

Basildon District Council

**Queens Park Country Park
and Hannakins Meadow**

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

2008 – 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow are areas of public open space adjacent to Rosebay Avenue on the northern fringe of Billericay. The sites play an important role in the provision of accessible green space for people living in the large residential areas close to the site. To this end Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow will be managed as countryside on the urban fringe where people can achieve a better quality of life by experiencing peace and quiet, enjoying wildlife and getting exercise. The sites will be promoted as a gateway to the countryside and relevant organisations and landowners will be encouraged to support this through physical improvements to the wider network of public rights of way. More information and interpretation about where people can go and what they are likely to see will also be provided.

Basildon District Council will manage Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow in partnership with the relevant statutory agencies to benefit wildlife whilst encouraging access and promoting suitable use, enjoyment and educational potential of the site. The local community will be encouraged to participate in this management at every opportunity. It is intended that in future both sites be managed as a cohesive unit, with the provision of suitable access between the two.

Through this management and use by the local community, Queens Park Country Park and Hannankins Meadow can help address the key themes identified in the Community Strategy for the District of Basildon. This management plan is intended to support the aims of the Community Strategy as well as other important underlying strategies, such as the Cultural Strategy for the District.

Both of the sites are designated as County Wildlife Sites and there is ample opportunity to increase their value for wildlife. Through correct habitat management it is intended that future management will support achievement of the Basildon Biodiversity Action Plan. It is also intended to work with Natural England to have all or part of the sites declared a Local Nature Reserve by Basildon District Council.

This five-year management plan builds on the work already done by Basildon District Councils Countryside Services who are actively engaged with the local community in

the management of Queens Park Country Park. The plan should be developed by Countryside Services in consultation with partner organisations as well as residents of the Basildon district who have been identified as having a stake in the future of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow. The management planning process is in accordance with guidance on site management planning produced by the Countryside Commission in 1998. It also identifies actions that have been identified through an assessment carried out in accordance with 'Raising the Standard' The Green Flag Award Guidance published by the Civic Trust (Updated 2004).

The main purposes for developing the Plan are to ensure that local residents and partner organisations are given the opportunity to help shape future management; to ensure that future management is aligned with local strategies and policies; to enable Basildon District Council to attract external funding for maintenance and development of the site; to ensure continuity of management over time and conserve the site for the future; and to help promote and publicise the wildlife and amenity value of the site more widely.

It is fully recognised that developing this Plan is only the start of a process that must produce measurable benefits for both Queens Park Country Park, Hannakins Meadow and the residents of the district. For this reason a five-year action plan is included, which clearly identifies what will be delivered, by whom and by when. A detailed financial analysis is included.

The outcomes from this management plan will be monitored and reviewed annually and in year four work should begin to produce a follow up plan to cover management at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow for the subsequent five years.

**1. INTRODUCTION TO QUEENS PARK COUNTRY PARK
AND HANNAKINS MEADOW**

1.1 SITE DETAILS	QUEENS PARK COUNTRY PARK
Name	Queens Park Country Park
Area	26.8 Hectares
Grid Reference	TQ674966
Local Planning Authority	Basildon District Council
District	Basildon
Conservation Status	County Wildlife Site no. Ba17
Nature of legal interest	Owners
Bylaws	Basildon District Council bylaws for pleasure grounds and open spaces.
Access	<p>The site has free open access throughout with pedestrian entrances off Queens Park Avenue, Rosebay Avenue, from the unmade track running adjacent to the western boundary, and from a public footpath to the north.</p> <p>Vehicular access is available through locked field gates from Queens Park Avenue, Rosebay Avenue and the metalled road on the northern boundary and the unmade road on the western boundary.</p> <p>There are permissive footpaths and bridle paths throughout the site. A bridleway runs east to west through the site. Public footpaths run along the northern boundary and along the western boundary.</p>

HANNAKINS MEADOW	
Name	Hannakins Meadow
Area	3.8 Hectares
Grid Reference	TQ666965
Local Planning Authority	Basildon District Council
District	Basildon
Conservation Status	County Wildlife Site no. Ba11
Nature of legal interest	Owners
Bylaws	None
Access	Access is restricted within the area enclosed by stock fencing. Outside this area, access is available but restricted by the terrain. Vehicular access is available through a locked field gate.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTIONS

Queens Park Country Park

Queens Park Country Park is an area of informal public open space adjacent to Queens Park Avenue and Rosebay Avenue on the northern fringe of Billericay. The site consists of large areas of open grassland managed as summer meadow ("Main Meadow" and "Victoria Meadow"), a large block of scrub dominated by Bramble ("Blackberry Scrub"), and a developing woodland of mixed native trees planted approximately fifteen years ago ("Mill Hill Wood"). Previous amenity tree planting has created a block of trees in the centre of Main Meadow and a shelterbelt along the southern boundary ("Rosebay Wood"). A number of hedgerows, some of considerable age, are present throughout the site.

A network of mown paths allows visitors' access throughout the Country Park and a surfaced bridle path provides a circular route for horse riding. A public footpath provides access to substantial areas of open countryside outside of the site to the north and west.

There is a car park accessed off Rosebay Avenue and there are a total of nine pedestrian entrances around the site. Limited signage has been provided at the

entrances and some benches and dog waste bins are provided for visitors to use.

The site is adjacent to a large residential area to the south, open farmland and the grounds of a private golf club to the north. There is an area of woodland adjacent to the northern boundary of the site that was previously plotlands, now mostly redundant.

Hannakins Meadow

Hannakins Meadow is adjacent to Rosebay Avenue close to the western boundary of Queens Park Country Park, although there is no direct access between the two sites.

The site consists of species rich meadow that serves as a washland for the floodwaters of the adjacent Queens Park development. Areas of this meadow are very wet in winter, and marsh extends over the southern end. There are small areas of scrub and some hedges along the boundaries of the site and an area of mown grass extends from the road verge from the south. Main rivers run along the western boundary and the northern boundary.

A pond has recently been created in a wet area near the southern boundary and a new boardwalk gives access to this pond across the wet ground. In preparation for grazing to take place, the meadow has recently been fenced with stock fencing and a field gate, and a water supply with trough provided.

Public access is not promoted at Hannakins Meadow and no provision is made for visitors, such as signage or furniture.

Hannakins Farm Open Space is adjacent to the western boundary, but separated by a main river. This site consists of a small amenity park managed by Basildon District Council containing sports pitches, children's play equipment, Hannakins Farm Community Centre, and a car park.

1.3 EVALUATION

1.3.1 THE SITES IN CONTEXT

Basildon district

Billericay is in the district of Basildon. The District was formed in 1974, covers 42.5 square miles, approximately 70% of which is rural, and includes the towns of Basildon, Billericay and Wickford. At 165,668, Basildon has the largest population of any district in Essex and ethnic minority groups account for 3.1% of the population. Currently, the average life expectancy levels for the District are below those for England. By 2011 it is expected that the number of people aged over 55 years will increase by 39%, which is expected to have a significant impact on the overall health profile for the District. Essex is considered one of the safest counties in England, but crime and the fear of crime are still a major concern and Basildon has a higher rate of recorded crime than the average for Essex.

Billericay

Billericay is a semi-rural town in the north of the district comprising a combination of large residential areas, a small industrial area, shops and services. Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow are adjacent to the Queens Park estate in the ward of Billericay West. The index of multiple deprivation shows most of the areas in Billericay West ranked in the top quartile in England, and none in the bottom quartile. However, there are pockets where the measure for barriers to housing and services is significantly low, in some areas within the worst 25% in England.

Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow are therefore accessible to a large number of residents, many of whom would not need to use their car. This gives the sites potential to become popular and well used by the local community. Future management must consider both the obvious benefits to the quality of life of the local community that increased use would bring, together with the possible negative impacts to the sites of a growth of visitor numbers (for example trampling, litter, dog fouling, car parking).

1.3.2 THE LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

Community Strategy

Correct management and use of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadows will help address the key themes identified in the Community Strategy for the District of Basildon. The Strategy has been prepared by the Local Strategic

Partnership to help improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the district. It will also contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. Future management of the site will be guided by the Community Strategy and will aim to address all five themes, in particular 'Feeling safe', 'Health and social well-being' and 'Living in a pleasant environment'.

NB

At the time of writing, the Local Strategic Partnership is undertaking a review of the Community Strategy and the existing themes may be altered or replaced. This Management Plan should be reviewed and refreshed in the light of any new priorities identified in the Community Strategy.

Basildon District Council Strategic Improvement Plan 2006 - 2009

The Council's Strategic Improvement Plan sets out priorities until 2009, outlines ways in which the Council can continually improve services and gives an insight into the Council's long-term vision of the District. The Strategic Improvement Plan is underpinned by a set of organisational values to guide the Council in delivering its aims and priorities. Management of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow will fully support delivery of the Council's vision to *improve the quality of life for the people of the District now and for future generations*. This management plan identifies measurable outcomes that will address three strategic aims: *continually improving quality services, a clean, pleasant and safe environment, and a vibrant community*. In addition, the corporate values of *creating inclusion, valuing customers, demonstrating integrity, inspiring leadership, ensuring our future and delivering excellence* underpin the outcomes of this management plan and will guide their delivery.

Equal opportunities Policy (which includes race equality)

Basildon Council believes that it must take action to ensure that the needs of all sectors of the community are identified and that steps are taken to eliminate any discrimination in how its services are delivered. The Council's Cultural Services has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment (2006/07) of the current Cultural Strategy for the district and identified action to improve the delivery of their services (including Countryside Services) in order meet identified needs of the whole community. The conclusions and recommendations state that the results of the Impact assessment feed into the service and performance planning process in the following ways:

- Seek to increase awareness of the diversity of leisure and cultural services available.
- Promote services in a targeted and accessible way to address areas of the community where there is a specific benefit or take-up is low, e.g. young people, women and girls in sport, and those suffering ill health.
- Train staff to ensure that they are aware of, and can engage with, the differing cultural needs of ethnic and socially excluded groups within the community.

Basildon District Council Countryside Services Service Standards

These standards outline how Countryside Services will help deliver the Council's strategic aims and support corporate values. The standards state that Countryside Services aim to:

- Be courteous and helpful to customers at all times
- Provide an efficient, value for money service across all our sites
- Encourage customers to let us know their views, and listen when they do
- Respond to comments, complaints and suggestions in a positive and timely manner.

The standards also state that Countryside Services will:

- Protect and enhance Basildon's biodiversity
- Provide country parks and nature reserves for wildlife, amenity and recreation
- Work with the local community to ensure management best practice across all countryside areas
- Create easy access to countryside areas for all visitors, whatever their physical mobility, on scooters or with pushchairs and small children, where safe and appropriate to do so
- Develop a full programme of environmental education, with formal and informal tuition and regular events
- Promote environmental sustainability through management, education and partnerships.

All of the policies and actions identified in this management plan will help meet these Service Standards.

Cultural Strategy for Basildon District

The Cultural Strategy for Basildon District recognises parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water, the environment and countryside recreation as part of the material dimension to culture. Future management of Queens Park Country Park and

Hannakins Meadow will be guided by the Cultural Strategy and will aim to address all six themes, in particular 'contribute to healthy living', 'engender a sense of community identity and well-being', be 'sustainable and sensitive to the environment', 'be accessible to all', and 'benefit current and future residents'.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

The key ambitions of the LDF are not established at the time of writing but the cultural strategy, as a reference document, will inform the LDF process. It is anticipated that the Council will carry out an open space audit of the district as recommended in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17. This will map provision against demand and will involve consultation with local people. When development of the LDF is complete, this management plan for Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow should be reviewed in light of the agreed policies.

1.3.3 LOCAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION

In addition to Queens Park & Hannakins Meadow there are four other significant areas of Public Open Space in Billericay (all are managed by Basildon District Council). These are:

Norsey Wood Local Nature Reserve (including Norsey Meadow)

Approximately 80 hectares of ancient semi natural woodland and meadow. The site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is a scheduled Ancient Monument. Norsey Wood has free open access for visitors on foot and dog walking is allowed. The site has an information centre with toilets, an exhibition room, a classroom and a ranger's office. Wood sales are provided from the wood yard. Refreshments are not available for sale, but a picnic site is provided.

Mill Meadows Local Nature Reserve

Approximately 40 hectares of old grazing meadows, much of which is unimproved, and areas of scrub and woodland. The unimproved grazing meadows are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Cattle graze much of the site over the summer as part of the conservation management. The site has free open access for visitors on foot and dog walking is permitted. There are no facilities for visitors (i.e. no toilets, designated car parking, information centre, refreshments etc).

Lake Meadows Park

Approximately 18 hectares of formal parks containing a fishing lake, bowling green, golf putting, novelty golf, sports pitches, children's play area, sports pavilion, bowls pavilion, tennis courts, swimming pool formal gardens and cafeteria open during the summer. This site has free open access for visitors on foot and dog walking is permitted.

Hannakins Farm Open Space

9.6 Hectares of formal open space containing sports pitches, children's play equipment, Hannakins Farm Community Centre, and a car park. The site has free open access for visitors but (apart from the community centre) there are no toilet facilities or refreshments available for visitors to the park.

It is important to establish how Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow can best compliment this mix of provision to help attract users to the public open spaces provided in Billericay as a whole. The process of developing this management plan has helped identify a clear understanding of those characteristics of the sites that will be developed to fill gaps in local open space provision. Options for closer working with other site and facility managers, particularly at Hannakins Farm Open Space and Community Centre, have also been explored.

Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow will continue to be managed as countryside on the urban fringe where people can achieve a better quality of life by experiencing peace and quiet, enjoying wildlife and getting exercise. The sites will also be promoted as a gateway to the countryside, supported by physical improvements to the wider network of public rights of way that can be accessed through the sites and by providing more information and interpretation about where people can go and what they are likely to see.

1.3.4 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The Health and Safety Policy Statement for Countryside Services contains the following statement of general policy:

- To provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from our work activities;
- To consult with our employees on matters affecting their health and safety;
- To provide and maintain safe plant and equipment;
- To ensure safe handling and use of substances;
- To provide information, instruction and supervision for employees;

- To ensure all employees are competent to do their tasks, and to give them adequate training;
- To prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health;
- To maintain safe and healthy working conditions; and
- To review and revise this policy as necessary at regular intervals.

Staff, volunteers and contractors are expected to work within these standards and Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow are subject to a monthly safety inspection by the Countryside Ranger. Faults and issues are then reported to the Countryside Officer for action to be sanctioned and carried out.

1.3.5 CURRENT VISITOR PROFILE

At the time of writing no survey of visitor numbers or satisfaction has been undertaken at Hannakins Meadow, as it has not been accessible to visitors.

A survey of the views of members of the Friends of Queens Park Country Park was undertaken in 2005 to gauge levels of satisfaction with the Country Park. Results indicate that those questioned generally come from the Billericay area, with 47% from the nearby Queens Park residential area. 93% of those questioned were regular visitors, with just over half visiting on a daily basis. The biggest proportion (44%) was in the 46-60 age range, with 38% being 60 years old or over. 44 % were retired from work. All of those questioned considered themselves white British (93%) or white other (7%). 67% said that they walked to the site, 27% drove, and 7% arrived on horse. The most popular reasons for visiting were to walk the dog (67%), experience peace and quiet (67%), general exercise (47%), and to see wildlife (33%).

Although the survey results provide some useful information, the total number of visitors questioned was relatively small and was restricted to those who are already actively involved with the site through the Friends Group. Therefore, a key action is to carry out a comprehensive survey of visitors to Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow, repeated at different times of the week, and at different times of the year to give a more complete picture of who currently uses the site and what their expectations are. The results should be used as baseline statistics for future monitoring. The views of non-users should also be sought to ascertain what would attract them to visit. Information gained from user and non-users will be used to inform future management and this plan identifies the process by which delivery will be reviewed and management targets updated.

1.3.6 NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

An invertebrate survey of Queens Park was undertaken in 2003 (Harvey, 2003) and of Hannakins Meadow in 2006 (Harvey, 2006). In the recent conservation review of Basildon (EECOS 2005) the key nature conservation characteristics of the sites were identified, and the sites designated as County Wildlife Sites. This information is outlined below, along with other site survey information and sightings held by Countryside Services.

QUEENS PARK COUNTRY PARK

The scrub and grassland are quickly maturing into a valuable mosaic of wildlife habitats, including flower-rich grassland, which are highly attractive to a good range of invertebrates.

Main Meadow contains a rough but managed sward rich in legumes. The sward comprises a mix of Common Bent grass (*Agrostis capilaris*), Meadow Foxtail (*Aleopecurus pratensis*), Crested Dogs Tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), Timothy grass (*Phleum pratense* agg.) and Rough Meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*). A range of herbs are present, the most widespread being Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Buttercups (*Ranunculus* spp.) and both Red and White clover (*Trifolium pratense* and *Trifolium repens*).

Victoria Meadow also supports Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*) and Smooth Tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*).

Bumblebee species recorded at the site include *Bombus verstitialis*, *B. lapidarius*, *B. lucorum*, *B. pascuorum*, and *B. terrestris*.

Blackberry Scrub contains abundant Bramble scrub, rough grassland and a scattering of trees. The sward is characterised by False Oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*).

Common Lizard and a good variety of butterfly species benefit from the rougher vegetation. Butterfly species recorded at the site include Common Blue, Small Heath, Meadow Brown, Large Skipper, and Ringlet.

Mill Hill Community Woodland comprises young trees planted as whips

approximately twenty years ago and representing a good mix of native species. Rough grassland has developed around the trees; the sward contains Ramsons, (*Allium ursinum*), Wood False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), and Wood Millet (*Milium effusium*). Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) can be found growing on the southern glade and there is a redundant pond, which floods in winter to the north of this area. Skylarks are seen in this area, although it is not confirmed if they are nesting in the woodland or in the neighbouring golf course.

A total of 175 invertebrate species were identified in the 2003 survey, two are in the Red Data Book, and eleven are nationally notable. Recommendations for management specific to invertebrates put forward in the survey report have been used to inform the action plan in section four of this Plan.

HANNAKINS MEADOW

The majority of the site comprises an area of meadow and marsh which floods in part over winter. These areas support a species rich mix of herbs and grasses including Tufted Hair grass (*Deschamps cespitosa*), rushes (*Juncus sp.*), and greater pond sedge (*Carex riparia*). The drier areas contain Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*).

The site of a former pond in the centre of the meadow is heavily silted with some scrub encroachment.

A total of 45 invertebrate species were identified in the 2006 survey, ten of which are of local status (*Trigonometopus frontalis* was recorded as new to Essex).

Future management should support achievement of the Basildon Biodiversity Action Plan that identifies actions that will be taken to safeguard and improve specific habitats. Management of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow can support a number of these, in particular boundary and linear features, grassland, broadleaved woodland, ponds and urban habitats.

The nature conservation value of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow is already notable and there is potential for it to increase through suitable management. There is also potential for the local community to get involved in the

care and management of the sites, and to learn more about the natural environment through experiencing what the sites offer. It is, therefore, an aim of this plan that the sites be designated a Local Nature Reserve in partnership with Natural England.

1.3.7 HISTORY AND PAST MANAGEMENT

Queens Park Country Park

Management of Queens Park Country Park transferred from the Council's Parks Service to Countryside Services in 1999 and since then the emphasis has shifted towards less 'formal' management, increasing the nature conservation value of the site, and promoting greater community involvement.

The previous five year site management plan covered the period to March 2006 and emphasised the following four management objectives:

1. Optimise public enjoyment and interpretation of the site
2. Enhance populations of notable species within the site
3. Enhance habitats and species within the site
4. Encourage community involvement in the site and its management.

The desired outcomes of the previous plan have largely been met, although the coppicing of some hedgerows that was identified has not been achieved. This was due to a shift in resources to ensure that the hedge laying operations kept on track. This current management plan has been developed to build on the successes of the previous plan and the hedge coppicing operations will be rescheduled.

The primary purpose of this plan is to continue to raise the standard of management at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow and to measure success. An assessment of the site using the national Green Flag awards criteria has been completed to establish a baseline for current standards against which future management can be measured.

Hannakins Meadow

There is no indication on site, or formal records, of any recent management of Hannakins Meadow prior to Countryside Services taking on the site in 2005. Since then preparatory work has been undertaken to enhance the nature conservation value of the site and to improve physical access for visitors, including erecting stock fencing and providing a water supply in preparation for grazing part of the site, and

creating a pond and board walk in the marshy area to the south.

The actions contained in section five of this plan clearly identify what will be done to build on this management.

1.3.8 ACCESS, RECREATION AND AMENITY

In a survey of visitors to Queens Park Country Park in 2005 there was a variable response when asked about the condition of the paths, although overall they are considered as reasonably good. The survey indicated that there is generally a good perception of the cleanliness and amount of litter on the site, but many see dog mess as a problem and this has been addressed in the management objective of this plan. Parking provision was generally perceived as good. The highest satisfaction rating across all visitors was given to the natural beauty of the site and it is an objective of this plan to build on this aspect of the site.

Queens Park Country Park has an important role in providing for horse riding as it is the only public open space in Billericay with this provision. Dog walking is also a popular activity on the site so this management plan addresses issues of combining dog walking, horse riding and grazing. A zoning approach will be taken, where the various activities are permitted in defined areas of the sites, and this is described in section nine.

1.3.9 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A residents survey in Queens Park was undertaken in April 2006 (BBWCVS 2006). The door-to-door survey covered 407 houses and included both social and private housing. The aims of the survey included identifying the key strengths and weaknesses of the area, finding out residents perceptions about the positive and negative aspects of living in Queens Park and identifying key areas of improvement to make it a better place to live. Broadly speaking the survey identified three key issues requiring actions: local environment, youth and community safety. These have been considered in the development of this management plan.

The results showed that many residents are between the ages of 26 and 55 years old (62%) and that many of them (61%) had lived in the area for less than 10 years. 64% of respondents said they have children. 61% said they liked living in Queens Park.

Some respondents identified being close to the nature reserve and the countryside as a positive aspect of living in Queens Park. Amongst the negative aspects of living

in Queens Park identified were the need for children to cross a busy road to get to Hannakins Farm play equipment (adjacent to Hannakins Meadow).

A reference group was established from the residents who took part and this group.

Public consultation has taken place to inform the development of the previous site management plan for Queens Park Country Park. A public meeting was also held and the Friends of Queens Park Country Park were formed from those people who came together for that meeting. This group of about thirty people are consulted on issues affecting Queens Park Country Park and undertake practical management on site organised by the countryside ranger. They have a formal meeting every three months.

The countryside ranger produces a regular newsletter for local residents about the Country Park called 'The Drummer'.

The following groups and individuals should be consulted on this current management plan:

Public

The Friends of Queens Park Country Park, Hannakins Farm Community Centre, the Queens Park Residents Reference Group, The Billericay Society, Billericay Town Council.

Partner organisations

Basildon Wildlife and Countryside Forum, Natural England, Environment Agency.

Basildon District Council

Portfolio holder for Leisure and Open Spaces, Corporate Policy Team, Equal Opportunities Manager, Manager of Open Spaces, Risk Management Team.

1.3.10 EDUCATIONAL VALUE

The site does not currently feature in the Basildon District Council Countryside Services Education Plan. The lack of toilet facilities and an indoor area for use in bad weather severely restricts the scope for a school activity programme.

With the provision of suitable accommodation close by at Norsey Wood LNR it is not proposed that future management be geared towards a formal programme of school

education visits.

However, Countryside Services organise a program of public events and activities on all of their sites and in recent years have held dog training sessions and hands-on sessions of hedge laying. It is proposed that more of these events giving people, including young people, the chance to learn about wildlife and the countryside are organised at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow.

To facilitate more events, opportunities to work in partnership with Hannakins Farm Community Centre should be explored. Their toilet and refreshment facilities would also help to make public events more accessible and welcoming. It is proposed to improve physical access to Hannakins Farm Open Space and the Community Centre directly from the sites.

1.3.11 RESOURCES

Basildon District Council hold a revenue budget to cover basic amenity and conservation management at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow and this is forecast to continue for the duration of this plan. Dog bins are emptied under contract and this is funded through the site management revenue budget.

Grass cutting is funded and carried out by Parks Services and an annual hay cut is funded and carried out under a contract arranged and overseen by Countryside Services. There is an arrangement with Parks Services for the disposal of Ragwort arising from the hay cut.

Queens Park Country Park has been receiving funding through the Woodland Grant Scheme but this agreement comes to an end in 2006. At the time of writing there is no application for funding site management through the new England Woodland Grant Scheme as the new criteria of this scheme make it less attractive.

Hannakins Meadow

Hannakins Meadow is now included in operational terms as part of Queens Park Country Park and basic management is covered by the same revenue budget.

A successful bid to the Cleanaways Pitsea Marshes Trust has enabled site improvement to promote the value of the site to the local community by raising awareness through interpretation, promotion and increased physical access.

At the time of writing the sites are patrolled by a countryside ranger on an ad hoc basis, approximately once every two weeks. It is proposed that provision is sought to improve this level of cover.

It is intended that this document provide a business plan that will forecast the required finances and resources to carry out recommended site management for the next five years. A more detailed financial analysis is contained in section six.

2	MANAGEMENT AIMS FOR QUEENS PARK COUNTRY PARK AND HANNAKINS MEADOW
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2.1	MANAGEMENT AIMS
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|----|--|
| 1) | Make Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow a welcoming and safe place to live near and visit through practical management and by working in partnership with relevant community groups and organisations. |
| 2) | Integrate Queens Park Country Park, Hannakins Meadow, Hannakins Farm Open Space and the public rights of way network through physical improvements and information provision. |
| 3) | Develop the involvement of the local community in Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow so that they play a central role in its management and develop a strong and representative community group. |
| 4) | Provide high quality information and interpretation for visitors and the local community so that they are fully informed of what is on offer at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow. |
| 5) | Promote Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow as a gateway to the countryside, supported by physical improvements to the wider network of public rights of way. |
| 6) | Increase the quality and diversity of habitats and species at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow by working in partnership with relevant organisations. |
| 7) | Preserve the landscape and visual amenity of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow through practical management and by informing visitors of the part they can play. |
| 8) | Develop the educational opportunities for the local community, in particular young people, offered at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow. |
| 9) | Ensure that the management of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow adheres to the best practice available for environmental stewardship and that it has a local impact in support of sustainable development in the UK. |

3. MANAGEMENT POLICIES

OBJECTIVE ONE

Secure resources and funding in year one as outlined in Section six of this plan

ACTIONS	
1.1	Secure and maintain provision within Basildon District Council (Countryside Services) mainstream budget to ensure the actions identified in this plan can be delivered.
1.2	Identify and secure external funding for site management as identified in section six of this Plan.
1.3	Capture capacity within partner organisations to provide funding, resources or expertise to further the aims of this plan as described in section six of this Plan

OBJECTIVE TWO

Make Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow a welcoming and safe place to live near and visit, through practical management and by working in partnership with relevant community groups and organisations.

ACTIONS	
2.1	Carry out a comprehensive assessment of the risk to visitors, make good any hazards identified and extend the programme of regular site safety checks to cover both sites
2.2	Create and maintain open, accessible entrances with quality information for visitors about the site (including a map) and details of who manages the site, with clear instructions of who to contact for concerns or further information
2.3	Improve access within Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow in accordance with standards and guidelines for urban fringe managed landscapes (<u>BT Countryside for all</u> , the Fieldfare Trust)
2.4	Work closely with local community safety organisations on initiatives to reduce crime and the fear of crime in the local area

OBJECTIVE THREE

Integrate Queens Park Country Park, Hannakins Meadow, Hannakins Farm Open Space and the Public Rights of Way network through physical improvements and information provision.

ACTIONS	
3.1	Provide a footbridge to link Hannakins Meadow with Hannakins Farm Open Space and the Community Centre
3.2	Create a footpath between Hannakins Meadow and Queens Park Country Park alongside Rosebay Avenue
3.3	Provide independent walk information to provide a circular walk through all of the sites and the footpaths through farmland to the north, and improve the physical infrastructure along the route where necessary
3.4	Provide signage to inform visitors of how to access the various areas of the site and surrounding area

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Develop the involvement of the local community in Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow so that they play a central role in its management, and develop a strong and representative community group

ACTIONS	
4.1	Ensure that decisions on management at the sites are made through consultation and collaboration with local residents
4.2	Encourage and provide opportunity for local residents to establish a dedicated community group aimed at coordinating and sustaining community action for the sites

OBJECTIVE FIVE

Provide high quality information and interpretation for visitors and the local community so that they are fully informed of what is on offer at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow.

ACTIONS	
5.1	Use 'The Drummer' to promote the sites and attract people to visit
5.2	Use opportunities for local publicity, such as local publications,

	community events, and local schools to increase the profile of the site
5.3	Install and maintain way marked trails, including signs and leaflets
5.4	Provide independent walk information in accordance with guidelines published by the national 'Walking the Way to Health Initiative'
5.5	Develop zones for grazing, dog walking and horse riding, and provide information to visitors about their location and purpose.

OBJECTIVE SIX	
Promote Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow as a gateway to the countryside.	
ACTIONS	
6.1	Work with partner organisations (eg the Ramblers and Essex County Council) to promote the site as a gateway to the wider countryside
6.2	Provide independent walk information for people who want to venture further afield along the surrounding public rights of way
6.3	Arrange guided walks to introduce people to the routes available outside the boundaries of the sites

OBJECTIVE SEVEN	
Increase the quality and diversity of habitats and species at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow by working in partnership with relevant organisations in particular the Basildon Wildlife and Countryside Forum, Natural England, Environment Agency and BTCV.	
ACTIONS	
7.1	Improve meadow structure in identified areas by hay cutting
7.2	Improve meadow structure in identified area by grazing
7.3	Manage hedges identified by laying or coppicing and trimming on rotation
7.4	Improve and maintain ponds through dredging
7.5	Improve woodland structure in identified areas through selective thinning
7.6	Encourage regeneration of scrub in identified areas
7.7	Control invasive species like Himalayan Balsam by preventing flowering through cutting and pulling.

OBJECTIVE EIGHT	
Preserve the landscape and visual amenity of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow through practical management and by informing visitors of the part they can play.	
ACTIONS	
8.1	Maintain the special landscape features, in particular the meadows, woodlands, and hedgerows through practical management
8.2	Provide dog waste bins, with associated signage and run publicity campaigns to improve participation
8.3	Ensure that levels of litter on the site are kept at very low levels (in accordance with corporate objectives to meet BVPI 191) through education, policing and collection.
8.4	Ensure that any episodes of fly tipping are cleared away within 3 days

OBJECTIVE NINE	
Develop the educational opportunities for the local community, in particular young people, offered at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow.	
ACTIONS	
9.1	Ensure that at least two events are organised as part of Countryside Services annual events programme
9.2	Attract and enable other local organisations to hold public events at the site, particularly young peoples groups
9.3	Work with Hannakins Community Centre to develop suitable activities identified by the local community
9.4	Organise dog training sessions to inform dog walkers of their responsibilities

OBJECTIVE TEN	
Ensure that the management of Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow adheres to the best practice available for environmental stewardship and that it has a local impact in support of sustainable development in the UK.	
ACTIONS	
10.1	Develop Service level environmental policy and put in place a management strategy for all Countryside sites (including Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow)

10.2	Manage the site in accordance with 'Raising the Standard' the criteria for the Green Flag Awards scheme organised by the Civic Trust and aim to have the site awarded a Green Flag
10.3	Manage the site in accordance with the recommendations for Local Nature Reserve Status produced by English Nature and acquire Local Nature Reserve Status

OBJECTIVE ELEVEN

Monitor and review the effectiveness of all aspects of management at Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Meadow and make changes where they are desirable or necessary to improve delivery against the agreed aims

ACTIONS	
11.1	Maintain a performance monitoring system based on the five-year action plan
11.2	Monitor habitat conditions and be prepared to make changes to management regimes if required
11.3	Put in place an enquiries, comments and complaints procedure for users of the site and ensure that necessary action is taken and feedback given
11.4	Undertake a thorough review of the delivery of this management plan in year four in order to produce a subsequent plan