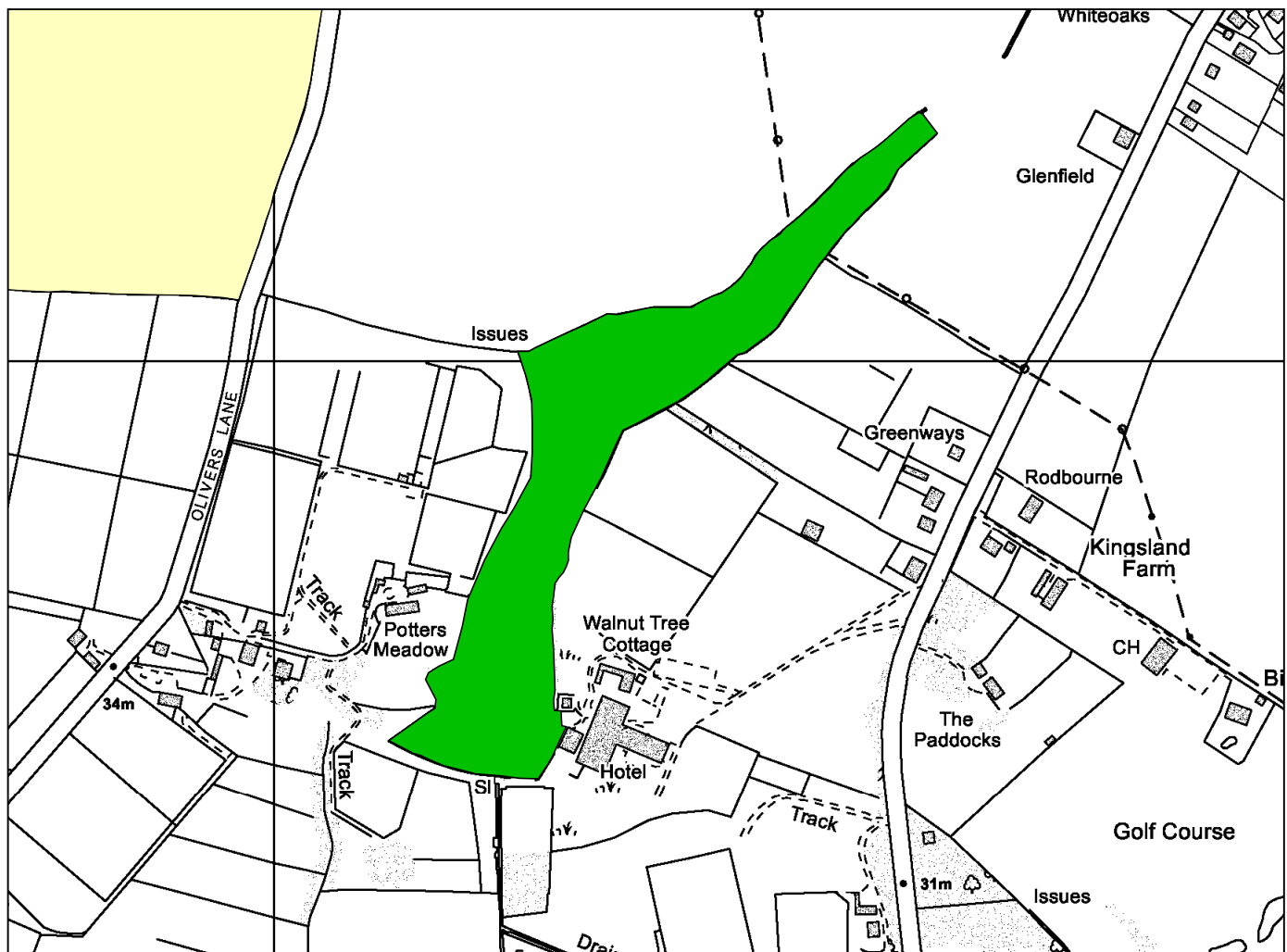


Co89 Sodoms Wood, Layer de la Haye (4.9 ha) TL 972219



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Sodom Wood is thought to comprise a core of ancient streamside wood that has expanded laterally by the growth of mature, but relatively recent woodland. The canopy is mainly composed of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with some Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and locally frequent Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). The dense understorey comprises Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and willows (*Salix* spp.).

The ground flora is characterised by frequent Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*) and Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) are also present, and Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), an Essex Red Data List species has been recorded. A spring seepage has allowed the formation of a small Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) bed, and a central damp flush within the Alder wood supports locally abundant ERDL species Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) alongside Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Wet Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

This woodland appears to be at least in part ancient, based on the structure and associated rich ground flora, although parts within the upper slopes are more recent and satisfy the criterion for the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England. Areas of stream side Alder wood satisfy the definition of wet woodland. A good population of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage satisfies the SC1 criterion.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; unmanaged

Management Issues

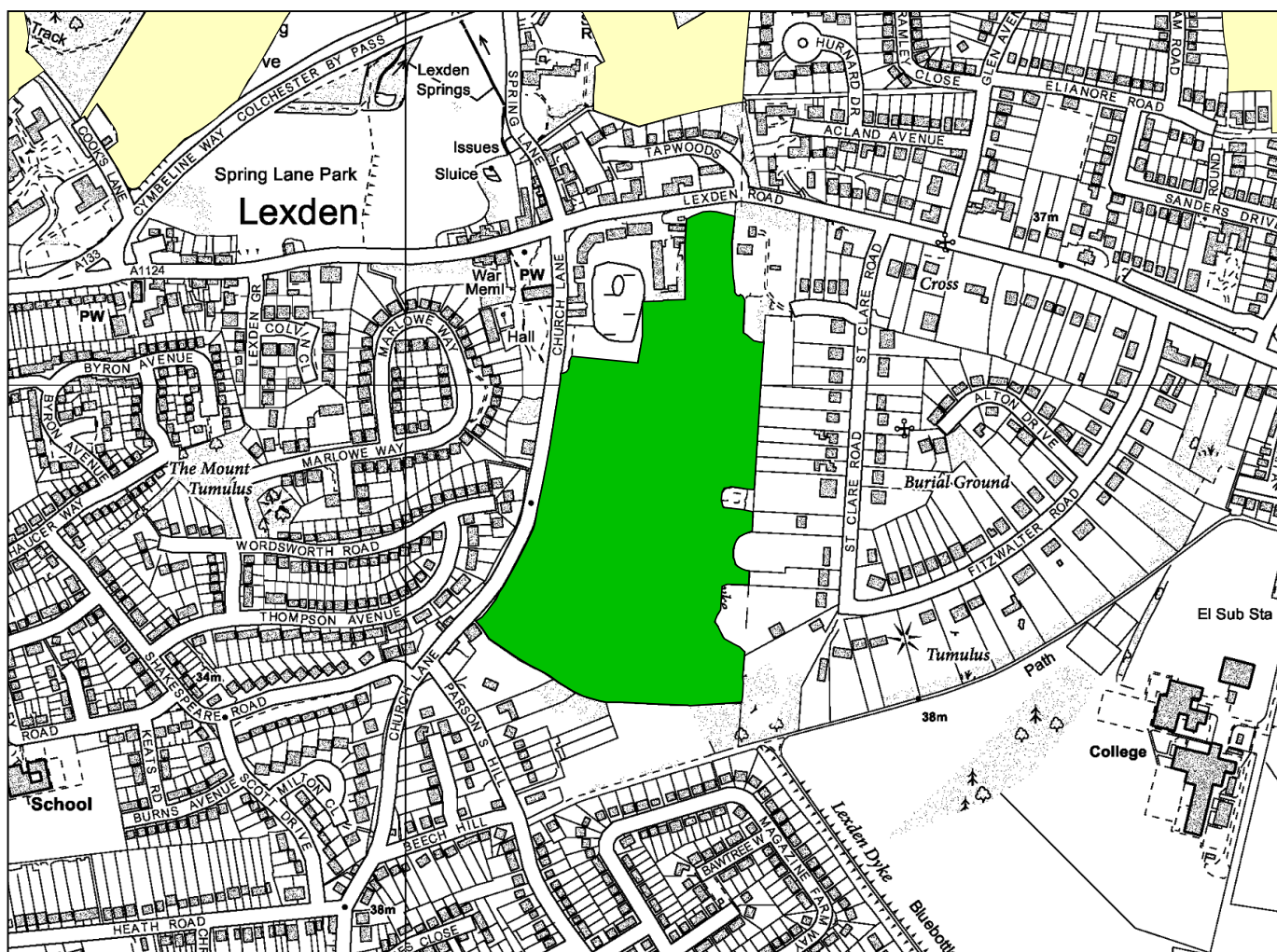
The current low-input management regime appears to be maintaining the woodland's ecological interest, as it exhibits a good structure and diversity within the understorey and ground flora. No action is immediately necessary, although some coppicing or thinning may be advisable in future years.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co90 Lexden Park (9.5 ha) TL 972248



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This site represents an important public open space and site for wildlife within a built up area of Colchester. The majority of the site is wooded, with a canopy comprising mainly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), including some notable veteran oaks along the high western ridge, alongside Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). The ground flora includes abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) along with Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) and Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), whilst Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) dominates large parts of the ground layer later in the season. Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) form locally dominant thickets and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) are becoming established in places.

The grassland sward is typified by Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) with locally abundant Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) as well as Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Oval Sedge (*Carex leporina*).

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and the majority is accessible to the public, the exception being the central woodland compartment.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Lowland Meadows

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC9 – Lowland Meadows

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

Rationale:

Although located largely on man-made earthworks, at least a portion of the woodland appears to be ancient, with some very large oak standards and pollards. In addition, there is a more recent element of woodland that matches the HC2 criterion. Lexden Park is of significance to the Essex urban HAP, allowing for a diverse wildlife experience within the environs of Colchester town and therefore satisfies HC31. The site supports grassland that appears to be largely unimproved and conforms broadly to the NVC MG5 community.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

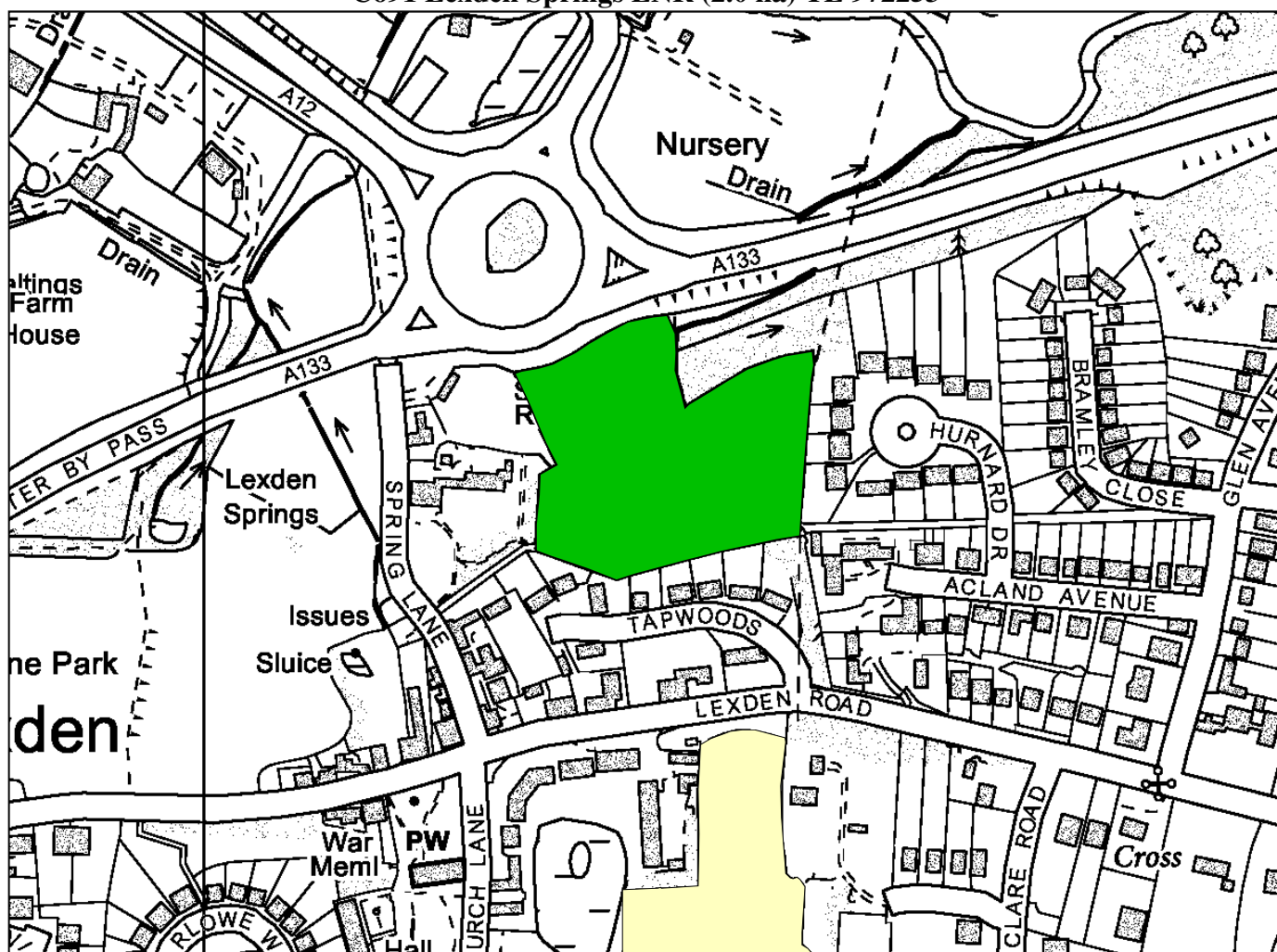
Some control of the non-native species Cherry Laurel and Sycamore is needed, and some targeted selective tree removal in cluttered areas would improve the woodland structure. The grassland appears to be retaining its diversity although cuttings should be removed and dog fouling minimised to avoid enrichment. The impact of public pressure on the site is further demonstrated by the loss of two veteran oak pollards to deliberate fires in recent years.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co91 Lexden Springs LNR (2.0 ha) TL 972253



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This sloping meadow shows a transition from freely draining grassland through to marsh, with a consequently rich flora. The drier upper slopes are typified by Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), with Essex Red Data List (ERDL) species Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) being previously recorded. A rabbit fence has been erected around the main body of grassland, resulting in increasingly coarse vegetation such as False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). ERDL plants Velvet Bent-grass (*Agrostis canina*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) are present within free-draining marginal areas maintained by rabbit grazing. The lower northern grassland is damp, with Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria uliginosa*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) being recorded, although this is becoming rank with locally abundant Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). The grassland and scattered marginal trees support a good population of bumblebees and the Minotaur Beetle (*Typhaeus typhoeus*), an uncommon species in Essex, has also been recorded.

Ownership and Access

Colchester Borough Council own and manage the site, which is open to the public.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The grassland is a mixture of neutral grassland, falling outside the NVC MG5 community, as well as marginal acid grassland communities which conform to the description of the relevant Habitat of Principal Importance in England, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland. The presence of Velvet Bent-grass and a good population of Devil's-bit Scabious justify the inclusion of SC1.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable, declining

Management Issues

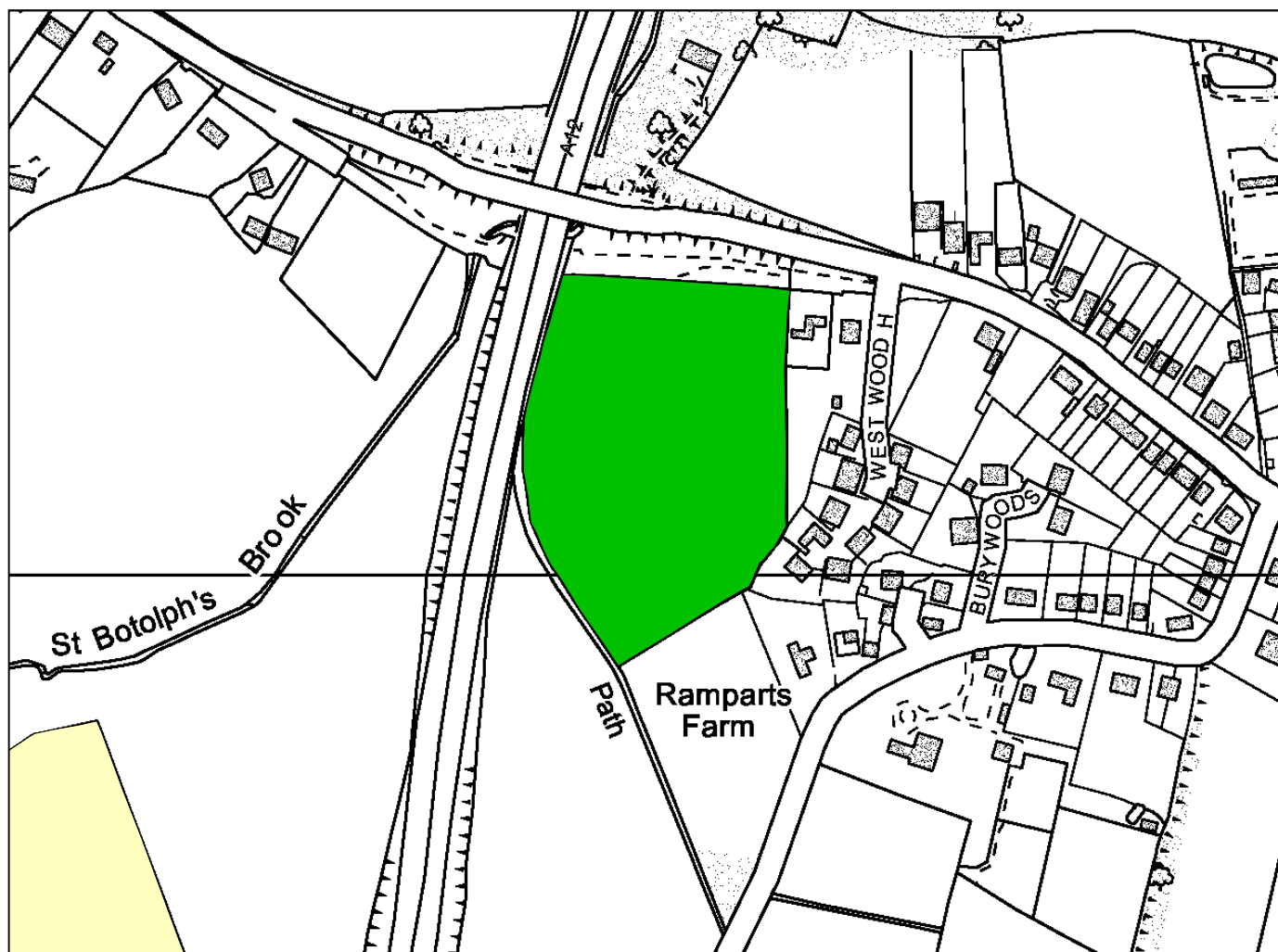
Both the upper and lower grassland areas are becoming increasingly rank and are in danger of losing their original floristic diversity. The recent erection of a rabbit fence around the main southern meadow compartment was carried out to counter grazing pressures, but this appears to be resulting in a coarser and herb-poor sward, whilst other areas are mown overly frequently. Sensitive grassland management guided by a Management Plan is required, including close monitoring of the effect the fencing and, if necessary, its removal.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co92. West House Wood, Braiswick (3.2 ha) TL 975270



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This site is an Essex Wildlife Trust nature reserve and comprises mainly ancient wood, with a strip of more recent wood along the northern edge. It has a canopy of mainly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with localised Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) over an understorey of old Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and locally dominant Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).

The ground flora is characterised by large quantities of Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), as well as more local Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Gooseberry (*Ribes uva-crispa*) and Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*). Two central ponds support Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*), Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Essex Wildlife Trust. A public right of way runs along the western boundary of the wood and there are permissive paths through it.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

The ground flora and presence of old Small-leaved Lime coppice, suggests ancient status, even though the woodland is not listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. The northern more recent compartment forms a valuable addition and satisfies HC2.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; neglected coppice

Management Issues

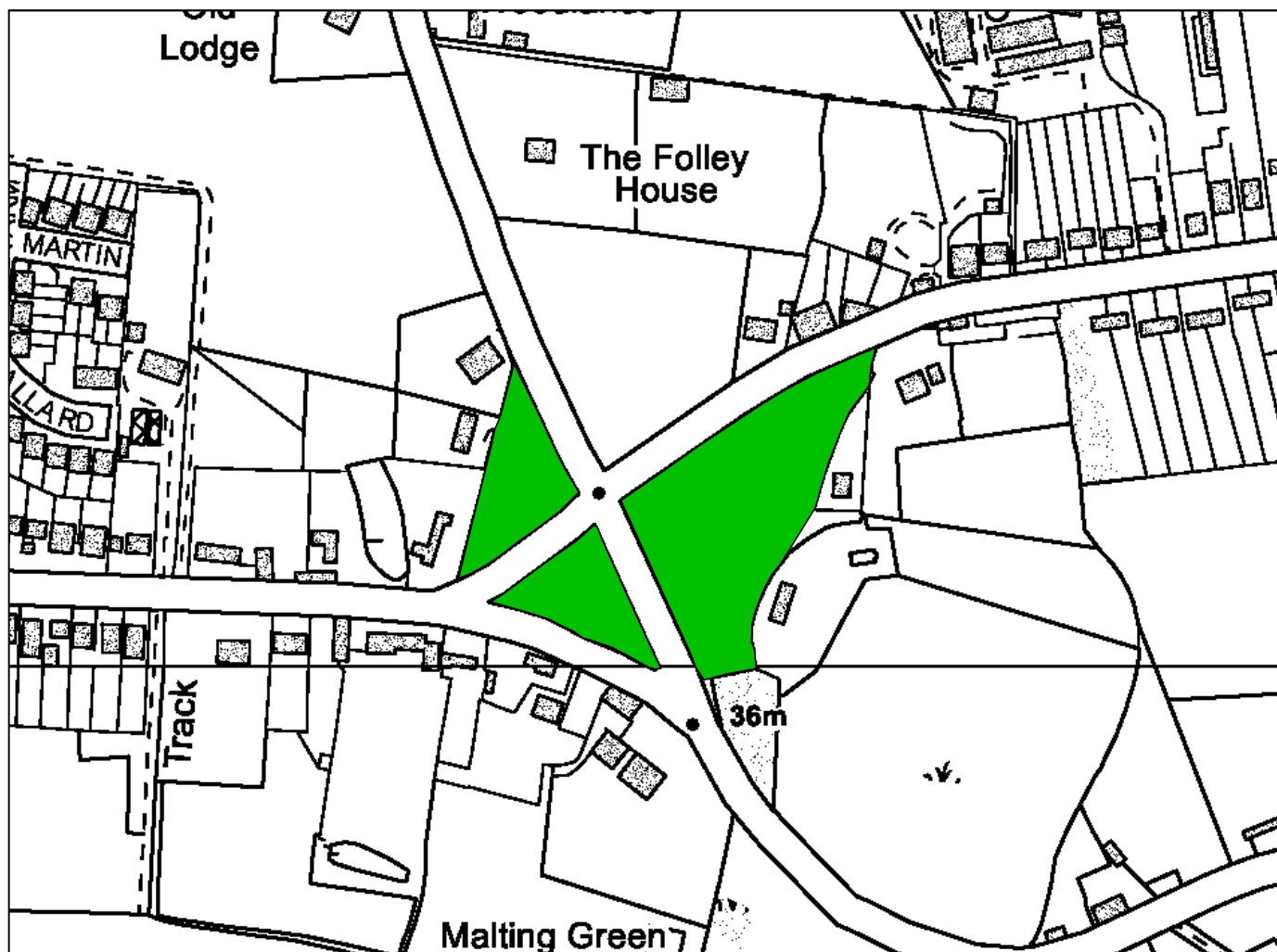
Some coppicing has taken place in recent years within a small compartment of Small-leaved Lime and Hazel coppice. A resumption of rotational coppice within other areas would be beneficial to maintain the high biodiversity and rich ground flora of the site.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co93 Malting Green, Layer de la Haye (1.3 ha) TL 976200



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This village green comprises short acidic grassland separated by roads into three triangular areas, with a small southern pond and surrounding scrub providing additional habitat. The turf is typified by Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*). Amongst the relatively few herb species present are Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and Common Mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*).

Heath Grass (*Danthonia decumbens*), Velvet Bent-grass (*Agrostis canina*) and the declining species Blinks (*Peplis portula*), have been recorded in the past. A source of enrichment is leaf debris from planted Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and Turkey Oaks (*Quercus cerris*) adjacent to the pond.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by the Parish Council and there is public access throughout.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

Rationale:

The site supports grassland that appears to be largely unimproved, but it does not conform to the NVC MG5 community required for the Lowland Meadow criterion.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable

Management Issues

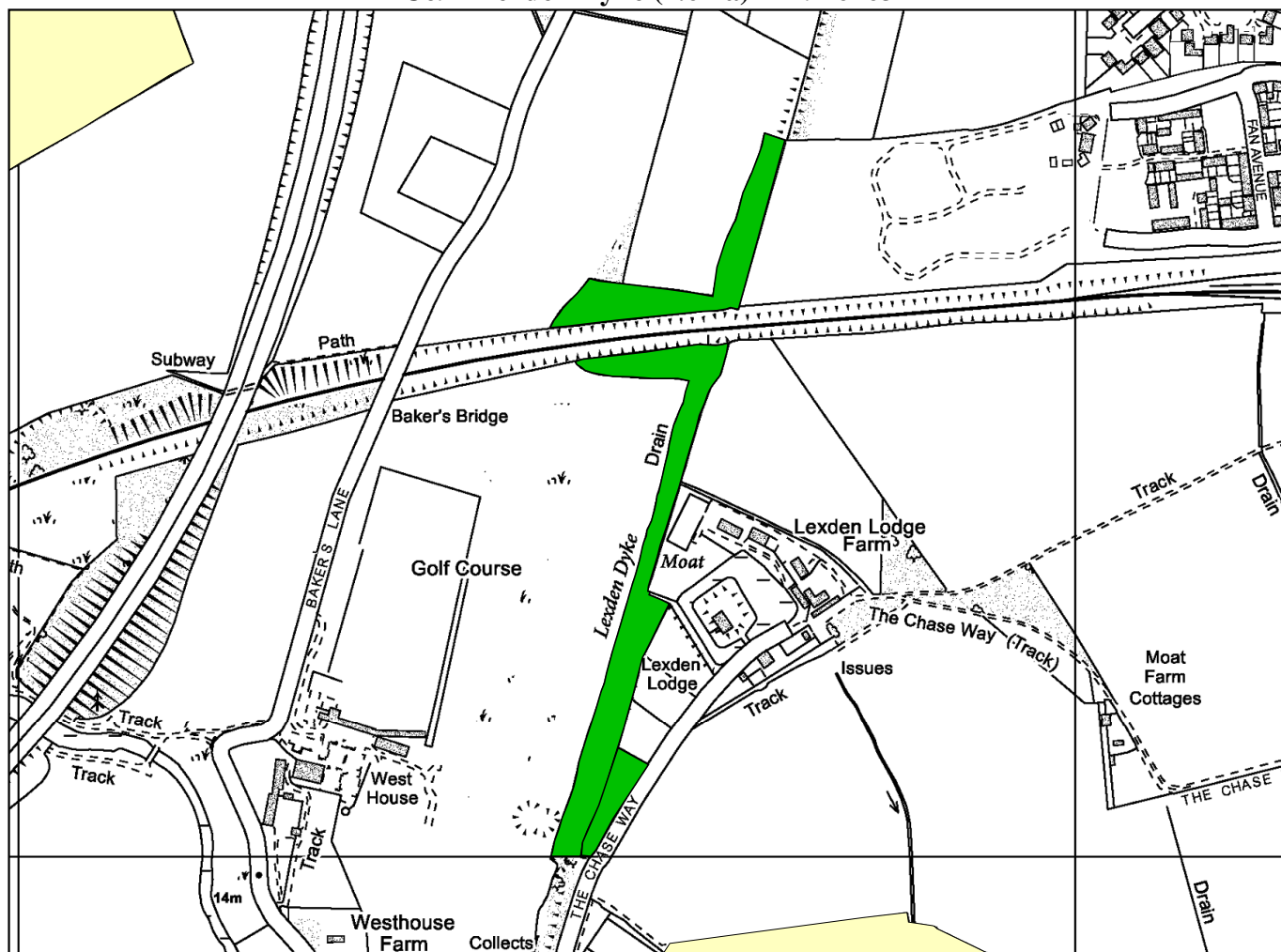
The meadow is mown very frequently, resulting in an almost permanently short sward and reducing its value to wildlife. In addition, the cuttings do not appear to be collected, which will, over time, result in a build-up in nutrient levels and a decrease in plant species associated with old unimproved grassland.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (no change)

Co94 Lexden Dyke (2.6 ha) TL 976263



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This site comprises a small block of clearly ancient Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) woodland, strips of possibly ancient woodland along the Lexden Dyke earthwork and a small extent of relic acidic grassland with scattered tree and scrub cover.

The southern portion of the dyke contains some small areas of acid grassland, with encroaching Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). A small sloping unimproved meadow to the east of the dyke, periodically horse-grazed, is included in the site, as it is continuous with the dyke habitat and shares some of the herbs, notably Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), an Essex Red Data List plant, and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*).

The northern broadleaved wood, bisected by the railway line, comprises standards of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and overgrown Small-leaved Lime coppice, along with stands of Aspen (*Populus tremula*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), elm (*Ulmus* sp.) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The ground flora here includes Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*).

Ownership and Access

The site ownership is unknown. There is no public access within the site, but a public footpath crosses the dyke and runs along part of the western boundary.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

Rationale:

The structure and flora strongly suggest that at least the northern portion of the woodland is ancient. More recent areas of woodland are included under the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland criterion. The small southern grassland areas conform to the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Habitat of Principal Importance in England description. Although an ERDL species, Harebell does not occur in sufficient quantities to satisfy the SC1 criterion.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in parts; grassland declining

Management Issues

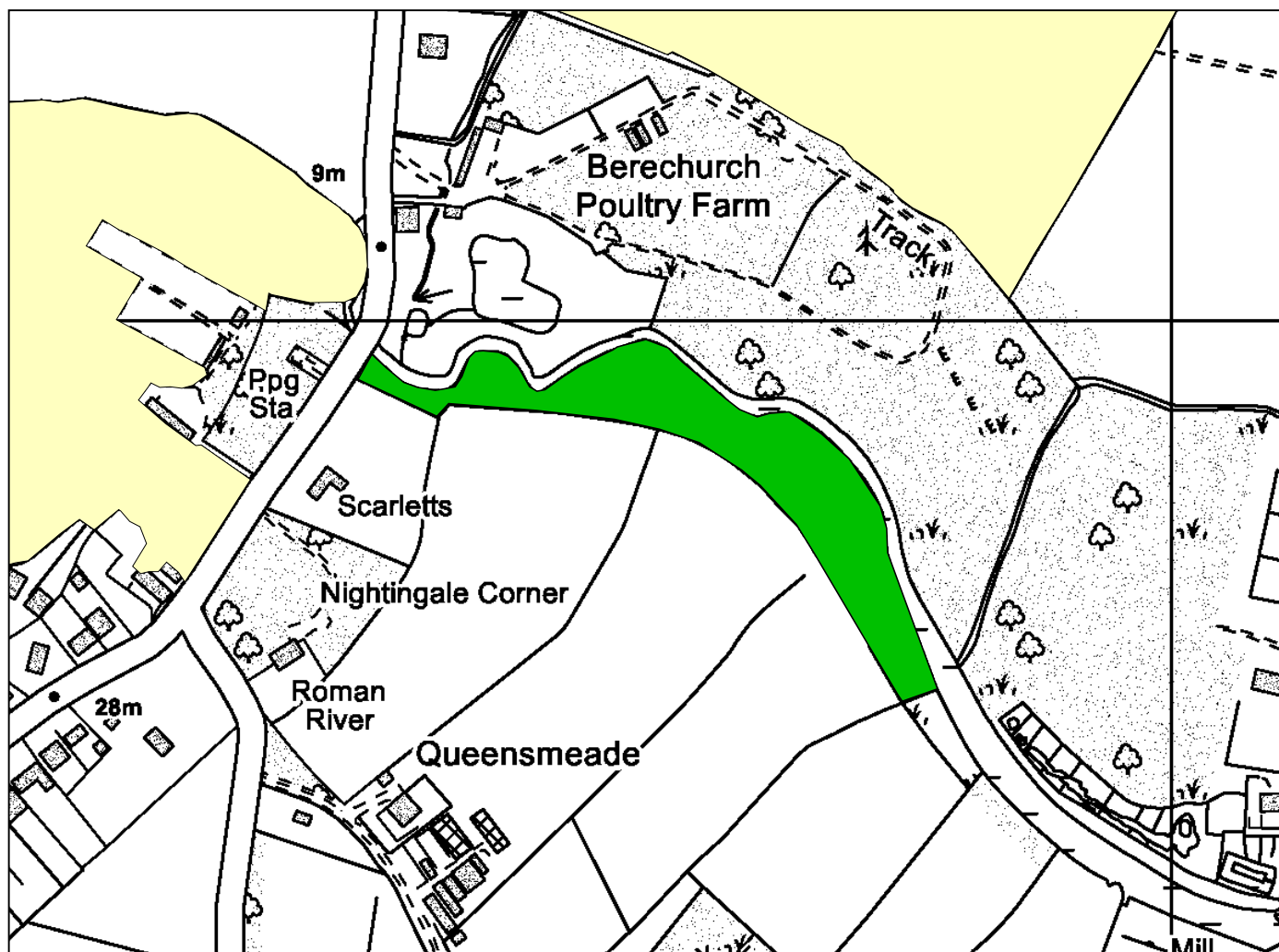
Areas of acid grassland are being lost to scrub encroachment in the absence of management. Targeted scrub clearance would be appropriate whilst appreciating that scrub forms an interesting feature within its own right, and management should aim to strike a balance between vegetation types.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (minor addition)

Co95 Roman River Willow/Aldercar, Layer de la Haye (1.3 ha) TL 978208



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This site comprises an area of willow and aldercar, which constitutes an addition to the Roman River wildlife corridor supporting a range of species indicative of wet woodland. The canopy changes from well-spaced Cricket-bat Willows (*Salix alba* var. *caerulea*) in the east, to dense areas of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*) in the west, becoming increasingly scrubby and impenetrable. Some of the large fallen Crack Willows provide good habitat for invertebrates. Some old Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice stools line the southern boundary.

Much of the ground layer is dominated by a dense tangle of sedges and tall herbs, the main species being pond-sedges (*Carex* sp.), Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*). Small Teasel (*Dipsacus pilosus*), an Essex Red Data List (ERDL) Species, Water Chickweed (*Myosoton aquaticum*), Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Red Currant (*Ribes rubrum*) are also present amongst the tall herbs. Under the closed Alder and willow canopy the ground flora includes Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Common Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*) and ERDL species Scaly Male-fern (*Dryopteris affinis*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

The Alder and willow carr represent wet woodland which satisfies the HC3 criterion, being a Habitat of Principal Importance in England (HPIE). The remainder of the woodland on higher ground is probably not ancient although it has good structure and corresponds to the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE, providing an extension to the wet woodland.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

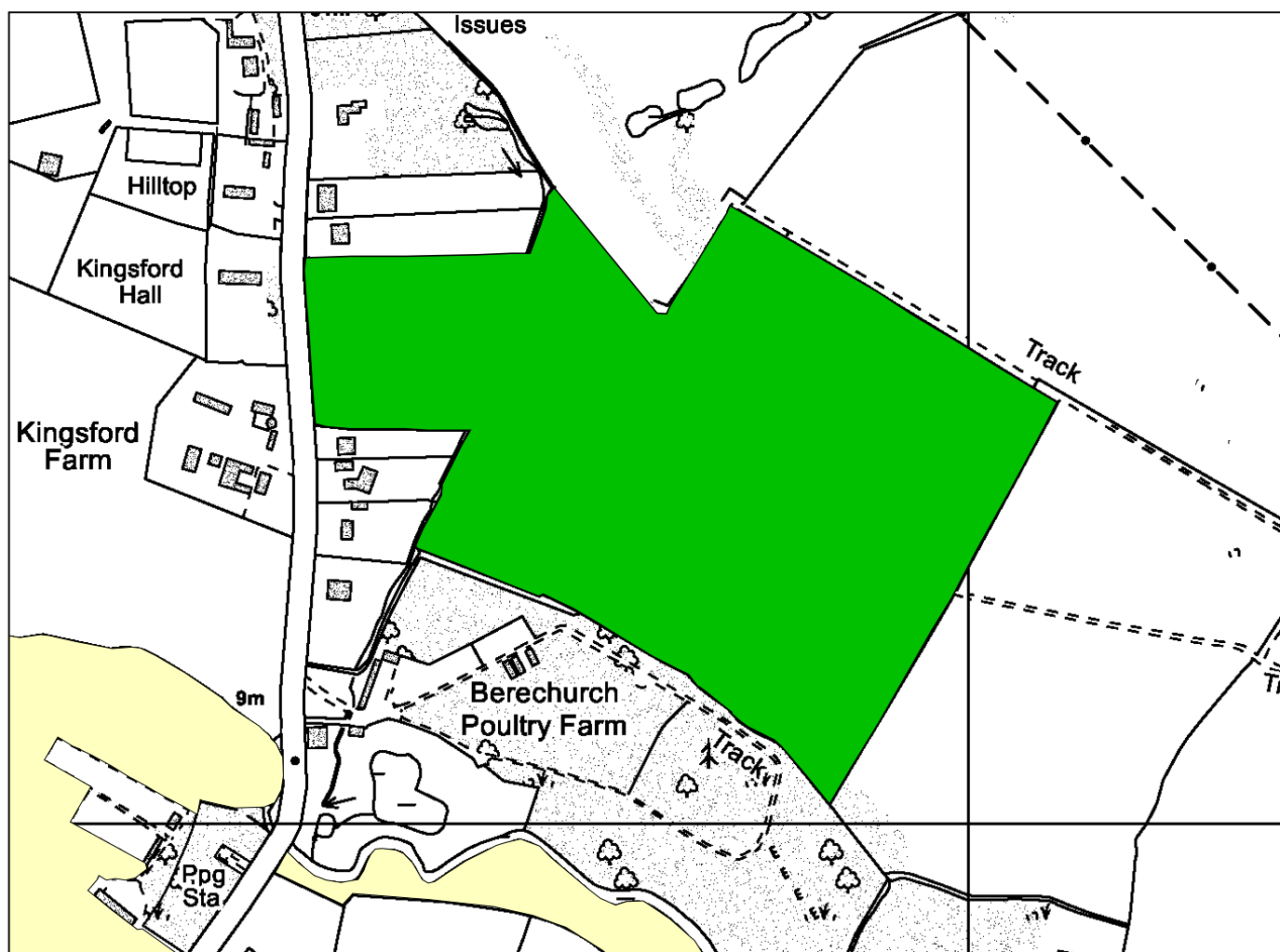
The current non-intervention management appears to be maintaining the sensitive habitat types present, although in the longer term some coppicing or thinning may be advisable.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

Co96 King's Ford Grove, Layer de la Haye (11.2 ha) TL 977212



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King's Ford Grove itself is a small area of possibly ancient woodland lying adjacent to Layer Road, the remaining part of a larger woodland block mostly now subsumed into the gardens to the north and south.

It comprises old Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) coppice with standards of oak (*Quercus* spp.). The wood canopy also includes Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) over a ground flora dominated by Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*). Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), and Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) also occur in the ground layer. Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), an Essex Red Data List species, has also been recorded. Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) dominate parts of the upper slopes.

The remainder of this site, to the east, comprises acid grassland and heathland with scattered mature Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) wood and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) scrub. The relict heath is predominantly acidic grassland typified by Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), with Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) in smaller quantities. Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Bramble are present within the grassland margins.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Defence Infrastructure Organisation. There is public access via paths around the heathland and grassland, including one public right of way connecting it with Friday Woods to the east.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

Rationale:

The structure and flora strongly suggest that at least the western portion of the woodland is ancient and it is illustrated on the 1777 Chapman and Andre map of Essex. More recent areas of woodland are included as representing the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England (HPIE). The eastern areas of grassland conform to the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland HPIE description.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

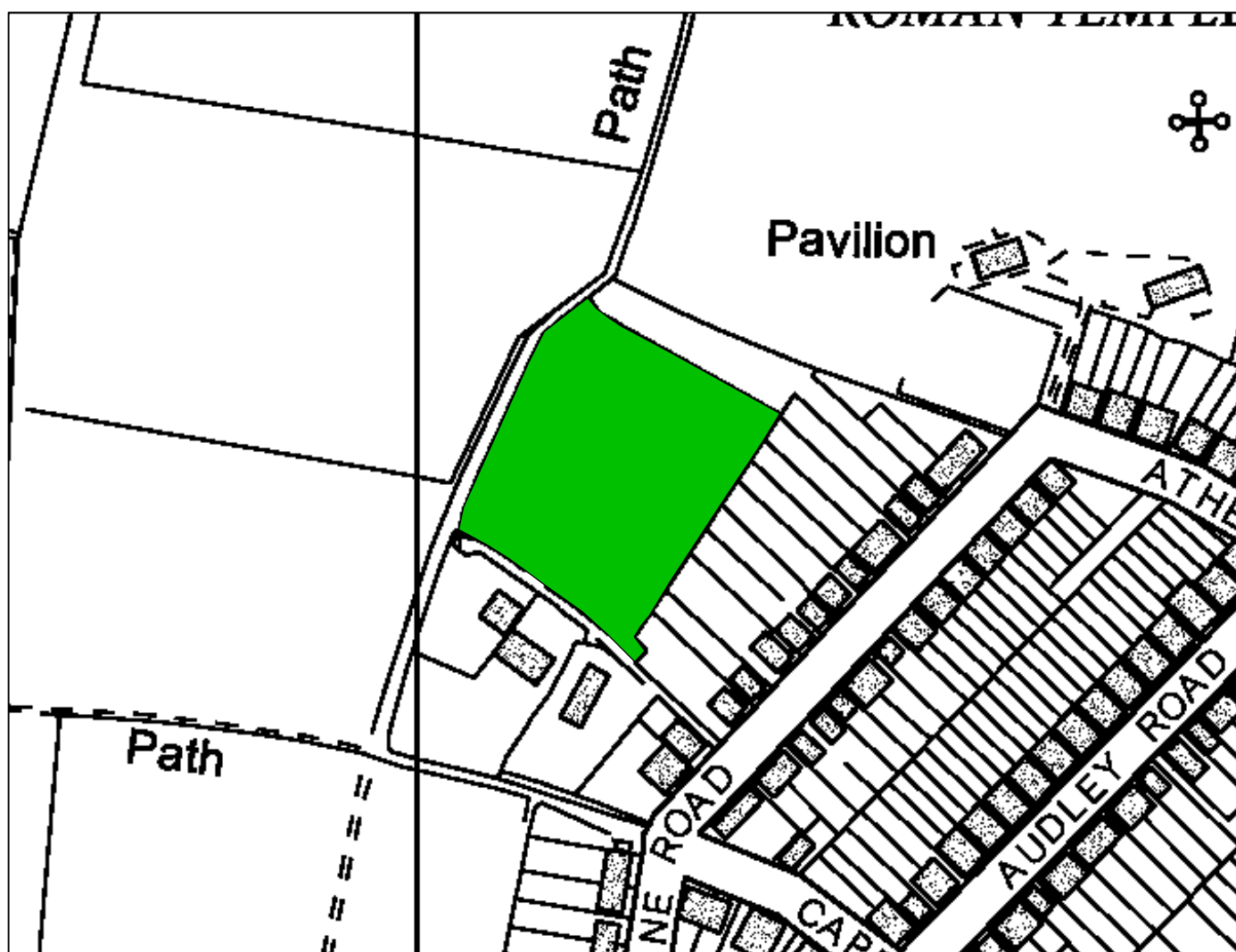
The current management regime is unknown, but appears to be maintaining the site's interest. Scrub encroachment into grassland areas should be monitored and controlled and the woodland would benefit from periodic rotational coppicing and selective felling within areas of close-growing trees.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co97 Irvine Road Orchard, Colchester (0.7 ha) TL 980243



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This small abandoned urban orchard comprises a mosaic of old fruit trees, rough grassland and spreading scrub and young woodland. The western boundary hedgerow is old and contains a number of mature Pedunculate Oaks (*Quercus robur*). As well as apples (*Malus pumila*), the orchard contains Pear (*Pyrus communis*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Walnut (*Juglans regia*) and cherry (*Prunus avium*, unknown cultivar).

The grassland in the more open parts of the site is largely made up of False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), with Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) with Meadow Fox-tail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Rough Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), Common Cat's-tail (*Phleum pratense*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), the latter abundant on the tops of the frequent ant hills. Herbaceous species include Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), Cut-leaved Crane's-bill (*Geranium dissectum*) and Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) with small quantities of Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) and Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

Standing dead wood can be found within the orchard trees and some noteworthy invertebrates associated with this resource have been recorded, including the solitary wasps *Monosapyga clavicornis* and *Crossocerus cetratus*. The site also supports an important local population of the Rose Chafer (*Cetonia aurata*), rarely recorded in Essex away from Colchester. Hedgehog and Grass Snake are also known to be present

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Traditional Orchards

Selection criteria:

HC7 – Old Orchards

Rationale:

The site fits the HPIE description for Traditional Orchards, featuring low density fruit trees interspersed with herbaceous vegetation and never having been managed intensively

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

Management Issues

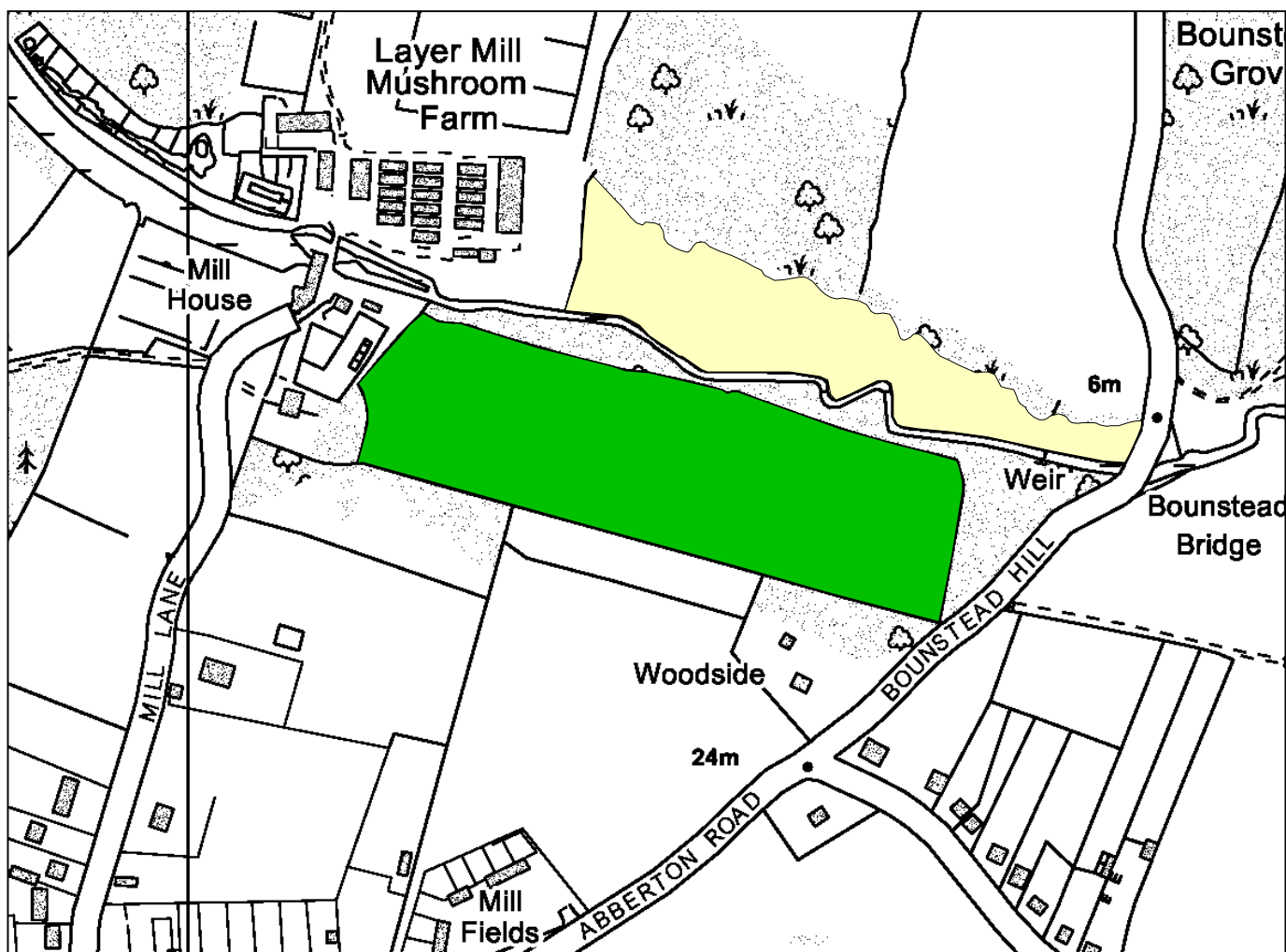
Although still retaining wildlife interest at a local level, as an orchard the site is declining, with no management of the fruit trees or other vegetation in recent years. The grassland is becoming rank through lack of management and *Prunus* scrub is spreading, already being dominant in some areas. The northern edge of the site is being managed inappropriately, from a conservation point of view, by the neighbouring resident without the site owner's consent.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (minor reduction to remove track)

Co98 Mill Grove, Layer de la Haye (3.2 ha) TL 982205



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The canopy comprises mainly Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice, with some large Sweet Chestnut standards, alongside Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), birch (*Betula* sp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). The understorey is varied in structure and composition and includes Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) is dominant in places but gives way to a diverse ground flora comprising abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) as well as Red Currant (*Ribes rubrum*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*) and Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

Despite the presence of several ancient woodland indicators, documentary evidence and the lack of older trees suggest that this woodland is not ancient. However, it does satisfy the definition of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; unmanaged

Management Issues

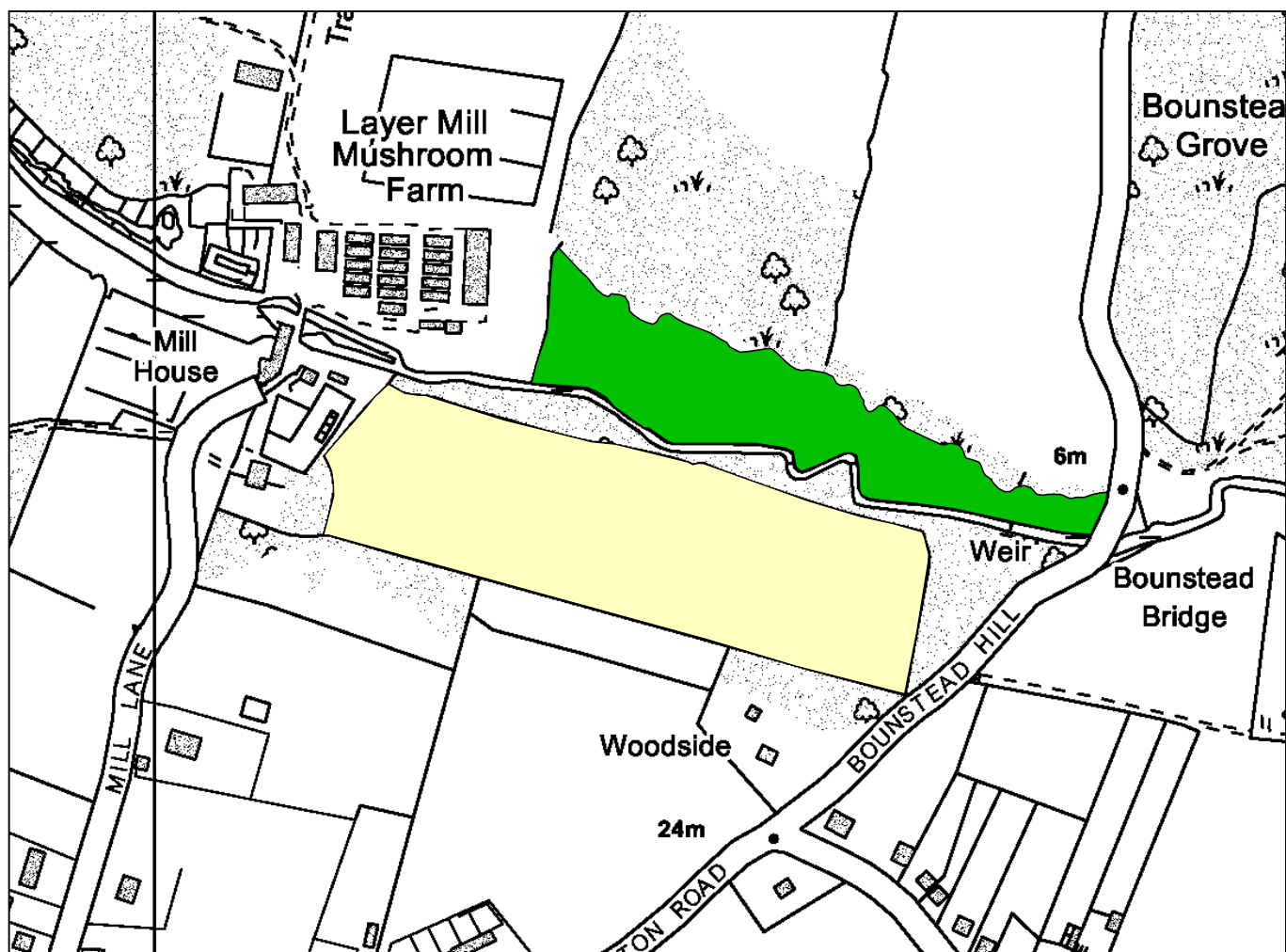
Selective removal of Sycamores would be beneficial. The overall structure of the woodland is good although some thinning and coppicing work will be needed in future years.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

Co100 Bounstead Bridge West, Layer de la Haye (1.5 ha) TL 983206



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This streamside, wet area on the northern banks of the Roman River supports tall fen vegetation with alternating stands of Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) and Great Pond-sedge (*Carex riparia*) alongside lush tall herbs such as Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Common Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*) and Fragrant Agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*) have been previously recorded.

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Fens

Selection criteria:

HC14 – Lowland Fen Vegetation

Rationale:

This site forms part of an important chain of good quality wildlife habitats along the Roman River valley; although declining in quality through scrub encroachment, the site still currently contains Lowland Fen habitat corresponding to HC14.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable; declining

Management Issues

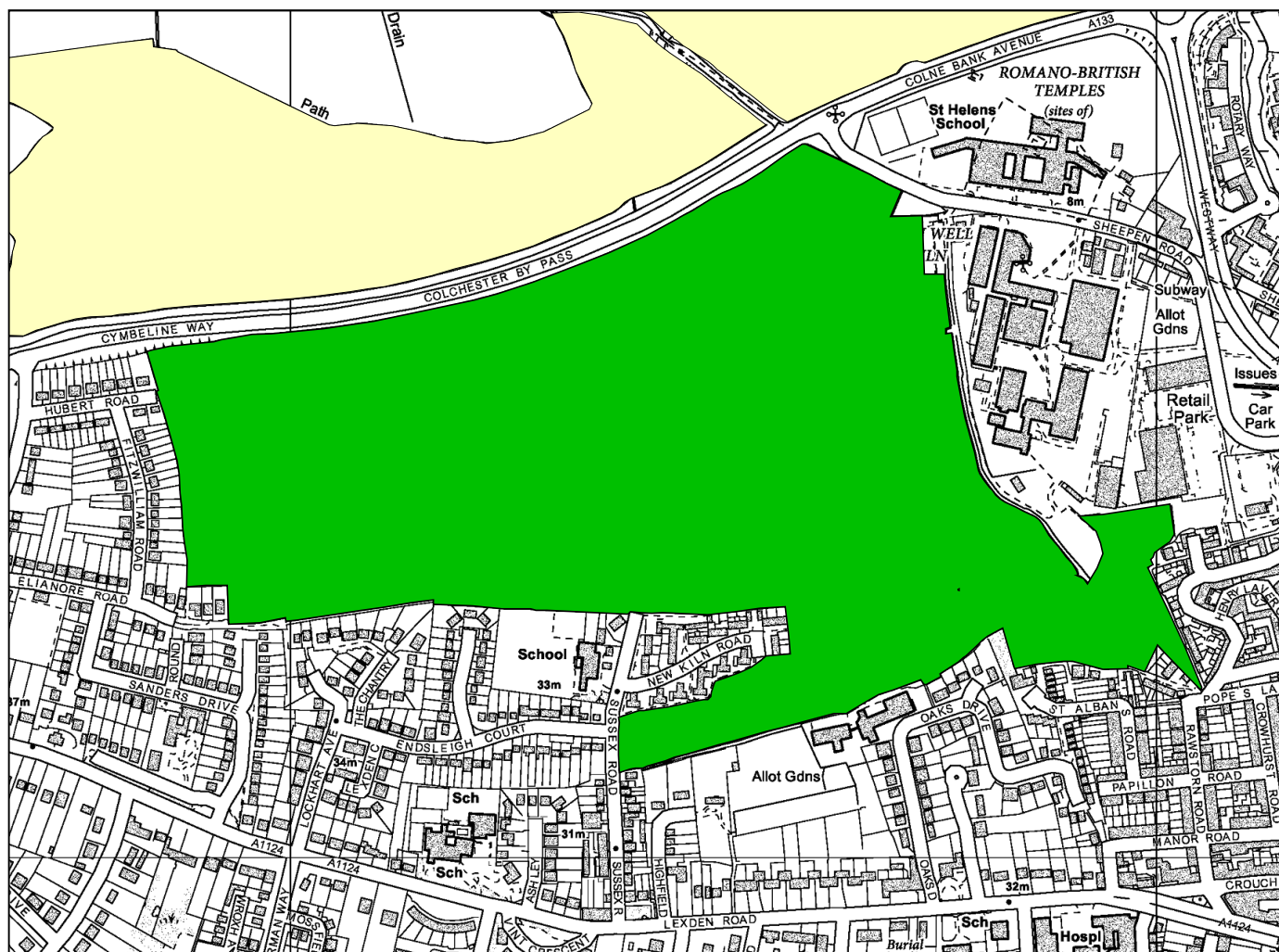
A lack of management has resulted in scrub encroachment across much of the site which threatens the floristic diversity of the floodplain habitat; urgent management is required to stop the remainder being lost and to open up the former grassland areas.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (no change)

Co101 Hilly Fields, Colchester (43.9 ha) TL 984254



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Hilly Fields comprises a complex mosaic of habitats that has developed on this strategic high point, which has seen Iron Age and Roman occupation and 17th Century forts. Named on old maps as 'Broom Heath', the site still retains significant areas of acid grassland, displaying a transition from freely draining soils near the summit, through to a neutral soil sward with scattered scrub to wet inundation grassland and swamp to the north. The southern extension has developed into mature woodland, providing contrasting habitat conditions to the more open and exposed hillslope.

The two main woodland compartments are dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) over what is in parts a dense understorey of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). The low lying northern margins include permanently inundated ponds, a small area of wet willow (*Salix* sp.) scrub and marshy vegetation including Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*).

The upper, drier grasslands support a variety of species including Mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Squirreltail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). These freely draining lighter soils also support a good diversity of legumes, most notably Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) and the Essex Red Data List species Subterranean Clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*) and Spring Vetch (*Vicia lathyroides*). Bramble and Hawthorn are encroaching within the grassland, which is largely maintained by rabbit grazing. Taller semi-improved and neutral grassland dominated by coarser grasses with fewer

herb species, covers the lower open areas west of Sheepen Road and within Bunting Meadow, formerly arable land, to the north-west of the site.

The invertebrate fauna includes 11 species of bumblebee (over half the Essex total for this group), including the UK BAP species Red-shanked Carder-bee *Bombus ruderarius*, the Nationally Scarce *Bombus rupestris* and the recent UK colonist *Bombus hypnorum*. Also to be found here are the Nationally Scarce solitary bees *Andrena humilis*, *Andrena bimaculata*, *Andrena trimmerana* and *Lasioglossum quadrinotatum*; the Nationally Rare (RDB3) mining bee *Lasioglossum pauperatum* and the Nationally Scarce digger wasp *Crossocerus distinguendus*. Notable amongst the diverse butterfly fauna are Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*) and Purple Hairstreak (*Quercusia quercus*). Minotaur Beetle (*Typhaeus typhoeus*), an uncommon species in Essex, has been recorded as well as Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), a Species of Principal Important in England.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council, and is an important local public open space with access throughout.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

SC1 – Vascular Plants

SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

Rationale:

The mosaic of habitats present within Hilly Fields form a site of high wildlife value within suburban Colchester providing an accessible green space for visitors that satisfies many separate selection criteria. The recent woodland and small area of wet willow satisfies the descriptions of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and Wet Woodland Habitats of Principal Importance in England (HPIE). The acid grassland communities conform to the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland HPIE description and the neutral grassland, which falls outside the NVC MG5 community, forms a valuable addition to the site. The presence of Subterranean Clover and Spring Vetch justifies the inclusion of SC1, and the diverse range of invertebrates present, including SPIE and ERDL species, means that SC19 can also be applied.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in parts, declining in places

Management Issues

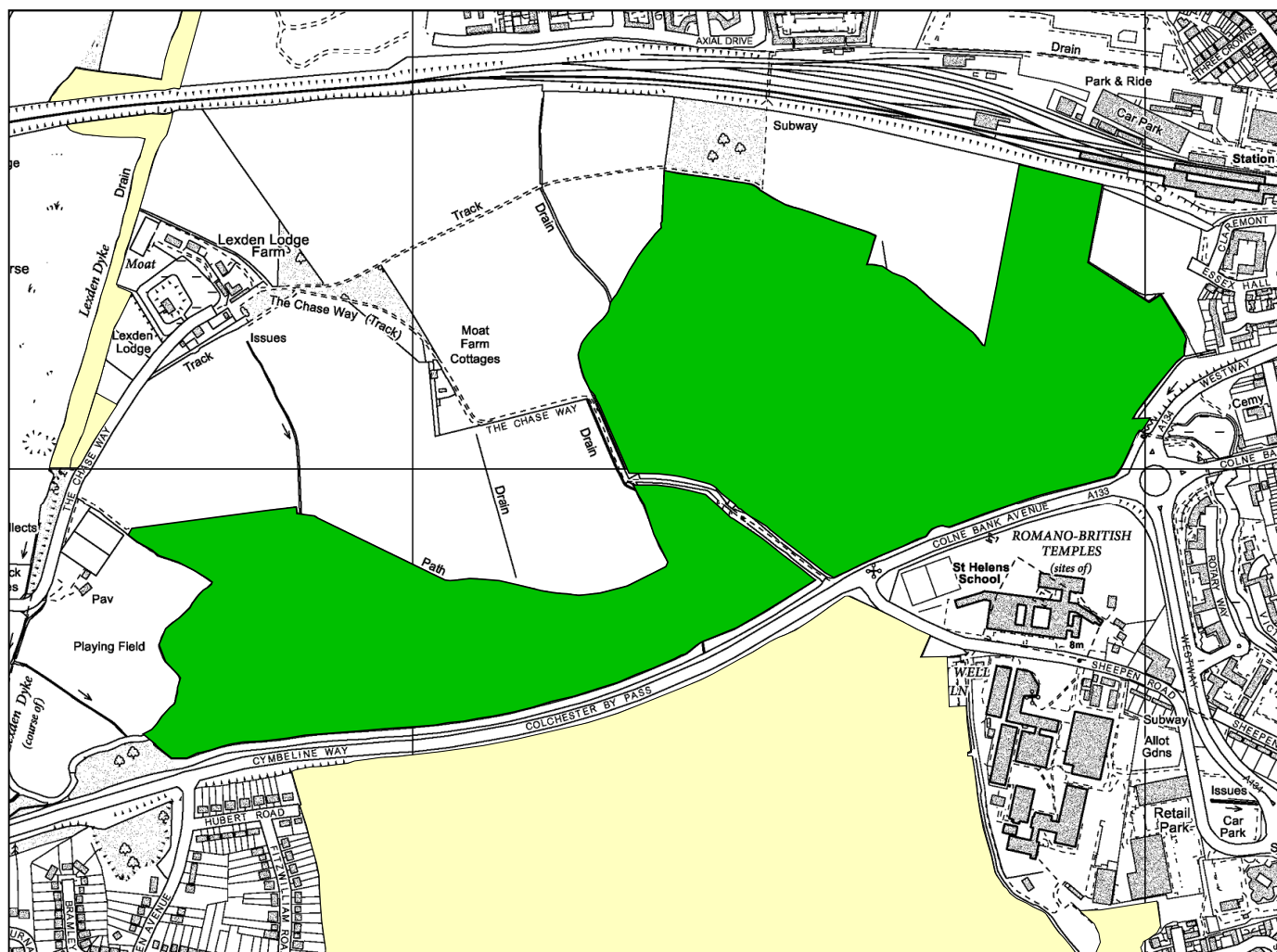
The site's habitats are complex, and management should consider the requirements of different communities and features, according to a detailed Conservation Management Plan. This should consider how best to balance amenity requirements within a site under heavy pressures from visitors and dog walkers and its conservation maintenance. The clear priority should be to maintain or increase the areas of acid grassland habitat, which are suffering from scrub encroachment, and this will help maintain a diverse invertebrate fauna.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co104 Cymbeline Meadows, Colchester (46.7 ha) TL 983258



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This site comprises a series of pastures within the floodplain of the meandering River Colne, also including areas of marshland, numerous hedgerows and aquatic vegetation within the river channel itself. A wide range of grass species occur including Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Soft-brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*) and Smooth Meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*). Wetter areas support Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*). Essex Red Data List species Brown Sedge (*Carex disticha*) also occurs locally in dense stands.

The western meadows were previously cultivated with cereal crops until 1990 when they were seeded with species of grass and wildflower as cattle pasture. They have largely retained a species-rich sward with herbs including Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*).

The banks of the River Colne have a diverse riverside flora, which includes stands of Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Branched Bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and Water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*), alongside the marginal and aquatic species Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*), Common Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Flowering-rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), Water Figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*).

The river corridor supports a range of riparian species including invertebrates such as Banded Demoiselle along with other hunting dragonflies and damselflies, Kingfisher, Otter and a newly established population of Water Voles. Noctule bat is regularly recorded feeding over this grassland site.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and there is widespread public access encouraged within the site along a series of public footpaths.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC10 – River Floodplain

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

SC12 – Breeding Water vole Colonies

Rationale:

Extensive river flood plain sites are becoming an increasingly scarce habitat in Essex, and this site supports large areas of floodplain grassland that satisfy criteria HC10. In addition, on higher slopes the site supports neutral/semi-improved grassland (not NVC MG5 community) which satisfies criteria HC11 and provides a valuable habitat extension to the seasonally inundated lower meadows. Water Voles have recently become well-established within the site following an upstream re-introduction and Mink control measures, and the site supports ideal habitat for the expanding population.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in parts, declining in others

Management Issues

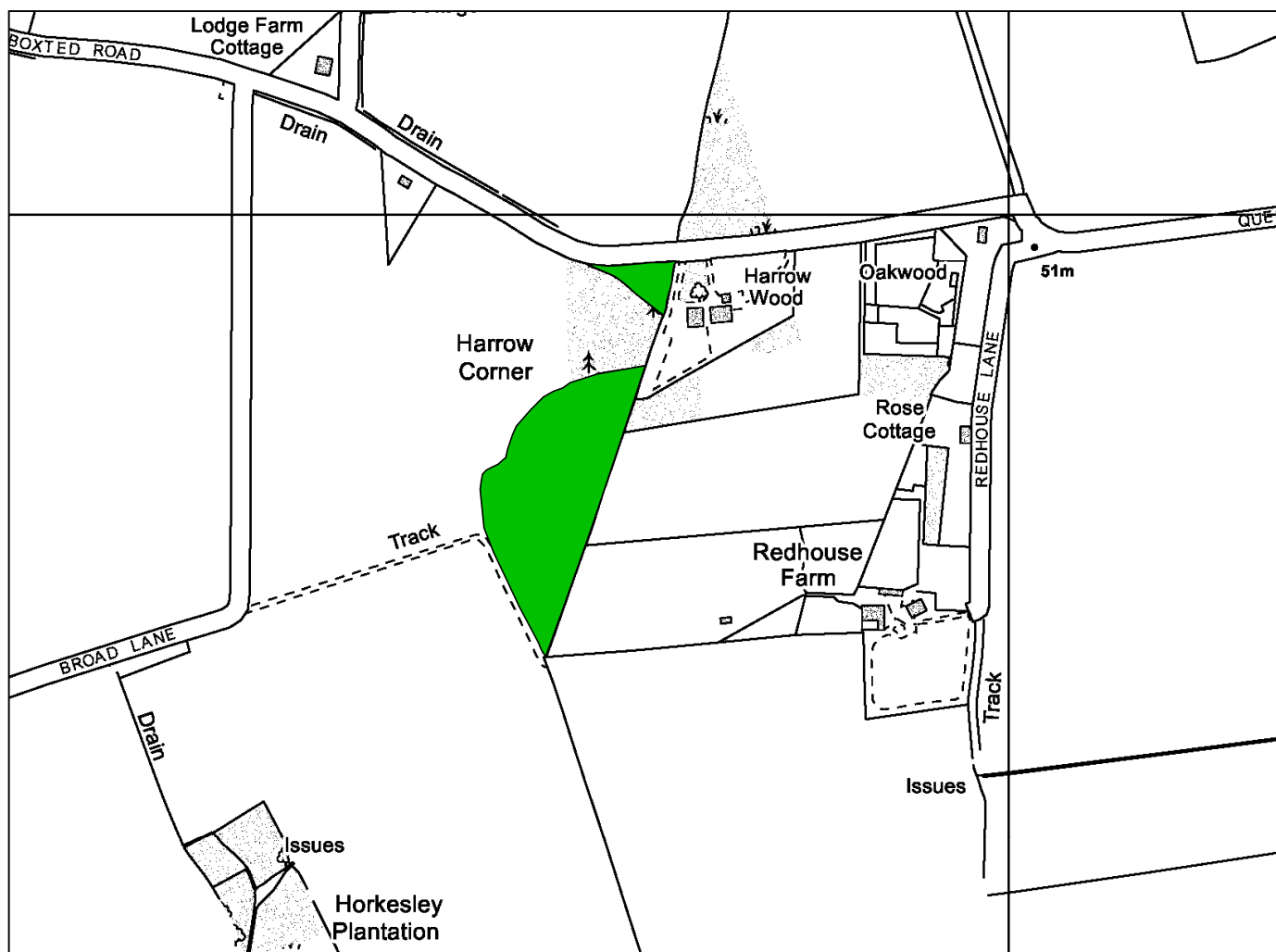
The site is large and complex and grassland management should follow a detailed conservation management plan. The majority of grassland is actively grazed by sheep or cattle, and the timing and densities will largely dictate the structure and composition of each grassland unit. Over-grazing, as appears to be occurring within the large eastern sheep-grazed meadow, should be avoided and stocking densities carefully regulated to benefit the flora and maximise the wildlife value. The impacts of the annual circus, and other events, on the eastern meadow should be minimised where possible. Measures to control the invasive Water-fern (*Azolla filiculoides*) with the River Colne should be explored, although this species rarely dominates riverine sites and is naturally susceptible to hard winters.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co105 Harrow Wood, Great Horkesley (1.7 ha) TL 986307



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This small wood is predominantly Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice with Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards. Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) forms a scattered shrub canopy, alongside Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). The small northern compartment contains some younger Sweet Chestnut coppice to the north of a conifer plantation. The ground layer reflects the freely draining soils, being dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) with patches of Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership, but a public footpath crosses the site centrally and runs alongside the western boundary.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

The site appears on pre-1870s maps but does not appear to be ancient. It does, however, satisfy the definition of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England.

Condition Statement:

Unmanaged

Management Issues

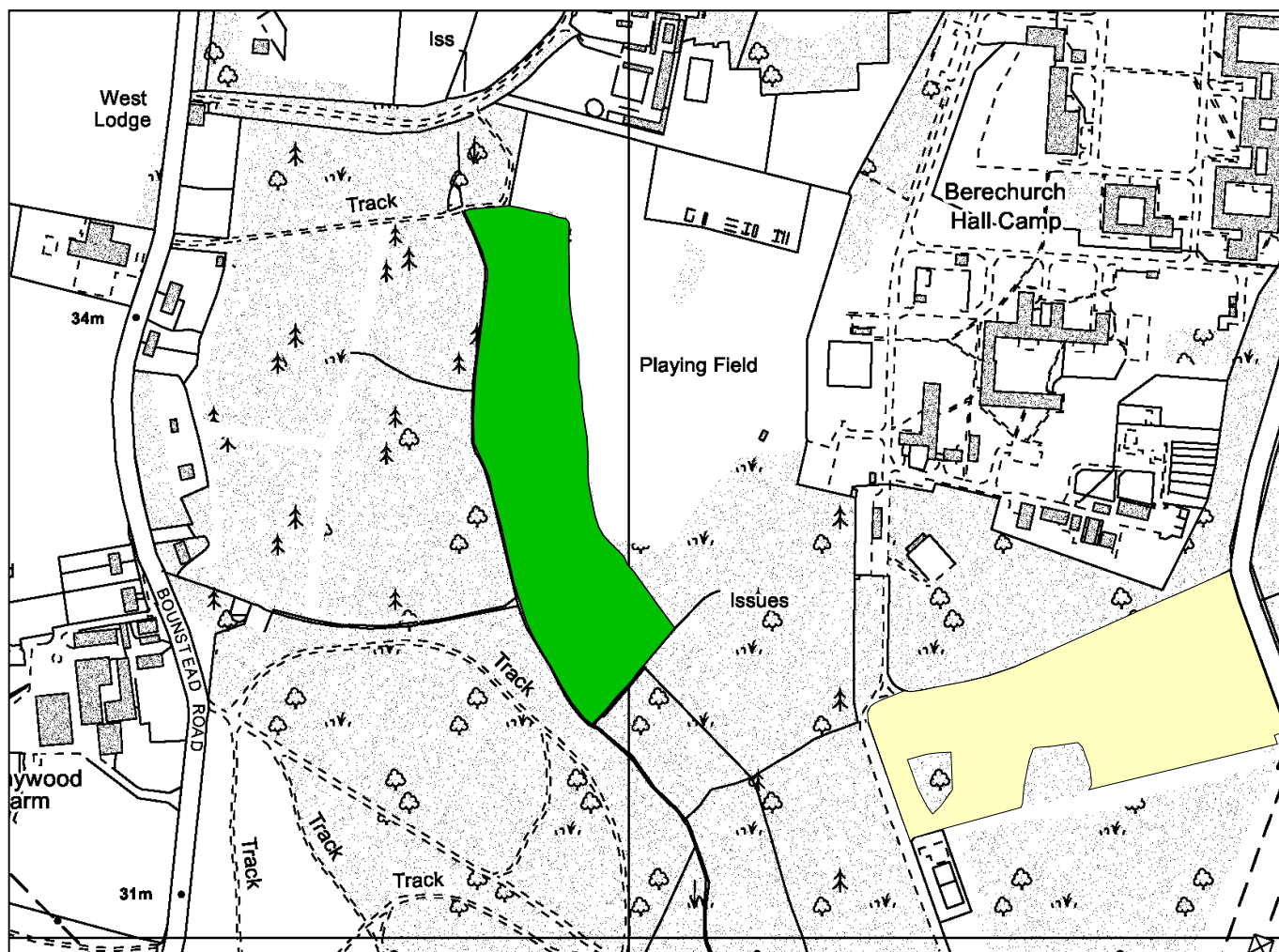
Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is found throughout and should ideally be thinned out and removed over time to prevent overshadowing of the ground layer. Otherwise, no action is immediately necessary, although some coppicing or thinning may be advisable in future years.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co106 Friday Wood North, Colchester (3.5 ha) TL 989214



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This site comprises woodland on the northern edge of Friday Wood that is not included within the Roman River SSSI. The woodland forms three distinct compartments, the first being a rather open canopy to the south and west along the streamside, made up of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), with some Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and climbing Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). The ground flora here supports Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*). Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) dominate the ground cover in other areas.

A large central portion is almost entirely dominated by the exotic Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), which suppresses any form of ground flora, and is spreading within the streamside woodland area. The northern compartment, within the ancient woodland boundary, has been planted with Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and here Cherry Laurel is also becoming increasingly established at the expense of the ground flora, which includes Bramble and Bracken.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Defence Infrastructure Organisation with public access via a network of paths.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

Despite its unfavourable condition at present, the entire woodland, including the dense Cherry Laurel and Scots Pine compartments, appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and some ancient woodland indicator plants remain in the western area.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable, declining

Management Issues

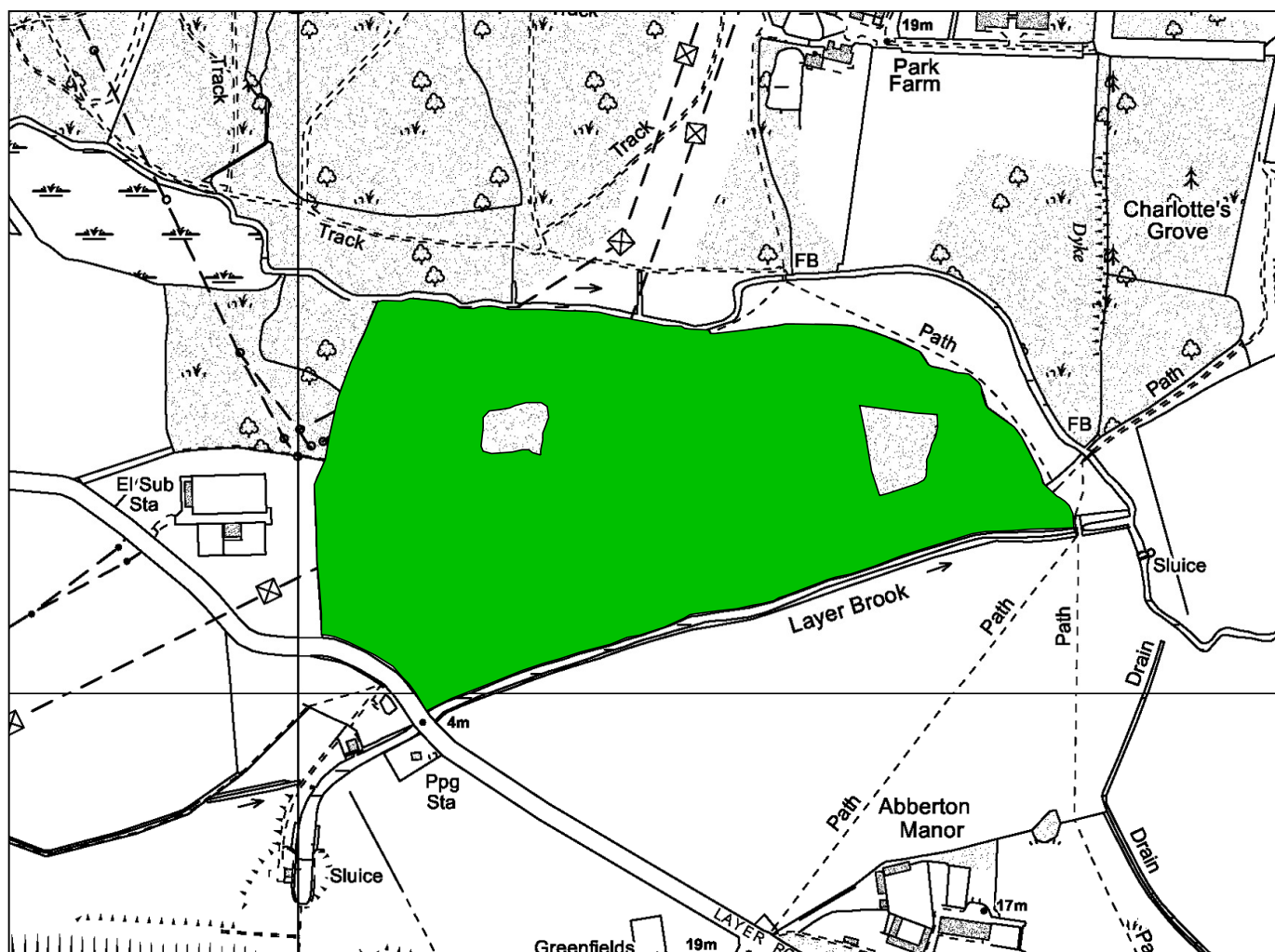
The over-riding concern is the spread of Cherry Laurel within this woodland, and the spread of saplings into native deciduous woodland indicates a worsening situation that threatens the adjacent SSSI as well. The woodland would also be improved if the conifers would be gradually removed or significantly thinned out over time.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co108 Layer Brook Pasture, Abberton (14.7ha) TL 992201



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Layer Brook Pasture is a large area of sloping grassland which comprises a short sward composed of a good variety of grasses. Amongst the 14 species recorded are Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) and Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*) are also present within the grassland sward.

The dominance of grasses results in a poor assemblage of herbs, the most common of which are Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*). A number of waxcap (*Hygrocybe* sp.) and earth tongue (*Geoglossum* sp.) fungi grow within the grassland, these being indicators of short, unimproved free-draining turf.

A southern line of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), including some large coppice stools, alongside Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), is included as a complimentary habitat to the extensive grassland area.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. There is public access along two paths that cross the Roman River, one to the south of the tree and scrub line, the other to the north-west.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

Rationale:

The Roman River constitutes part of the northern boundary and the site links the SSSI to the north and the south providing a valuable buffer area and complementary grassland habitat. The site supports grassland that appears to be largely unimproved, but it does not conform to the NVC MG5 community.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

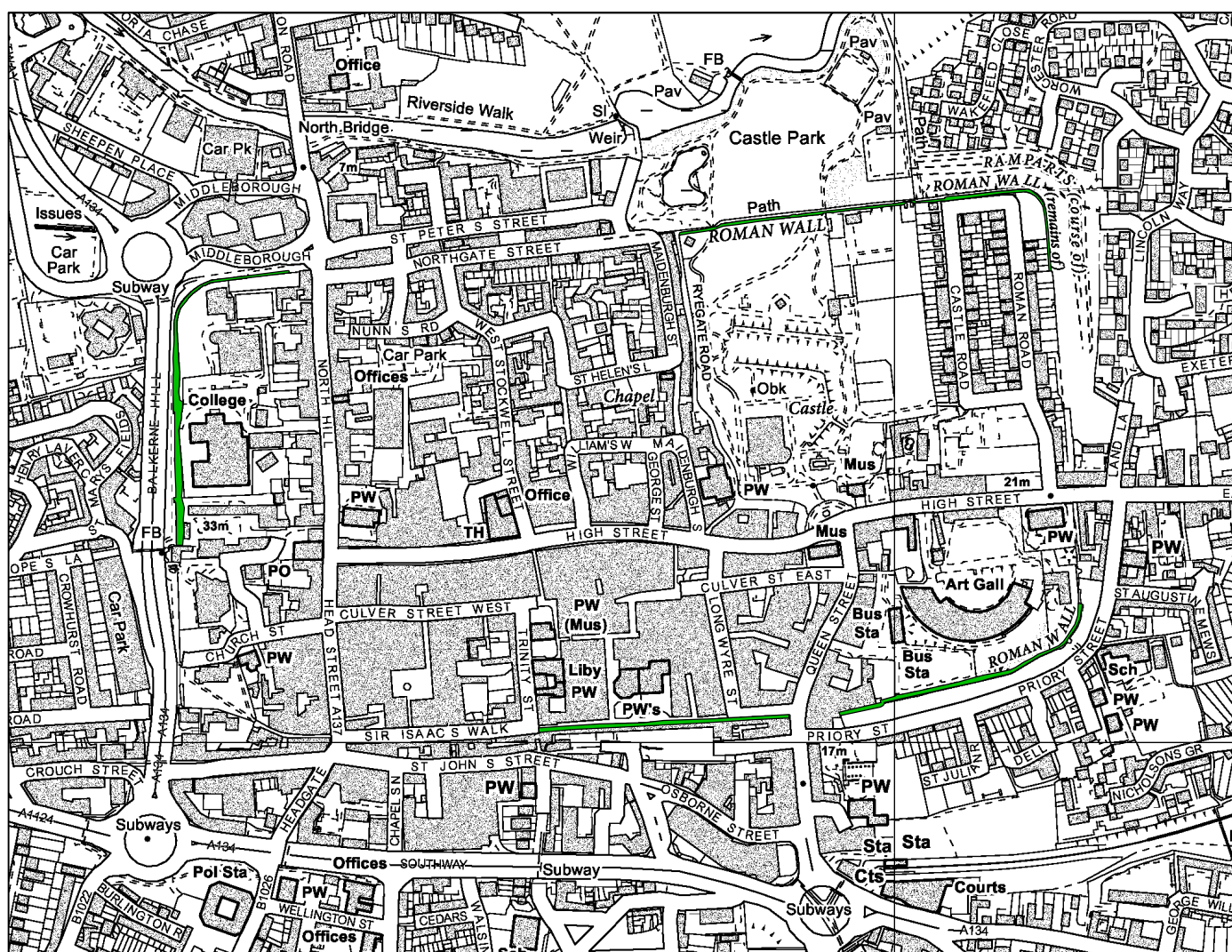
The meadow is kept short by rabbits and periodic sheep grazing. As with all grazed meadows, the grazing regime and stock density will determine the quality of the grassland.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

Co109 Colchester Roman Walls (0.5 ha) TL 997253



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The Roman town walls around Colchester are unique in the county and have developed a specialised flora, which includes several scarce species. Only the main remaining sections of the wall are indicated on the map, but the LoWS designation extends to any extant surfaces. The section between the upper and lower Castle Park is of particular significance.

Rue-leaved Saxifrage (*Saxifraga tridactylites*), Black Spleenwort (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*), Wall Rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*), Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*), Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium calamintha*), Flattened Meadow-grass (*Poa compressa*) and Subterranean Clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*) are of particular note, all featuring on the ERDL. Other characteristic species include Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*), Thyme-leaved Sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*), Common Whitlowgrass (*Erophila verna*), Thale Cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*), Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Pellitory-of-the-wall (*Parietaria diffusa*). Non-native species such as Wallflower (*Erysimum cheiri*), Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) and Ivy-leaved Toadflax (*Cymbalaria muralis*) also contribute to the distinctiveness of the community.

The lichen flora is exceptional and, amongst a taxonomically difficult group, may contain an as yet undescribed new species, discovered during earlier survey work. Where south-facing, areas of soft mortar support populations of solitary bees and wasps.

Ownership and Access

The ownership of the walls is uncertain, but it is assumed that most sections are in public ownership. Access to some sections is possible, on one side or the other, from public paths.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The site is designated on the basis of its populations of ERDL plant species.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

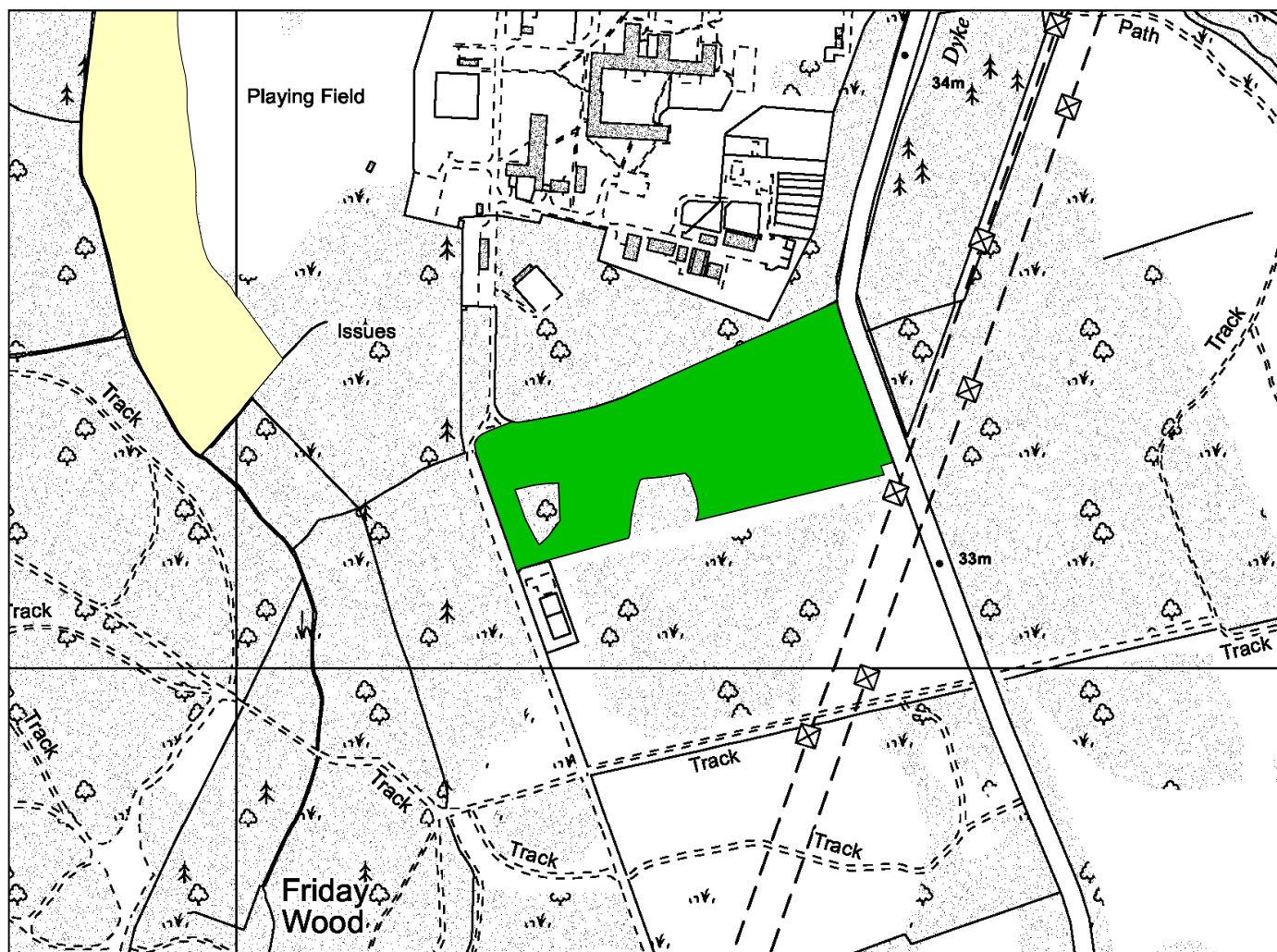
Restoration and maintenance work remain the most significant threats to the plant species for which the site has been designated.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co110 Berechurch Grassland, Colchester (3.7 ha) TL 993211



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This site comprises an area of regenerating acid grassland that has developed following the clearance of a conifer plantation, forming a valuable extension of habitat to the adjacent Friday Woods SSSI.

The sward is dominated by Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) but also includes Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and localised Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*). The fauna includes Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*), an uncommon Essex butterfly.

The northern portion of the site includes a strip of taller neutral grassland that supports coarse grasses and locally abundant Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), along an overgrown tree line containing Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), providing structural diversity.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Defence Infrastructure Organisation. Ball Lane, to the east, is a public right of way and the site forms part of an extensive area with open access to the public.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

Rationale:

The site conforms to the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Habitat of Principal Importance in England description. The northern strip of trees and semi-improved grassland would not qualify alone as individual habitats, but are included as an addition to the site under Small-component Mosaics.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

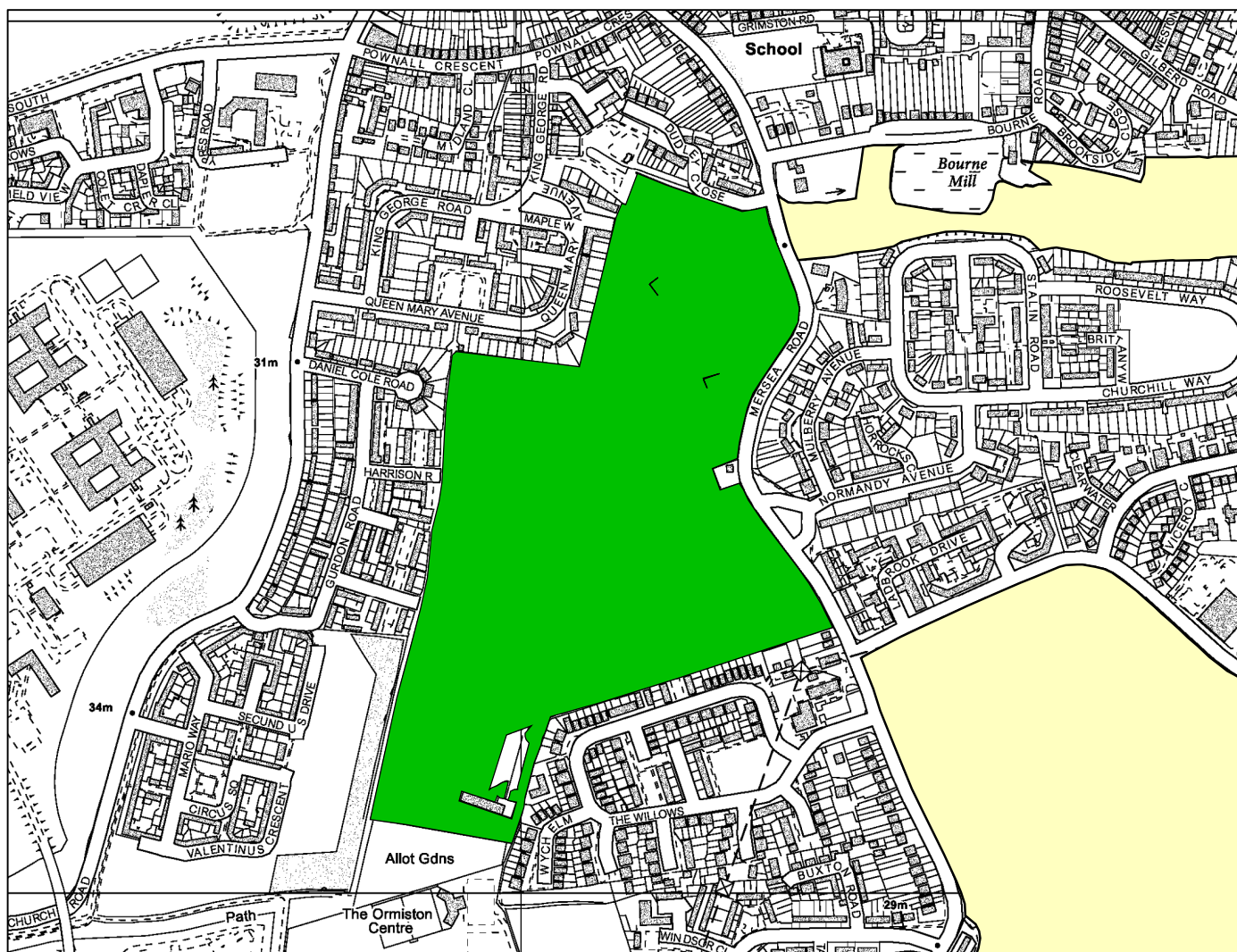
In the absence of grazing, which is the preferable management regime, cutting appears to be maintaining the grassland structure, although Bramble and shrubs threaten to encroach from the margins.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (minor reduction)

Co113 Colchester Cemetery (21.0 ha) TM 000234



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As with many churchyards, this large, old cemetery has encapsulated and helped to preserve an area of old grassland, albeit modified by its use. The best flora lies in the older western section, where the Essex Red Data List plant Meadow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*) is particularly notable. Other characteristic acid grassland species include Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*) and Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*).

Invertebrates recorded around the site include several Nationally Scarce species such as the SPIE Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), the solitary bee *Dasypoda hirtipes* and the micro-moth *Nemophora fasciella*. The Anglican Chapel supports roosting Long-eared Bat and Common Pipistrelle.

Ownership and Access

The cemetery is owned by Colchester Borough Council and has published opening times for public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The significant plant communities in the cemetery are characteristically acid grassland ones and the population of Meadow Saxifrage justifies the use of the Vascular Plants criterion.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

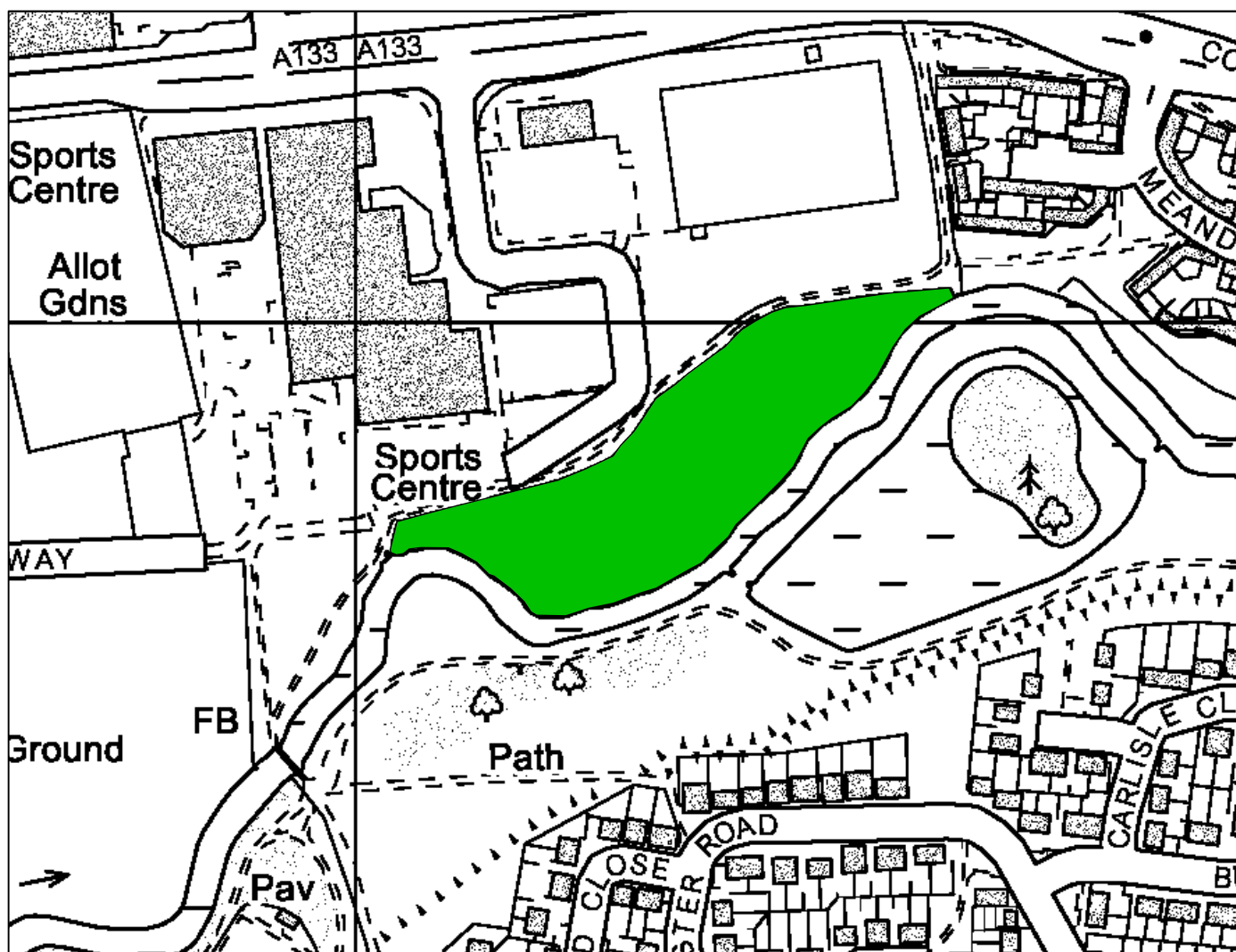
Management Issues

The main issue is in achieving a balance between management for public amenity and to maintain the favourable condition of plant communities.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)



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This riverside wet meadow is one of a series of remnant river flood plain sites that occur along the river Colne within Colchester and has a very diverse flora across several habitat types, with a dry stand of Common Reed at the eastern end, an extensive sedge (*Carex*) bed in the centre, damp rough grassland to the west, willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) woodland along the river and a broad, tall hedgerow along the northern boundary.

Significant plant species include Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) and the rare (in Essex) Brown Sedge (*Carex disticha*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Other species include Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), Water Chickweed (*Myosoton aquaticum*) and Amphibious Bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*).

The varied invertebrate interest includes a good range of foraging bumblebees, the Nationally Scarce (Na) Long-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus discolor*) and several species of damselfly from the adjacent river, which use the meadow as hunting grounds. Common Toads, a Species of Principal Importance in England, also occur here.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and is publicly accessible at either end.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Fens

Selection criteria:

HC14 – Lowland Fens

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

Rationale:

The main sedge bed represents Lowland Fen vegetation, as the HPIE is described. The remaining habitats are not of sufficient quality to justify the application of individual habitat criteria, but do form a coherent ecological unit with the sedge bed and so the mosaic criterion is used to define the overall extent of the site.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

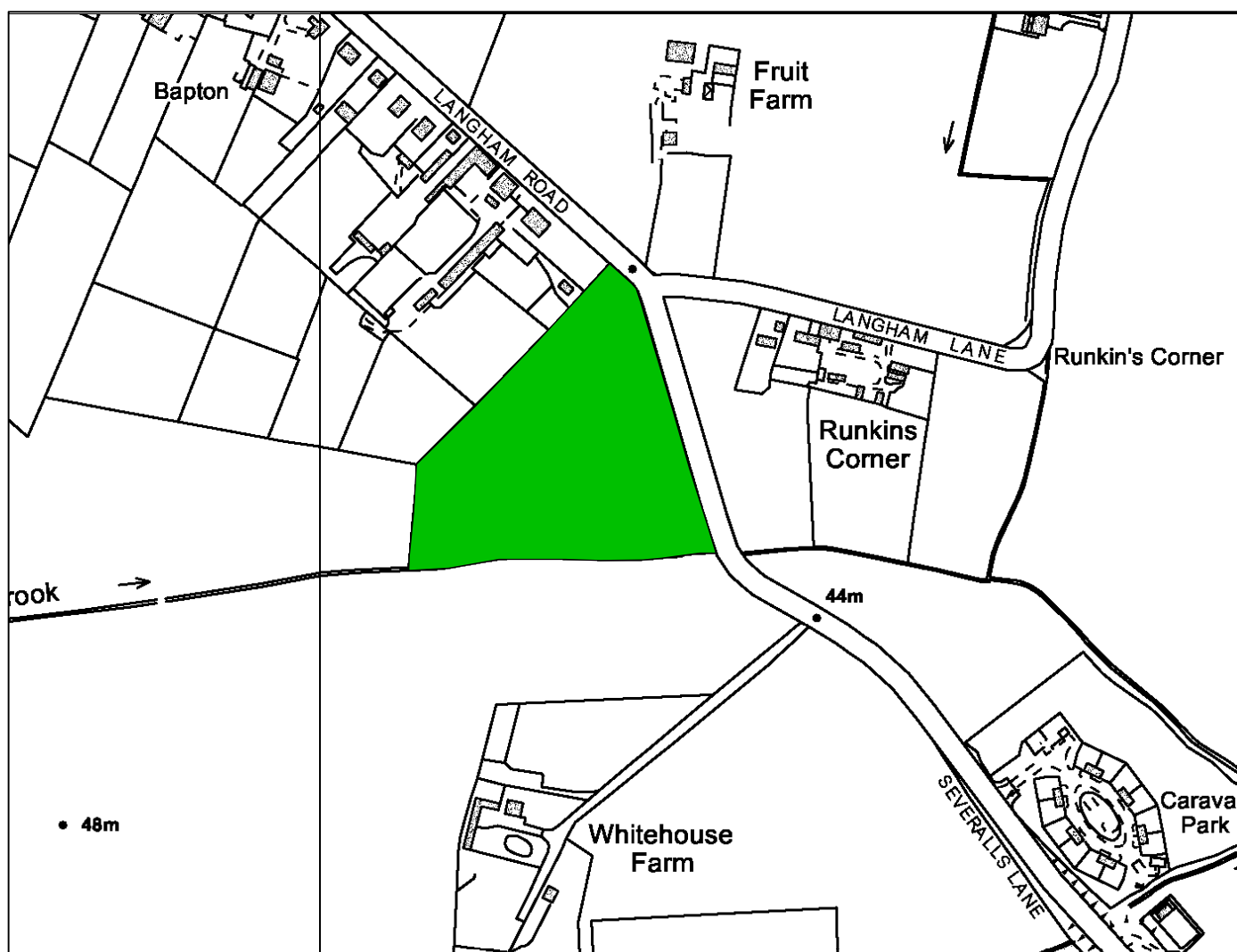
The habitat could be enhanced by cutting the grassland annually and removing the cuttings, reducing the dominance of coarse grass species and encouraging other plant species.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co115 Langham Road Grassland, Boxted (2.9 ha) TM 001296



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This varied habitat comprises dry and damp grassland with a pond on the east side of the site that mostly dries out over the summer months.

The drier grassland is characterised by grasses including Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and meadow-grasses (*Poa* sp.) with Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*). The presence of waxcap mushrooms (*Hygrocybe* sp.) and club fungi (*Calvinopsis* sp.) indicate that this is unimproved grassland.

The damper zones are distinguished by a composition including Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*). Herbs associated with these areas include Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and species which has declined due to improved drainage of wet meadows.

The pond is dominated by Narrow-leaved Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*) with encroaching Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) scrub and Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) particularly on the east and south sides. New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) has invaded the pond and its margins. The west side of the pond displays open habitat where Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), an Essex Red Data List species, and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) form an extensive stand with Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*).

Ownership and Access

The site is under private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The grasslands are of undoubted interest and apparently unimproved, but do not meet the Lowland Meadows HPIE description. The population of Water Horsetail is sufficiently significant to warrant the use of the Vascular Plants criterion.

Condition Statement:

Declining

Management Issues

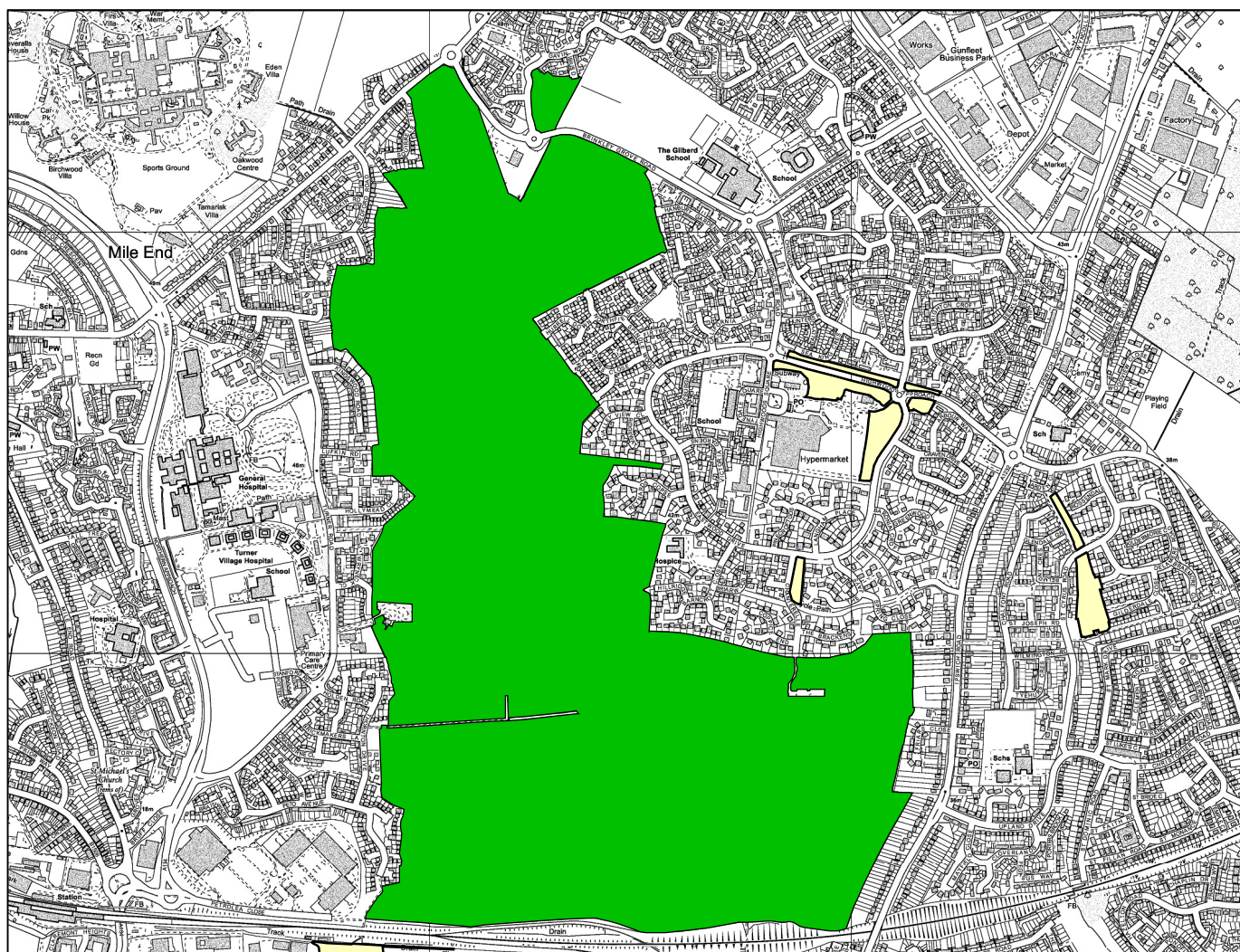
The pond is in need of significant management to reduce the scrub cover and control the New Zealand Pigmyweed. Grassland management appears to be variable, with close horse grazing in parts and no management elsewhere.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

Co116 High Woods, Colchester (150.0 ha) TM 001275



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Woodland

High Wood with Brinkley Grove is one of the largest ancient woods in the borough. The overgrown coppice-with-standards structure is composed of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Downy Birch (*B. pubescens*), with some planted conifers. Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is scattered along the small stream that runs through the wood to feed the main lake within the open grassland of the country park. The ground flora displays a wide range of species including Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) still survives in some areas.

Friars Grove on the eastern margin of the site is also ancient wood and is being actively managed as Hornbeam and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) coppice with Ash and Pedunculate Oak standards. The central stream supports a small stand of Alder with scrubby Oak/Ash wood adjacent to housing to the east. The diverse canopy and understorey also includes Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Sweet Chestnut, Hazel, Common Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Small-leaved Lime. The ground flora is varied, particularly with regard to ancient woodland species, including Moschatel, Wood Anemone, Pignut, Remote Sedge, Bluebell, Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*), Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*), Dog's Mercury, Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) (some of which are from garden origin) and Early Dog Violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*).

Elsewhere, blocks of relatively newly planted woodland are maturing and will need some management in the future to reduce crown density as they mature. Selective coppicing would greatly increase the habitat diversity of these areas of woodland, which currently comprise rather uniform stands of even-aged standards.

Grassland

The grasslands range from areas of short-mown amenity swards, through tall, less intensively managed meadow to areas of wet rush-pasture, swamp and fen vegetation. Some grassland has been recently created from ex-arable fields, using an appropriate meadow seed mix and creating some of the most flower-rich grasslands in the site. Overall, the sward comprises a diverse mix of common grasses and herbs, including Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Bent-grasses (*Agrostis* spp.), Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Field wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Clovers (*Trifolium* spp.) and Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). Species of particular note include Cowslip (*Primula veris*), Pepper-saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*). In damper areas, Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), rushes (*Juncus* spp.), Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) can be found.

Scrub invasion is well-advanced in some areas of grassland and management will be needed to maintain a mosaic of scrub and open grassland in some parts of the site, but especially in the south-east close to Friars Grove. Across the site, old hedgerows and a section of ancient green lane provide additional habitat diversity.

Fauna

The mosaic of habitats here supports a good variety of birds, insects, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, including many species of conservation concern. The main lake supports a good population of frogs and toads, despite the fish present, whilst a small pond near Turner Rise supports Smooth Newts. These amphibian populations help to support Grass Snakes, whilst Common Lizards also occur here. The Turner Road pond supports at least nine species of dragon- and damselfly, including the Nationally Rare (RDB2, Vulnerable) Scarce Emerald (*Lestes dryas*). Of particular significance amongst the invertebrates is the White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla*) – a rare Essex butterfly, which inhabits High wood itself. Many other species of more common butterflies are found here, including the Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Ringlet, Common Blue and Meadow Brown. The invertebrate fauna also includes a rare Essex cuckoo-bee (*Psithyrus rupestris*) and also a recent UK colonist bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* at one of its few known Essex locations. Planted Poplars in the open space near Mile End support the rare gall-forming bug *Pemphigus populi*.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and there is public access throughout.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Meadows, Hedgerows

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

Rationale:

The mixture of ancient and secondary woodland in the country park is well documented. The history of the grassland is less easy to discern, but it is unlikely that there is any significant extent of original grassland that would meet the Lowland Meadows HPIE description. However, the grassland resource is diverse and of considerable significance to the overall value of the park and so the inclusion of the Other Neutral Grasslands criterion is appropriate. The site is one of the most important natural public open spaces in the town and Borough and the use of the Accessible Natural Greenspace criterion reflects this and allows for the whole site to be defined.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

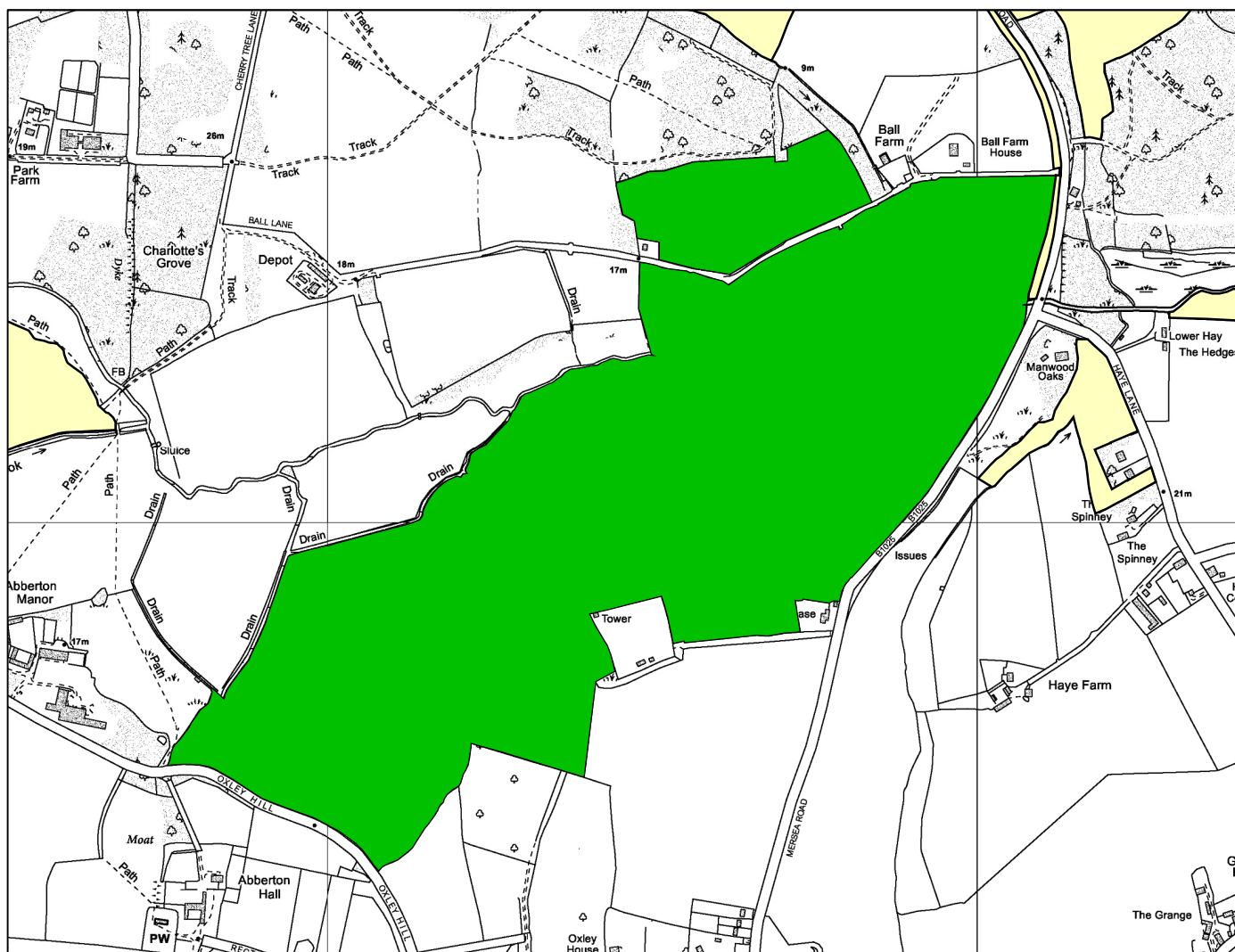
The site is currently maintained under a conservation management strategy.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended)

Co117 Manwood Chase, Abberton (64.9 ha) TM 004002



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This site is a complex of river flood plain marsh, grassland, scrub and woodland, which provides an extension to the adjacent SSSI.

Manwood Grasslands

This series of riverside grasslands and marsh are of extreme importance as an extensive tract of a rare and declining Essex habitat with good species diversity and also as part of the Roman River wildlife corridor, notably interlinking the two sections of the Roman River SSSI. The fields show little signs of agricultural improvement and include some notable marshland species including Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*), Marsh Dock (*Rumex palustris*) and Trifid Bur-marigold (*Bidens tripartita*); the latter two being on the Essex Red Data List.

The marsh comprises a patchwork of grasses, sedges and rushes, with the dominant species alternating between Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), pond-sedge (*Carex* sp.), Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*), Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*), and Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), which in turn give way to Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and rough grassland species on tussocky higher ground. Some areas are dominated by willow (*Salix* spp.) scrub.

The southern-most (adjacent to Oxley Hill) and northern-most (north of Ball Lane) meadows are drier, situated on the banks of the valley and support species such as Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*) and Meadow

Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) amongst the tall grassland sward, which includes Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) and Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Disturbed areas hold Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*) and Sand Spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*) and structural diversity is provided by scattered scrub.

Other notable species that have been recorded within Manwood grasslands are Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Pepper Saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) and Fine-leaved Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe aquatica*).

A population of Glow Worms is present.

Man Wood

This ancient wood has been extensively replanted by conifers, particularly Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). Native species, predominantly found around the margins of the wood and old internal boundary features, include Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) in the understorey and occasional Wild Service-tree (*Sorbus torminalis*). The ground flora is typical of light and well-drained soils, including Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*). Other notable species are Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), Hairy Brome (*Bromopsis ramosus*), Slender St John's-wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*) and Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*).

Scrub and Woodland

The scrub and secondary woodland to the west of Man Wood, including Oxley Grove, exhibits a varied structure and composition of woody species, which includes large Pedunculate Oak standards and dense Silver Birch, Hazel coppice, Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) along lower slopes. The underlying sand and gravels support associated species such as Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Bracken, Heath Speedwell, Sheep's-sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Wood Sage. Bluebell, Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Remote Sedge are also amongst the woodland flora. Other herbs found along disturbed tracks and open areas are Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Agrimony, Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil and Hairy St John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*). Parts of the site are used for clay pigeon shooting.

Ownership and Access

The land is owned by multiple private landowners. A public footpath runs south from Ball Lane across the river and along the western edge of Man Wood.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Fens, Coastal and Floodplain Grassland

Selection criteria:

- HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites
- HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites
- HC10 – River Floodplain
- HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands
- HC14 – Lowland Fen Vegetation
- SC20 – Notable 'Flagship' Macro-invertebrates

Rationale:

Although coniferised, Man Wood is documented to be ancient and is included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory, while map evidence demonstrates that other woodland blocks are secondary, but matching the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE description. Most of the grasslands are floodplain and do flood in most winters, but the in the western part of the site the low-lying meadows are dominated by stands of Lowland Fen vegetation. The grasslands on the valley sides are not Lowland Meadows according to the HPIE description and are not sufficiently acidic in character to be selected under the Heathland and Acid Grassland criterion, but they are largely unimproved and make a significant contribution to the overall conservation value of the site and so are included under the Other Neutral Grassland criterion.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

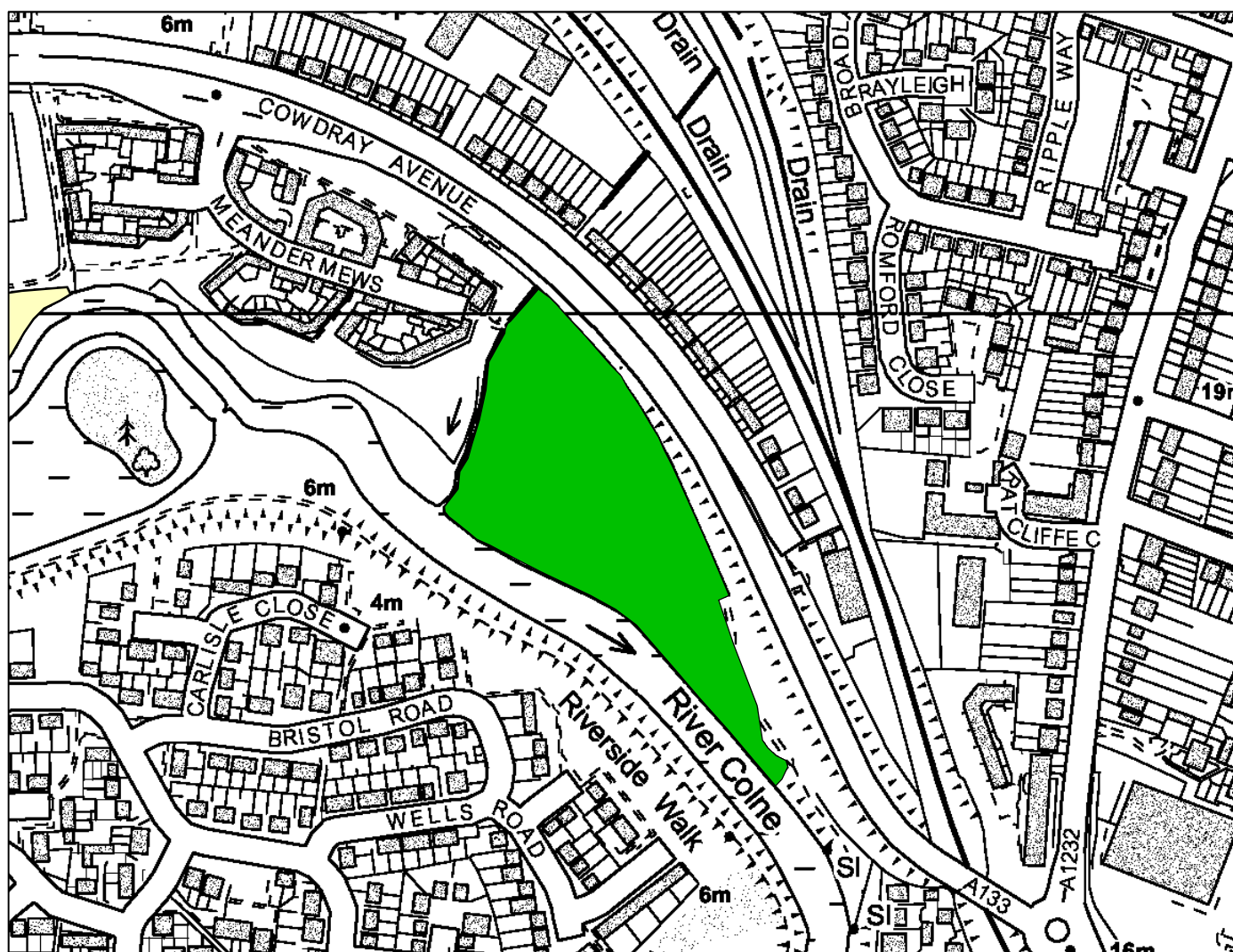
The restoration of Man Wood to broad-leaf would be desirable to maximise its conservation value.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended)

Co118 Cowdray Marsh, Colchester (1.8 ha) TM 006259



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Originally a rush-pasture, the site was largely topsoil stripped and generally disturbed before being passed to Colchester Borough Council. However, since then it has recovered to form a damp marshland and wet woodland mosaic within the River Colne flood plain, of interest principally for its flora.

Typical marshland plants include Greater Pond Sedge (*Carex riparia*), Lesser Pond Sedge (*Carex acutiformis*), Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*), Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*), Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*). Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) are of more significance. Drier grassland areas support Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*).

Areas of young wet scrub woodland are provided by Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Grey Alder (*Alnus incana*), Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*), Grey Willow (*S. cinerea*) and White Willow (*S. alba*), with some Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) appearing around the drier margins.

Records suggest that the site supports a significant population of Common Toad, with Common Frog and Smooth Newt also known to be present. There have been records of several nationally noteworthy invertebrates from the site, but their current status is unknown.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and public access is possible by viewing from the adjacent footpath to the north.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC14 – Lowland Fen Vegetation

Rationale:

Although not matching the Lowland Fen HPIE description, the tall fen communities present are comparable in character and an increasingly scarce resource in the county.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

Management Issues

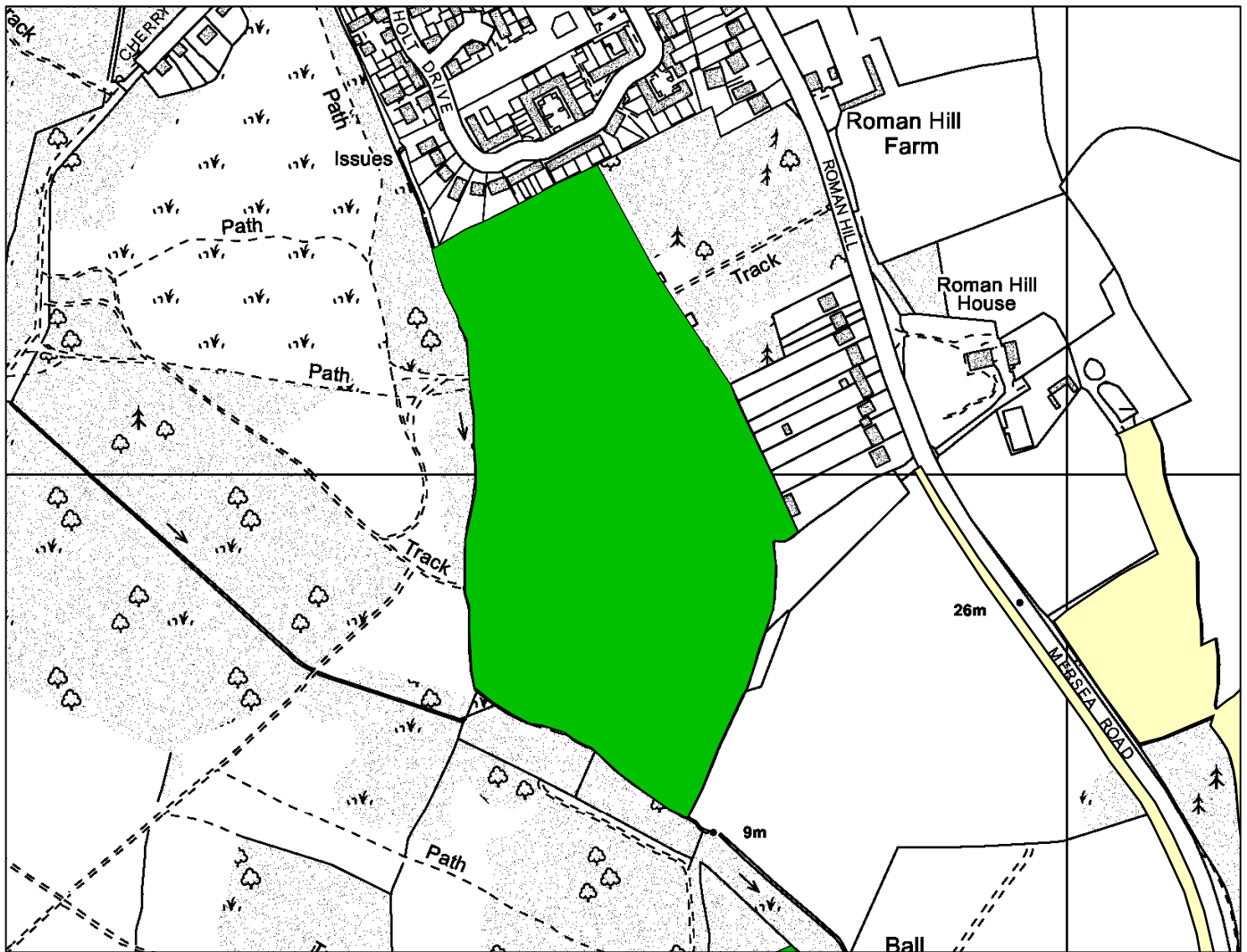
The principle problems on this site are the spread of willow across the open marsh communities and the maintenance of appropriate water levels. A management plan for the site is now in place.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (minor reduction)

Co120 Ball Grove, Colchester (10.3 ha) TM 006209



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This site comprises a mosaic of ancient woodland, recent woodland, rough grassland and, in the southeast corner, an old, species-rich meadow.

The most significant species in the largely free-draining meadow are Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*), Adder's-tongue Fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium calamintha*) and Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), amongst Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*), Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*). Waxcap mushrooms, an indicator of unimproved grassland, are present and, the lower, southern part of the meadow is damp, with Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*).

The northern grasslands, pylon rides and other clearings are taller and unmanaged, but still retain an acid grassland flora, which includes Common Bent (*Agrostis tenuis*), Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), Heath Speedwell, Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*). Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Lesser Stitchwort, Bird's-foot-trefoil and Perforate St John's-wort are also present.

The central area of woodland, around a spring and seepage, is the remnant ancient Ball Grove, which is typically old Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice with Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards and occasional Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*). The ground flora includes Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Enchanter's-nightshade

(*Circaea lutetiana*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*). Along the spring are Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Creeping-jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) with frequent ferns.

To the north and west of the ancient wood are blocks of maturing, but recent, scrubby oak woodland with a ground flora dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and, in more open areas, some remaining grassland species such as Agrimony.

Ownership and Access

The site is partially owned by the Ministry of Defence, but parts of it are believed to be in private ownership. There is public access

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Meadows

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC10 – Lowland Meadows

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

Rationale:

Map evidence and the species present indicate that Ball Grove is ancient, although some of the other woodland blocks are equally clearly secondary, but still within the definition of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE. The southeast meadow falls within the range of the NVC MG5 community, of a type that reflects the acidic nature of the soils in the area, but the composition of other grassland areas suggests a lack of the grazing history that characterises that community and more resemble acid grassland.

Condition Statement:

Variable

Management Issues

The larger block of grassland at the northern end of the site is in need of management to control the abundance of the coarse grass species – False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) – tall ruderals such as thistles (*Cirsium* spp.) and Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), and invading scrub. The meadow in the southeast is closely horse-grazed at present, but has suffered from scrub encroachment in the past; more balanced management is required.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)