length downstream.</li> <li>▪ Vegetation should be managed in the autumn to reduce potential impact to wildlife whilst ground conditions are still suitable.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ leave cut material adjacent to the water course over night to allow time for wildlife to return to the water. Do not allow cut material/ weeds to decompose on the banks and keep livestock away from plants that may be poisonous (e.g. hemlock or iris).</li> </ul>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Volunteers</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grazing will prevent the development of scrub and overgrowth of coarse vegetation overgrowth</li> </ul>

	<b>6. Spring vegetation clearance</b>
<i>Purpose</i>	<p>Marginal and emergent vegetation (such as reedmace) is to be removed from around half of the springs edge to prevent cover across the entire water surface. A fringe of marginal and emergent vegetation will be retained around at least half of the edge to provide habitat for aquatic wildlife.</p> <p>Excess floating and submerged vegetation will be regularly thinned and removed to reduce the progressive build-up of nutrients (such as nitrates and phosphates) when the aquatic vegetation rots down over the winter.</p>
<i>Method</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear marginal and emergent vegetation (including reedmace) from half of the spring's edge when required.</li> <li>▪ Remove excess floating and submerged vegetation.</li> </ul>
<i>Arising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leave removed plants on the pond edge overnight prior to removal, to allow time for small creatures to crawl back into the water.</li> <li>▪ Material to be removed from site by a contractor to an appropriate waste site.</li> </ul>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Volunteers/ contractor</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-going monitoring required, and management to be conducted whenever necessary to prevent re-encroachment from dominant marginal species.</li> </ul>

	<b>7. Pond creation</b>
<i>Purpose</i>	<p>A new pond feature will be created to offset the loss of the existing in-line pond in the main park area. In order to maximise wildlife value a pond complex will be created, consisting of multiple separate small pools, which become connected during times of high water content.</p> <p>The objective of pond creation is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To create high quality freshwater habitats in the landscape</li> <li>• To increase the diversity of pond habitats in the area</li> </ul> <p>The pond complex will be located in the area of wet grassland (Plovers Mead), but will be situated so as not to destroy original wetland features within the area, such as damp hollows, seepages, and/ or ditches. These features are likely to have existing biodiversity value.</p> <p>Plovers Mead is grazed, and accessibility to grazing animals would cause poaching, especially in the establishment phase. The pond complex should therefore be fenced.</p> <p>The pond complex is to be located near to the existing fence line so it can be easily observed by visitors on the boardwalk, but at a sufficient distance to avoid unloading of unwanted pond plants and animals.</p>
<i>Method</i>	<p>Establish consent procedure, considering the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local planning permission</li> <li>▪ Location within flood plain – consult with Environment Agency</li> <li>▪ Protected species (water voles and GCN) – consult with Natural England if required.</li> <li>▪ Archaeological importance – district archaeologist may need to investigate the site beforehand</li> <li>▪ Distribution of invasive species in nearby waterbodies. Locate new pond as far as possible away from existing sources.</li> </ul> <p>Dig test holes and monitor annual water levels to determine the maximum depth expected for final pond prior to excavation.</p> <p>Set parameters for pond design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define total area of pond complex.</li> <li>• To include two deeper ponds (1-1.5m deep to ensure water is retained throughout the year) and several shallower ponds, all connected by shallower areas.</li> <li>• Ponds to comprise an asymmetric and uneven profile. Majority of pond slopes are to be shallow, less than 1:5 (12°), and preferably less than 1:20 (3°), in order to create areas which are between 1 and 10 cm deep.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strip spoil across the whole design area to create wetland areas between the excavated ponds, and allow ponds to connect at times of high water content.</li> <li>• Construction to take place in autumn.</li> </ul>
<i>Arisings</i>	<p>Determine the volume of spoil that will be generated from the work. Spoil is to be disposed of according to one of the following approaches:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Spoil is to be removed from the flood plain completely with a waste transfer licence.</li> <li>(2) Spoil will be spread thinly/ flat across the area, at least 3 to 4 m downhill from the top of the pond bank and made stable (avoid creating a rim or bank). Top spoil will be spread furthest away and downhill of the pond. Spoil is not to be piled up more than 30 cm deep or fill in existing hollows or depressions.</li> </ol>
<i>Who</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contractor</li> </ul>
<i>Future management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe and monitor seasonal water levels for one year</li> <li>• If necessary, in year 2 or 3 following creation, modify the shape of the pond according to observed water levels and undertake delicate shaping of margins and shallows as required.</li> </ul>

## 7.0 APPENDICES

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### 7.1 Guidance on Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) control

#### 7.1.1 Section A: Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) reported and/or confirmed

If a potential OPM sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, the following actions will be taken within the first 48 hours:

1. The exact location will be recorded, and photographs of observable caterpillars, nests and webbing will be obtained and [sent to the Forestry Commission \(FC\)](#) for official identification.
2. [Notices](#) will be posted at prominent access points and close to the location of the sighting to alert people accessing the site to the possible presence of OPM.
3. Relevant partners will be informed to ensure that activities are conducted safely or cancelled where necessary.
4. The specific location of the sighting will be assessed with consideration to the typical use of the site. If OPM is identified within close proximity to areas assessed as posing a high risk of public contact then additional precautions such as additional signage or temporary fencing will be taken to reduce the risk of public contact with OPM caterpillars and nests.

If OPM is confirmed on site by the FC – either a) following submission of photos from a suspected sighting to the FC or b) through the FC issuing a statutory plant health notice following OPM identification as part of the FC's monitoring programme – then appropriate control measures will be determined within five working days of the FC's confirmed identification.

#### 7.1.2 Section B: Initial OPM control measures

Insecticide spraying which targets OPM may not be considered appropriate on this site due to its ecological impact. A coordinated approach to OPM control will be agreed with FC on a case by case basis. This will be determined by the location and extent of the infestation, the timing of the discovery and the proximity of OPM to high risk areas (outlined above). While this document outlines the intended process this must be agreed by FC on a case by case basis.

Should it be agreed that insecticide spraying is not appropriate, the OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is small and is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August) then nest removal represents a viable control to limit further advancement of the population.

- If the infestation is already substantial or the infestation is discovered after moth emergence (late-July to mid-August) then nest removal does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. As such nest removal should be conducted only when nests are in close proximity to high risk areas.

If insecticide spraying is appropriate, the OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable and is discovered in time to complete spraying before caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying represents the best control to limit further advancement of the population.
- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable but is discovered after caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying in the current season does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. In this case nest removal should be conducted if a) the infestation is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August), or b) if nests are in close proximity to high risk areas. Insecticide spraying should then be conducted within acceptable areas the following season.

Following assessment, if spraying in the current season or nest removal is appropriate then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be instructed to take appropriate action as soon as possible (typically within five working days). Arborists will be required to conduct insecticide spraying, nest removals and waste disposal in line with FC guidance as set out in [chapter 6](#) and [chapter 7](#) of the OPM Manual.

### **7.1.3 Section C: Subsequent OPM control measures**

If OPM is known to have been on site in the previous year then proactive inspections will be scheduled for the following spring after caterpillar emergence (late-March to mid-April depending on annual climatic variance). The range of the inspection area will depend upon the location of previous infestations and will utilise a common sense approach to determine what is feasible given the surrounding environment. For instance, on publicly accessible open land and along linear paths an inspection range of 100m from previously infested trees would be reasonable, however in dense woodland set back from typically accessible routes an inspection range of 50m may be more appropriate. New infestations will be reported to the FC and will be assessed to determine suitable controls measures using the principles outlined above.