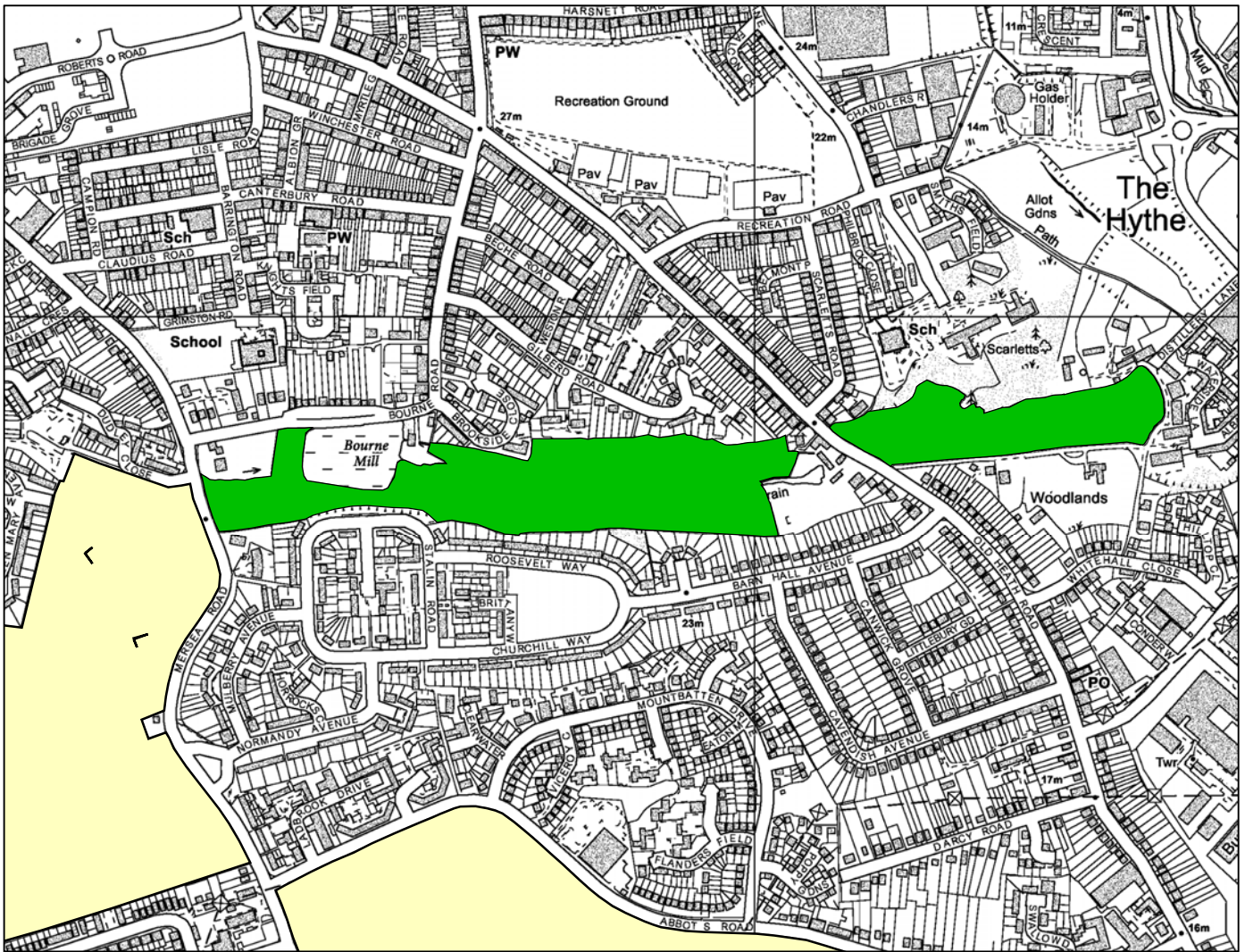


## Co121 Bourne Valley, Colchester (9.5 ha) TM 008238



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This site contains freely draining and swampy woodland, marsh, tall grassland, stream and lake habitats of great intrinsic interest, especially given its place in the urban environment.

The woodland south of Bourne Pond is very old, if not ancient, comprising Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice with some Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and an understorey of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The flora here includes abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*). Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willow (*Salix*) wood fringes the pond with Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*) and Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*). Eastwards, past planted poplars (*Populus* sp.) and large willows, this grades into young oak wood with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Alder, Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Holly. The ground flora consists of Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) with Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

The stream and adjacent marshes support species such as Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Fool's-watercress (*Apium nodosa*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*). Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) is present in grassy areas.

The Willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder woodland surrounding Distillery Pond has a diverse swamp flora which includes Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Lesser Pond-sedge, Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacorus*) and Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*). Invertebrate surveys have revealed an interesting fauna associated with the stream and wet woodland communities, including the Nationally Scarce (Na) Pale-lemon Sallow moth (*Xanthia ocellaris*). Common Toad, now a UK BAP species, breeds here.

**Ownership and Access**

Part of the site is under the control of Colchester Borough Council and part the National Trust

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Wet Woodland

**Selection criteria:**

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

HC30 – Wildlife Corridors

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

**Rationale:**

There is insufficient evidence to suggest that the western woodland is ancient, but it does conform to the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE, as do other more recent woodland sections. The site contains wet woodland, scrub, grassland and fen vegetation in insufficient quantity, or quality, for individual criteria to be applied, but they combine to form a valuable block of habitat and this is strengthened by the site's amenity and corridor functions.

**Condition Statement:**

Mostly favourable

**Management Issues**

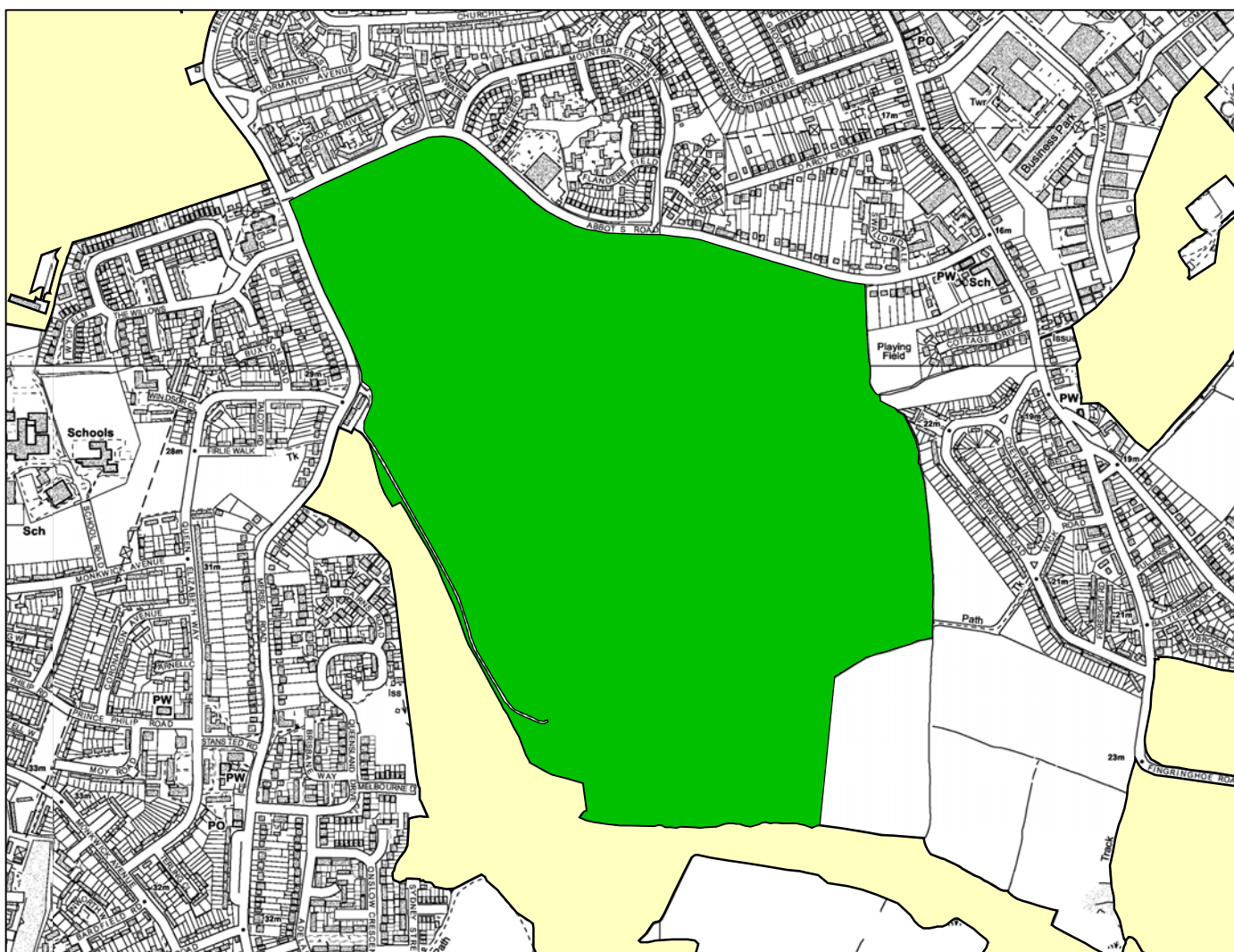
The site contains a number of invasive non-native species including Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and, in Blythe Pond, Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*). In places it is suffering from heavy use, resulting in trampling and compaction of the ground and the tipping of garden rubbish occurs in some areas.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co122 Middlewick Ranges, Colchester (76.0 ha) TM 009228



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The vegetation here comprises tall sward grassland and scrub to the north and south, short-mown acidic turf over the rifle ranges and scrubby acidic grassland behind the main butts.

The northern-most field is hay-cut and species-poor, but retains an acidic character with Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Common Bent (*Agrostis tenuis*), along with Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Scorzoneroideis autumnalis*). To the south of this the grassland has been invaded by scrub, which now includes Pedunculate Oaks (*Quercus robur*) of considerable size, with elm (*Ulmus* sp.), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The open grassland is marginally more diverse here, with Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*), meadow-grass (*Poa* sp.), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolia*) and Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*). However, False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Cock's-foot Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) are frequent and there is abundant Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) scrub. A population of the Nationally Scarce Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium calaminta*) can be found on the western edge of the site here.

To the south of the butts there is a combination of Gorse scrub, bare ground and sparse swarded acidic grassland over uneven ground. Although not floristically diverse on the whole, there are patches of lichen heath, dominated by *Cladonia* lichens. The meadow to the south of this area, beyond some more scrubby Pedunculate Oak woodland, is more diverse, in part, with Common Bent, Red Fescue, timothy (*Phleum* sp.), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Hare's-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*).

The principal value of this site, however, is its invertebrate populations. The main rifle butts at the south end of the site, along with smaller sandy banks to the north, provide significant nesting habitat for a range of insects, whilst the

extensive grasslands surrounding them, including those areas kept closely mown over the active parts of the rifle range, provide the necessary additional foraging grounds. The best-studied group of insects here is the hymenoptera (bees, wasps and ants), within which seven nationally threatened (Red Data Book) and eight Nationally Scarce species have been recorded. The most significant species are the SPIE digger wasps *Cerceris quadricincta* (RDB1) and *Cerceris quinquefasciata* (RDB3), the latter's brood-parasite cuckoo-wasp *Hedychrum niemelai* (RDB3) and the Small Blue Carpenter-bee *Ceratina cyanea* (RDB3). Some of the short-mown sandy banks bordering the range roads support a large population of the RDB2 Bee-wolf (*Philanthus triangulum*).

### **Ownership and Access**

The site is owned by the Ministry of Defence. There are public footpaths that cross the site and most parts of it are effectively open access except when the range is in use.

### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

### **Selection criteria:**

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

SC18 – SPIE Invertebrates

SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

### **Rationale:**

In parts, this site supports good quality Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, but other sections do not fit that HPIE description, although still acidic in nature and largely unimproved. The presence of the SPIE *Cerceris quinquefasciata* and *Cerceris quadricincta* is of significance as is the overall assemblage of nationally rare and scarce invertebrates.

### **Condition Statement:**

Largely favourable

### **Management Issues**

The spread of scrub, as a result of low levels of management work in parts, is reducing the extent of open flower-rich grassland.

### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended)

## Co123 East Wood, Colchester (2.7 ha) TM 010274



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East Wood was largely destroyed by a supermarket and housing development. However, a number of fragments and boundary banks survived, scattered through the development. The canopy of those blocks clustered around Highwoods Approach largely comprises Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards amongst Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees from coppice with some Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). The ground flora is dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), although a surprisingly varied ground flora has survived in places where human disturbance is not significant. Characteristic species include Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*), Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), Creeping soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) and Wood Meadow-grass (*Poa nemoralis*).

A small remnant of the southern part of East Wood also survives adjacent to the road Chanterelle. Here, Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) coppice is frequent, along with some Sweet Chestnut and Pedunculate Oak. The ground flora is being heavily trampled by general pedestrian traffic, but still includes frequent Creeping soft-grass, Bluebell and Bramble.

### Ownership and Access

Unknown. There are footpaths through or beside most of the sections of this site.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

### Selection criteria:

HC1- Ancient Woodland Sites

## HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

### **Rationale:**

East Wood is on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, as a cleared ancient wood, and sufficient indicator species remain to support this conclusion. The proximity of this habitat to a large residential population is of significance in its status.

### **Condition Statement:**

Only fragments remain.

### **Management Issues**

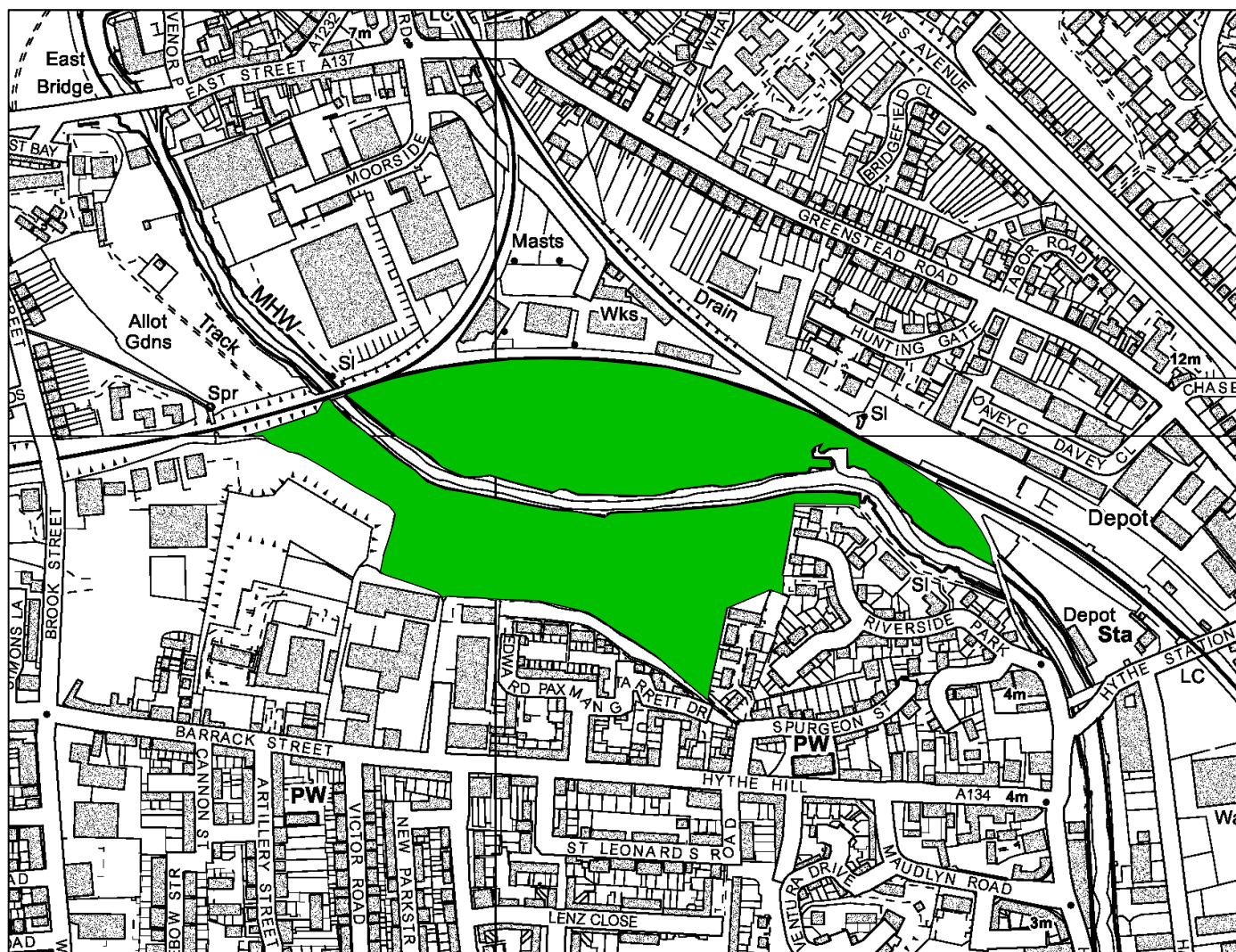
The remaining narrow strips of woodland don't require much in the way of management, although their long-term viability will be in question once standard trees pass maturity. There is some Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) in the understorey, which inhibits ground flora and the location of the woodland fragments means that they are vulnerable to the pressures of human use.

### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co125 The Moors, Colchester (8.1 ha) TM 011250



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This unusual site comprises beds of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), woodland, rough grassland and ruderal communities that have developed an unusual flora and fauna. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century this area supported a series of riverside meadows either side of a meander in the River Colne, but by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the river had been straightened, presumably to allow bigger boats to reach the East Mills upstream.

Common Reed forms dense fringes along the river's banks and a large stand is found on low lying ground between the river and the railway line. More interesting plant species include Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthum*), the Essex Red Data List species Small Teasel (*Dipsacus pilosus*) and the Nationally Scarce Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*), with Wild Celery (*Apium graveolens*) and Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) on the banks of the tidal River Colne also being of note. In general, away from the river, the site supports rough grassland with scattered bushes and patches of dense scrub. Along the southern edge there is an old boundary hedge and a band of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and willow (*Salix* sp.) woodland on damp land fed by springs.

The invertebrate populations are of note, with Wormwood Shark moth (*Cucullia absinthii*), several interesting hoverflies and, unusually for Colchester, a good mollusc fauna. Also present are a good range of bumblebees and butterflies, and populations of Slow Worm and Common Lizard.

### Ownership and Access

Unknown, but there is open public access to the south of the river including a surfaced footpath.

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Reedbeds

**Selection criteria:**

HC15 – Reedbeds

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

SC1 – Vascular plants

**Rationale:**

The stand of reed present is significant in a local context. The scrub, willow woodland and grassland habitats are of insufficient quality for individual criteria to be applied, but they combine to form a site of significant conservation value and one that is readily accessible to the large, nearby residential population.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable, but declining

**Management Issues**

The most significant management issue is the spread of scrub to the south of the river, which will reduce the diversity of habitats present. The invasive non-native Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is present in the southeast corner of the site.

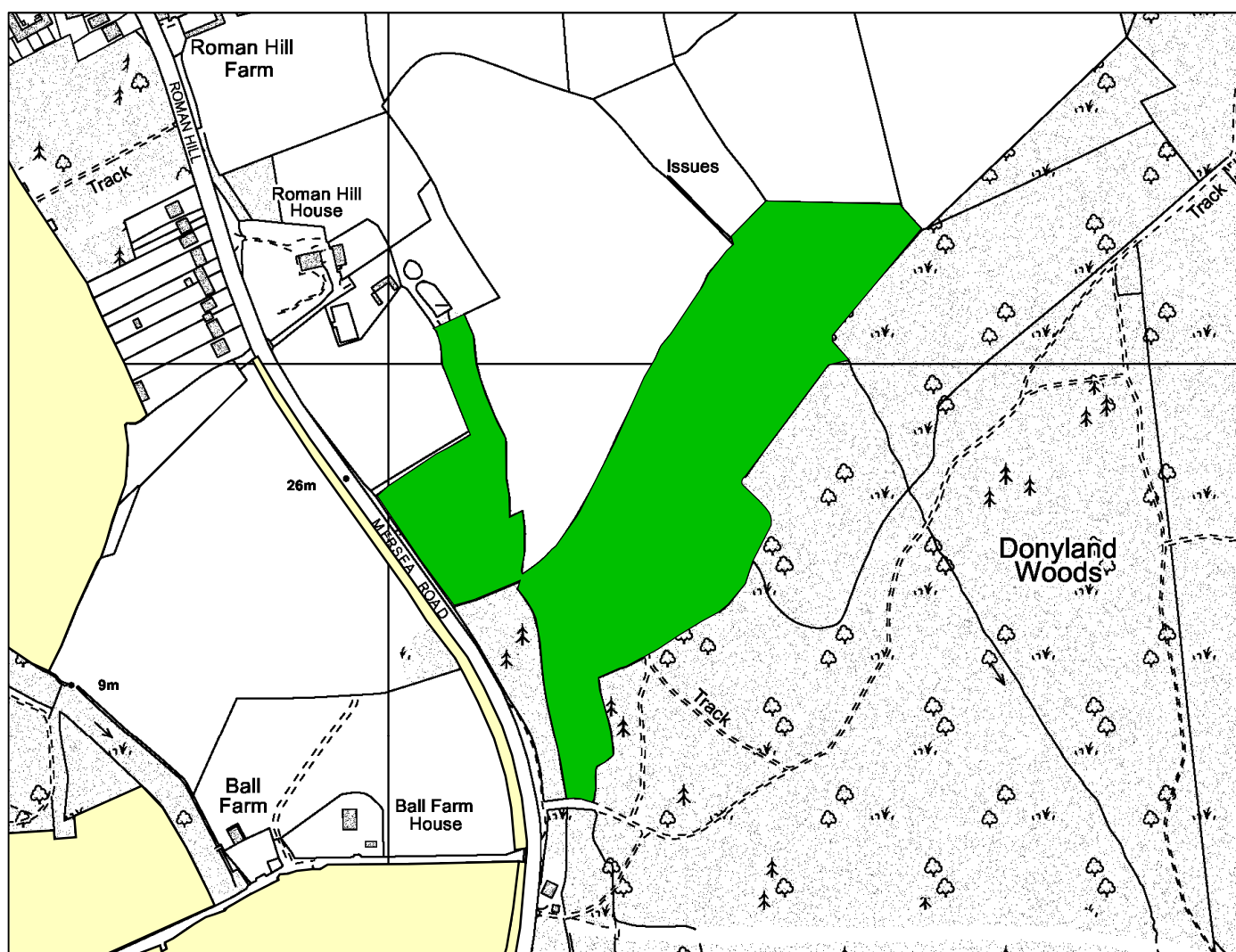
**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)



## Co127 Donyland Woods West, East Donyland (9.2 ha) TM 011208



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This site consists of an old streamside woodland strip together with more recent planted woodlands that augment the adjacent Donyland Woods part of the Roman River SSSI.

The northern end of the narrow, streamside wood has Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) standards with occasional Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and a Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) understorey. The ground flora includes Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) and abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) in the ground flora. To the west of the stream is a block of maturing planted Pedunculate Oak and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) into which Ash, Bluebell and Dog's Mercury have spread. Further south there is more Ash with Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and Elm (*Ulmus* sp.).

The blocks to the east of the stream were planted with conifers in the 1960s/70s, but are now being converted to broad-leaved woodland. The central one of these three blocks consists of Pedunculate Oak woodland with Elm, Hazel and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) over an acidic ground flora of Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), *Polytrichum* moss and *Cladonia* lichens. The north, eastern block is the oldest of the recent woodland, planted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and now made up of Pedunculate Oak and poplar (*Populus* sp.) with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and elm (*Ulmus* sp.). It includes some old Pedunculate Oak pollards and coppiced Ash, which may derive from old field boundary features.

**Ownership and Access**

The site is in private ownership with no public rights of way. Public access is possible to some parts, but only when Middlewick Ranges are not in use.

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

**Selection criteria:**

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

**Rationale:**

It is possible that the immediate stream valley contains the remains of ancient woodland, as Donyland Woods once extended north as far as Roman Hill House, but there is little remaining evidence that this is the case. However, these secondary woodlands have good conservation value, especially as an extension to the adjacent SSSI woodland.

**Condition Statement:**

Improving

**Management Issues**

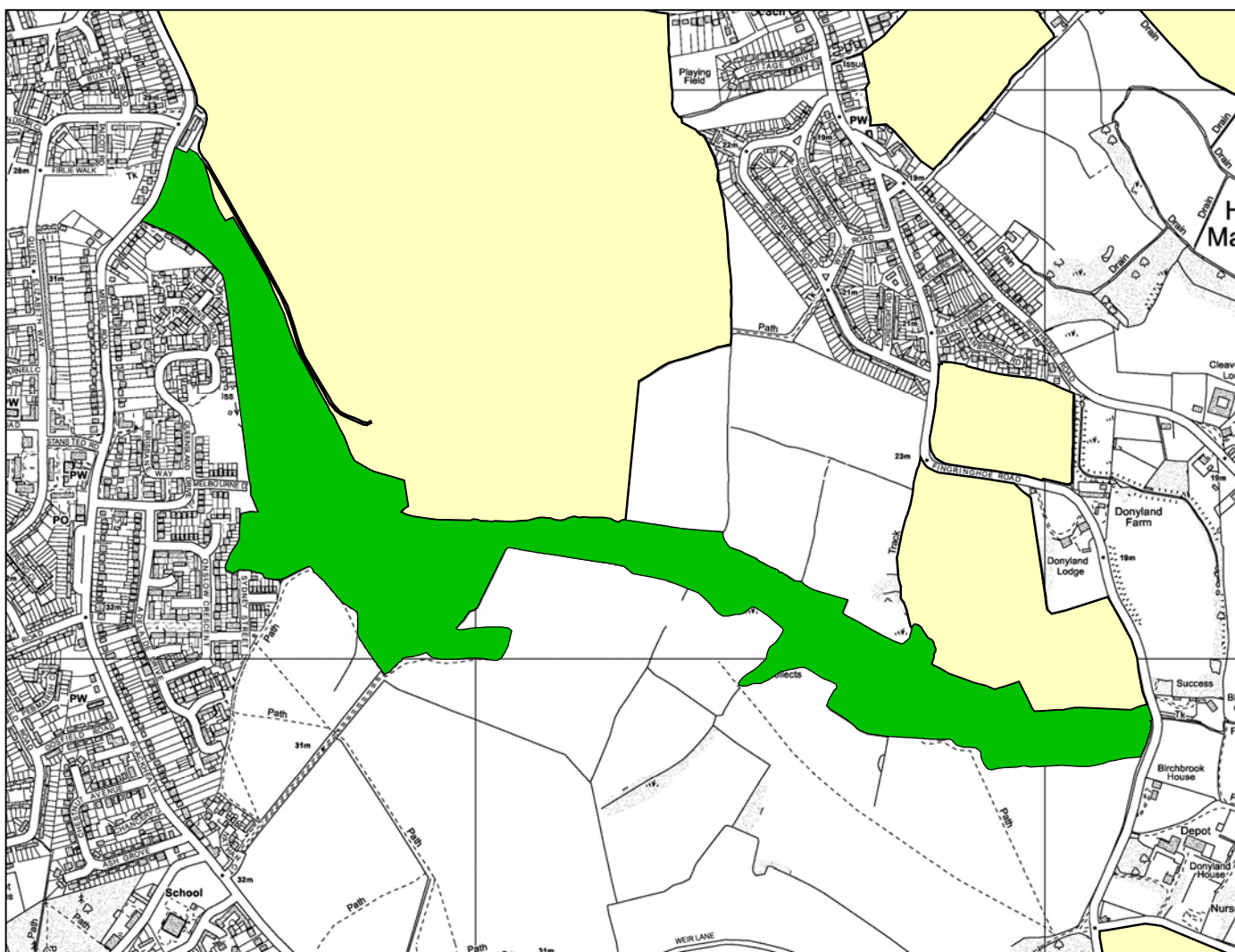
The removal of the majority of the remaining conifers, and other non-native species, will allow the development of native woodland communities in the future. Thinning and other ongoing woodland management will be needed to maintain the diversity of the ground flora.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (extended)

## Co128 Birch Brook, Colchester (30.5 ha) TM 010222



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Although now predominantly a woodland site, Birch Grove, towards the eastern end, is the only section of any age, with a flora that suggests it may be ancient in origin. The remainder of the site supports secondary woodland, spreading from old field boundaries, wet woodland along the brook and in lower lying areas and localised areas of acid grassland.

On the higher, dry ground the woodland consists of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Elm (*Ulmus* sp.) and Birch (*Betula* spp.) with Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) in the understorey and a ground flora that includes Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*). Scrubbier margins include Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and, in places, Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) while larger Pedunculate Oaks mark old hedge lines.

The wet woodland is largely made up of Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*) and Grey Willow (*S. cinerea*), with some Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*). In more open areas there are localised sedge (*Carex* sp.) beds with Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*).

Birch Grove consists of Pedunculate Oak and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) along the streamside. The ground flora is rich in ferns, with the Essex Red Data List (ERDL) species Narrow Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*), Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*) of particular note. Other noteworthy plant species include Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Creeping Jenny

(*Lysimachia nemorum*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and the ERDL Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) at one of its few Essex locations.

The area around the Redoubt comprises dry acid grassland and scrub, providing additional habitat diversity. The ground flora includes Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), *Hieracium sabaudum* (a hawkweed) and Bracken, with Pedunculate Oak, Gorse, Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) scrub. A further area of sparse acid grassland is found on the southern edge of the site near its eastern end. Plant species here include Common Bent, Sheep's Sorrel, *Hieracium sabaudum*, Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acris*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), *Cladonia* lichens and Hoary Cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*).

#### **Ownership and Access**

The site is under private ownership, but it is crossed by a number of public footpaths, most of which can't be used when Middlewick Ranges are being used.

#### **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

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

SC1 – Vascular Plants

#### **Rationale:**

The frequency of ancient woodland indicator species in Birch Grove strongly suggests that it is ancient in origin, but map evidence demonstrates that the other areas of dry woodland are secondary. Along the brook, the willow woodland meets the description of the Wet Woodland HPIE. Around the redoubt and at the eastern end of the site are communities made up of characteristically acid grassland species. The Vascular Plant criterion is applied because of the assemblage of locally rare fern species, rather than for any one of them individually.

#### **Condition Statement:**

Mostly favourable

#### **Management Issues**

The acid grassland around the Redoubt is rapidly scrubbing over and should be cleared to maintain the distinctive plant communities found there. None of the woodland is managed, which will lead to a decline in the ground flora in time.

#### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (minor extensions)



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This site comprises the remnant western edge of Magdalen Wood, the rest of which has been lost to housing. It is a well-walked wood and brings ancient woodland ecology right into the lives of those people living around it. The rather heavily trampled ground flora still includes locally frequent Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), as well as Pignut (*Conopodium majus*). The canopy comprises mainly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), with Hornbeam (*Carpinus betula*) and some very large overgrown coppice stools (now to canopy height) of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and, curiously for an essentially dry site, Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).

#### **Ownership and Access**

Unknown, but the site is accessible via well-used footpaths.

#### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

#### **Selection criteria:**

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

#### **Rationale:**

This remaining fragment is too small to be included within the Ancient Woodland Inventory, but its composition and the remnant ground flora indicate that it is ancient.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining

**Management Issues**

A number of non-native species, including Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*), Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.) has been introduced and these could swamp the remaining natural vegetation if not controlled. Heavy public use is adding pressure to the ground flora.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co133 Kiln Wood, Langham (8.9 ha) TM 017295



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This ancient wood has been modified by human use since the Second World War, when it became part of Langham Airfield, and some of the airfield buildings are now used for light industry. A large block on the western side of the track through the wood has been re-planted with Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and houses a large Pheasant-rearing pen.

The northwest and northeast sections of the wood consist of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards with Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice. The understorey includes Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and the ground flora is dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) with Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). The southern half of the wood is made up of Pedunculate Oak with Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Hazel coppice. Bracken and Bluebell are both present.

Poplars have been planted in the southeast corner of the wood and in a triangle on the eastern edge of the wood, outside its original boundary, which also contains Alder and Pedunculate Oak. Parts of the wood have been cleared, leaving open ground that is being encroached by Bramble and Aspen (*Populus tremula*) scrub. The remaining open areas display slightly acid flora including Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Common Centaury (*Centaurium erythraea*), Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) has also been recorded.

### Ownership and Access

The wood is believed to be in private ownership. There is no public access.

**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 majority of the wood is ancient, as shown on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, including the area replanted with conifers, but a small section on the eastern edge is more recent.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining

**Management Issues**

There is no evidence of recent, positive woodland management. Cleared areas should be replanted and the pines removed in order to restore the whole site to broad-leaved woodland. There is some intrusion of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), which will spread if not controlled.

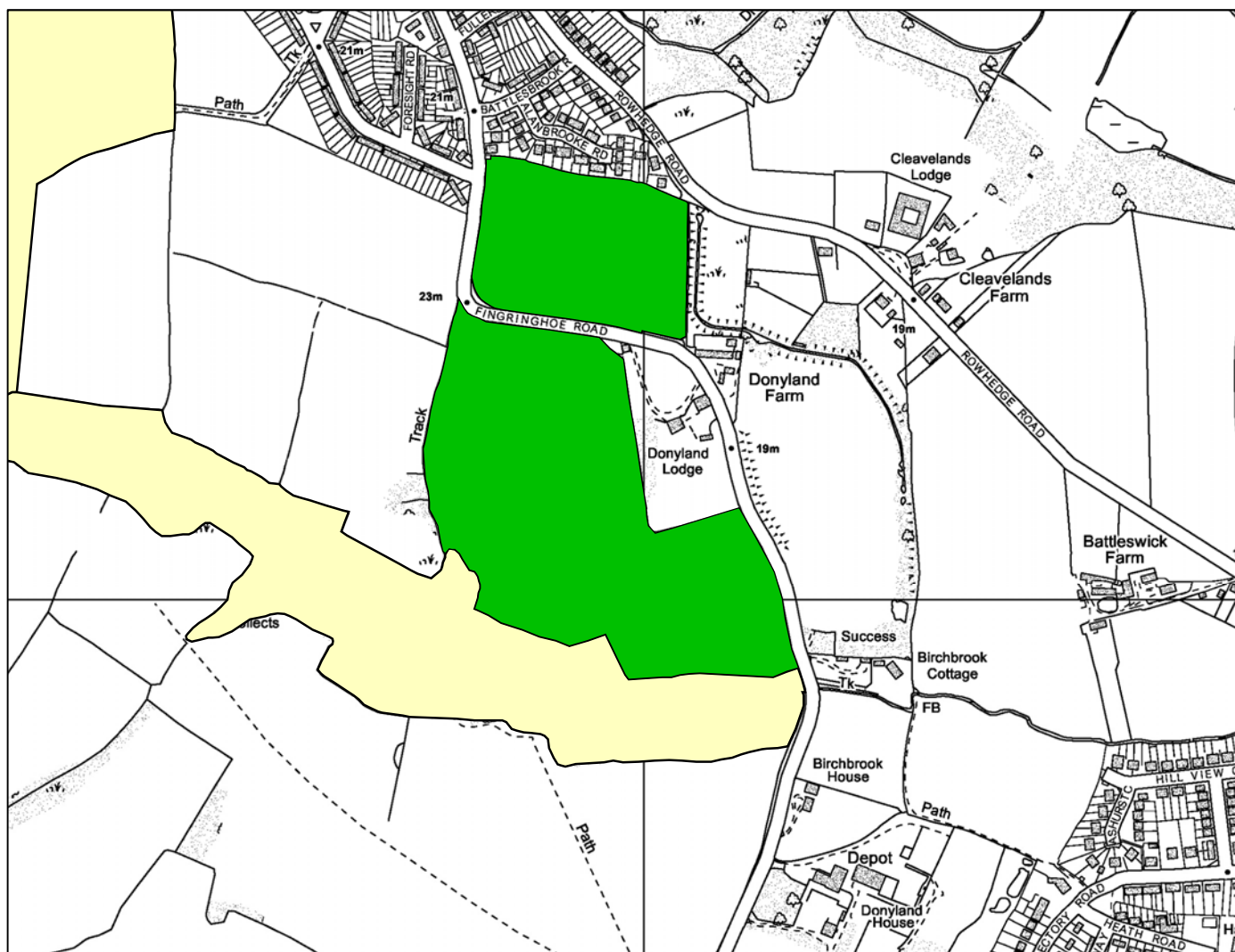
**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)



## Co135 Donyland Wetlands, Colchester (15.3 ha) TM 019223



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This is the area of a former mineral extraction site and supports significant populations of breeding amphibians, most notably a large colony of Common Toad, a SPIE, with Common Frog and Smooth Newt

The northern section comprises a broad, shallow lake that draws down in the summer. The shallow margins support dense willow (*Salix* spp.) woodland with swamp vegetation and some rough grassland. The lake supports a dense population of pondweed (*Potamogeton* sp.) and breeding Little Grebe and Tufted Duck. Great Green Bush-cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*) (an Essex Red Data List species) has been recorded here.

The southern section comprises a deep flooded pit, which is now a fishing lake, and sloping rough grassland dropping down to the adjacent Birch Brook LoWS. The fishing lake is fringed with scrub and Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and is well used by waterfowl in the winter. Along its western edge is an old lane with large Pedunculate Oaks (*Quercus robur*).

The grassland is recent in origin, following the disturbance of quarrying operations, including the main processing area at its eastern end. It includes exposed sandy banks and damp hollows, with significant patches of Bramble scrub becoming established. Plant species include Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) and Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). In some more open areas, including where rabbits have grazed, the mineral origin of the soils is revealed by the presence of Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*) and Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*).

**Ownership and Access**

The site is believed to be in private ownership. Public access is only possible by public footpaths to the east of the northern section and to the west of the southern section.

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Wet woodland

**Selection criteria:**

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

HC8 – Hedgerows and Green Lanes

HC11 – Other Neutral Grassland

HC16 – Lakes and Reservoirs

SC13 – Hotspots for Amphibian Diversity

**Rationale:**

The willow scrub in the northern section qualifies as the Wet Woodland HPIE. The lane on the western edge contains a significant number of old Pedunculate Oak trees and acts as a corridor of movement to and from the adjacent Birch Brook LoWS. Although the southern grassland is not old, it supports a diverse flora that is of considerable benefit in association with adjacent habitats. The lake qualifies by virtue of supporting significant amphibian populations and is used here to define the extent of the site.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining in part

**Management Issues**

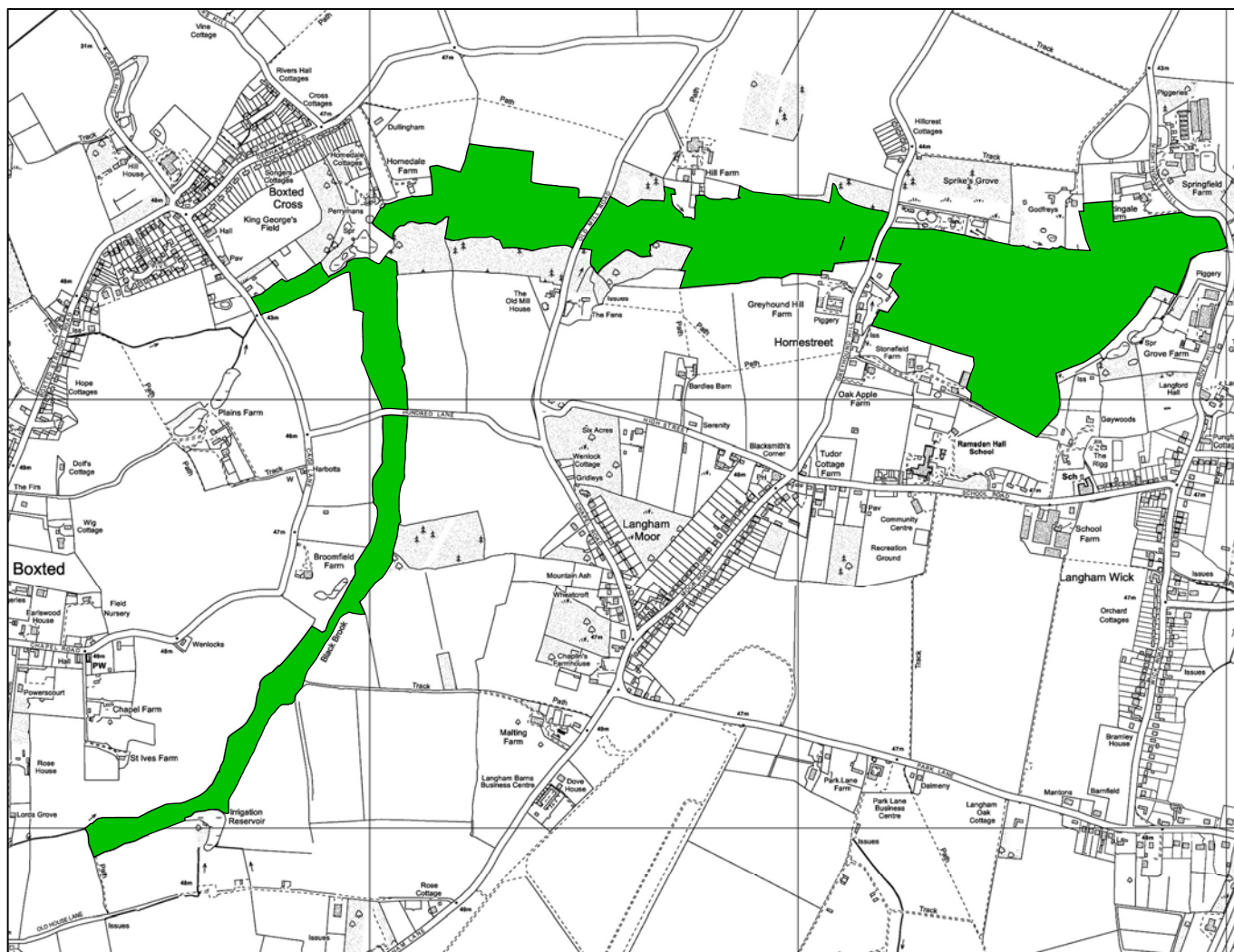
In the northern section, the willow scrub is becoming very dense and would benefit from clearance and ongoing management. The remaining open water area has been colonised by the invasive, non-native New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*), which could take over the entire water column. At the southern end the spread of Bramble scrub is affecting the quality of the grassland and there is a stand of the invasive, non-native Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*).

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991 (part)

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended)

## Co136 Black Brook, Boxted/Langham (54.2 ha) TM 020323



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This extensive mosaic of habitats associated with the Black Brook between Boxted and Langham provides a valuable wildlife corridor through a distinctive local landscape.

To the west of the site, willow (*Salix* spp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) dominates a very wet narrow woodland corridor. The waterlogged ground supports several plant species of interest including Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria uliginosa*), Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) and abundant Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*). Drier areas have tall Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) over a ground flora dominated by Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), with small patches of Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*).

Between Boxted Cross and Old Mill Road, a small compartment of probable ancient woodland to the north of the Black Brook has Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Alder and some Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) forming the high canopy, with Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) in the shrub canopy. Here, the higher ground is drier with Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*). Down slope, this grades into damper conditions that favour Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*). Towards the Black Brook the ground is very wet, typically supporting more Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage.

An unusual feature either side of Old Mill Road, are banks with very old Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) coppice with Pedunculate Oak standards. To the east of the road, the habitat changes and is characterised by grassland and plantation woodland. The higher grassy slopes exhibit a sandy acid soil with species such as Early Hair-grass (*Aira praecox*), Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). The lower streamside

grassland has in contrast, species of neutral grassland including Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.).

East of Greyhound Hill, grazed open grassland lies to the south of Black Brook, with plantation blocks with Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and Alder coppice. The grassland is most interesting near to a pond west of Grove Hill. Here, Lesser Spearwort and Cuckooflower are found in the wet grassland.

The easternmost block of habitat has shallow water located north of the Black Brook with tussocks of emergent and marginal rush (*Juncus* sp.). Other species found in the waterlogged zone include Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Bog Stitchwort and Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*). This habitat grades into drier neutral grassland, which in turn grades to a semi-acid grassland slope.

### **Ownership and Access**

The site is believed to be in private ownership, with multiple landowners likely. It is crossed by several public footpaths and highways.

### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, 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

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

### **Rationale:**

The woodland between Boxted Cross and Old Mill Road is believed to be ancient due to the indicator plant species present. The Grove, further east, is also very old, but there is no clear evidence to suggest that it is also ancient and so the non-ancient criteria are used for this and other more obviously recent woodland blocks, including areas of wet woodland.

### **Condition Statement:**

Variable

### **Management Issues**

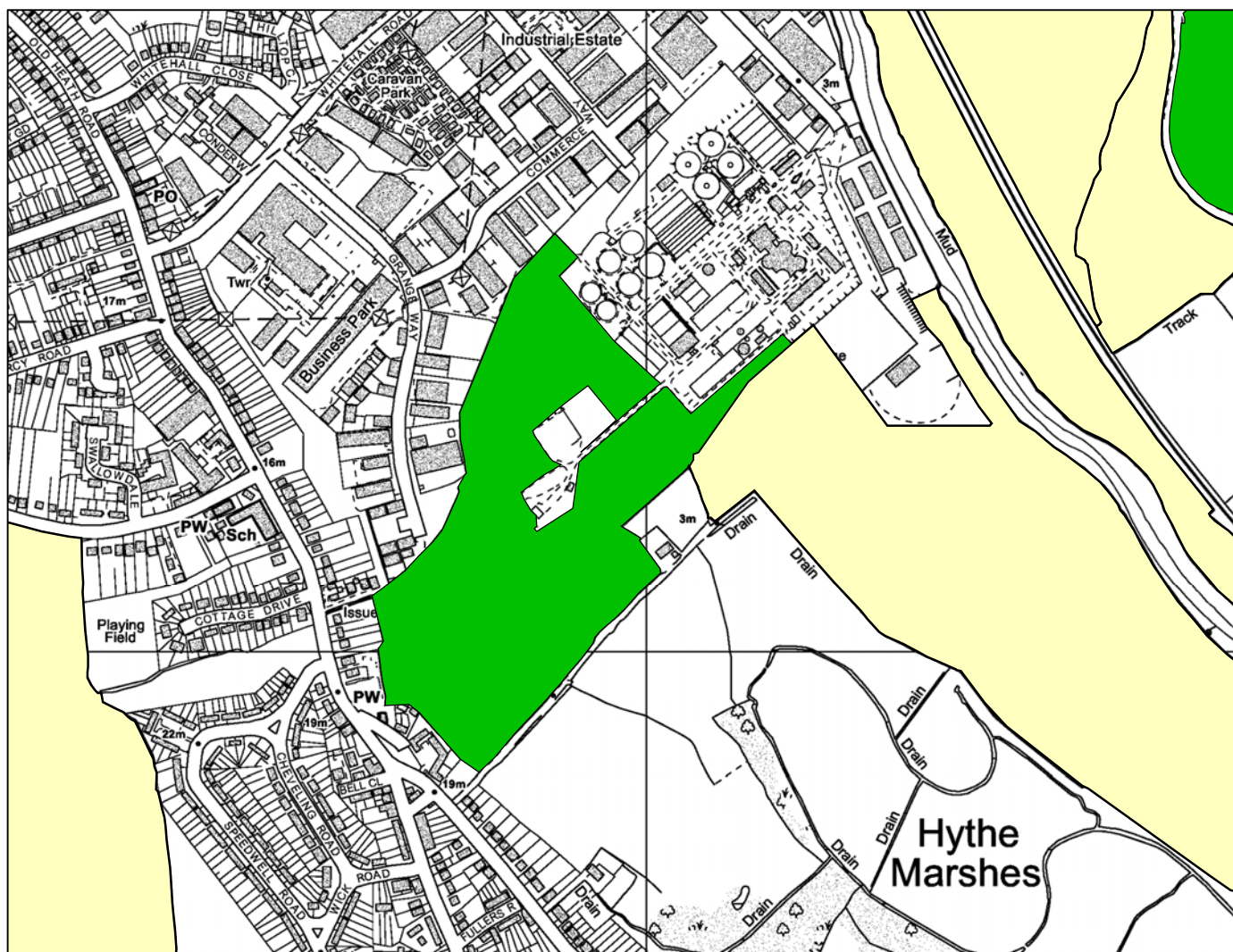
Many parts of the site are not being managed and this will lead to a decline in condition over time. Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) is scattered throughout the various planted compartments; it is a non-native species that can invade and overwhelm woodland understorey to the detriment of its ground flora.

### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (minor extension)

## Co137 Hythe Brownfield, Colchester (11.5 ha) TM 019232



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This series of post-industrial habitats includes an old sand pit, disused parts of a sewage treatment work and an area of old grazing marsh modified by sludge deposition. Such areas are known to be important for invertebrates, and the old sand pit cliff in particular supports a nationally important assemblage of solitary bees and wasps, including the Nationally Rare (RDB3) *Cerceris quinquefasciata*, a UK BAP Priority species; its cuckoo-wasp brood parasite *Hedychrum niemelai*, the nomad bee *Nomada fulvicornis* and the Small Blue Carpenter-bee *Ceratina cyanea* (all also RDB3), along with numerous other Nationally Scarce species. Much of the surrounding brownfield grassland provides essential foraging habitat for these and many other invertebrates.

The grassland at Place Farm is varied according to ground conditions. On the higher ground, the sward features Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Bent (*Agrostis tenuis*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Autumn Hawkbit (*Scorzoneroides autumnalis*), reflecting the acidic nature of the soil. On lower ground to the south and west it is more varied with Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), cat's-tail (*Phelum* sp.), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*). To the north of the meadow is a pool and associated marshy grassland that supports Nodding Bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and a water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus* sp.).

### Ownership and Access

The site is under private ownership. There is no public access.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

**Selection criteria:**

HC11 – Other Neutral Grassland

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites

SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

**Rationale:**

Place Farm supports an acid grassland community, sloping down to a damp neutral grassland community in the north. Both parts are the result of past industrial activity. The site is known to support a SPIE, *Cerceris quinquefasciata*.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable

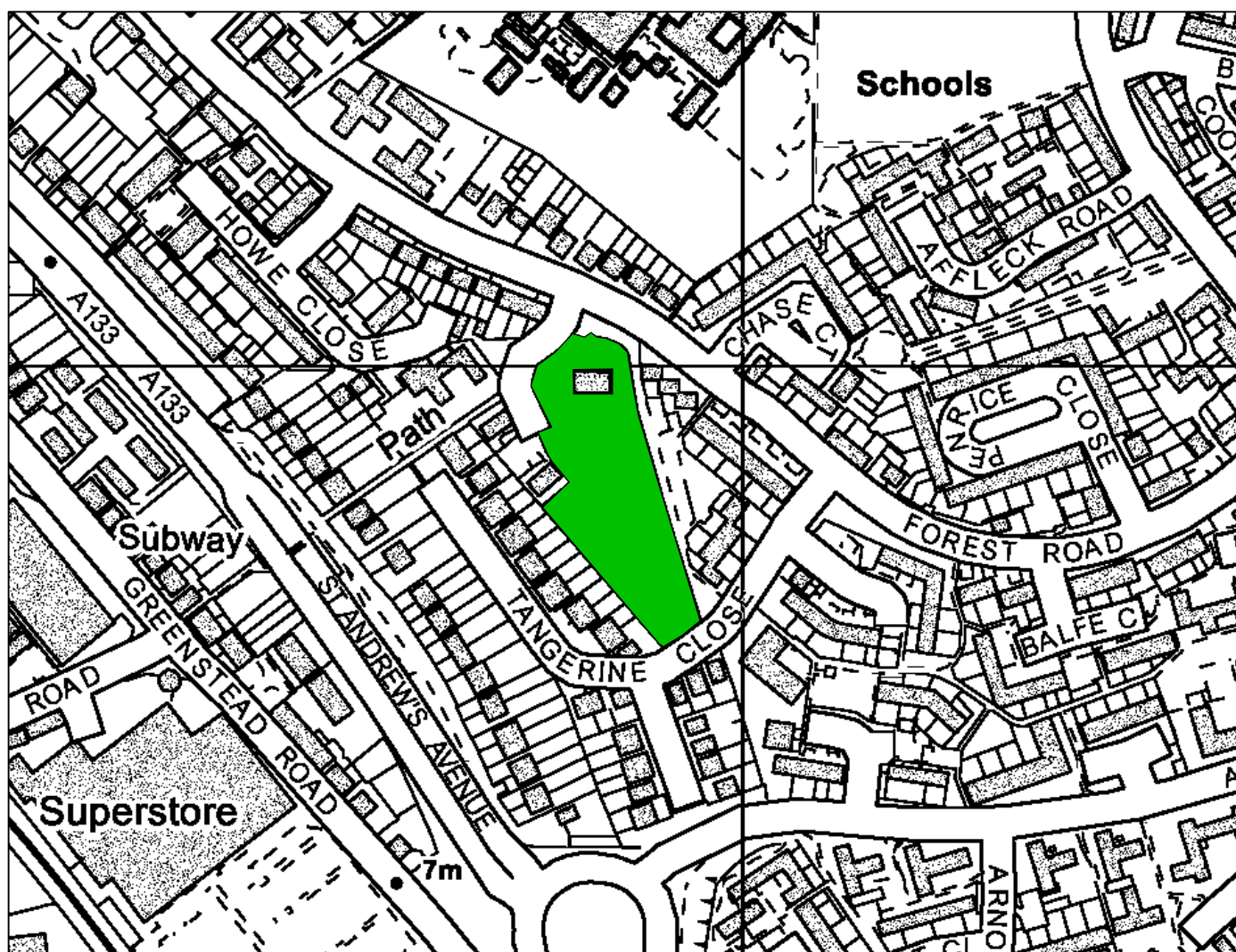
**Management Issues**

Horse grazing at the current intensity is preserving the characteristic plant communities and maintaining a degree of bare ground, but any change in management could have an adverse effect. The sewage works part of the site may be subject to development pressure should the treatment facilities be changed.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991 (part)

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended and boundary with adjacent LoWS adjusted)



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This churchyard in the Greenstead area of Colchester retains unimproved grassland, although it is, for the most part, regularly mown. Although not species rich, the site has a diverse mix of common grasses and herbs including Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Meadow grasses (*Poa* spp.), Common Bent (*Agrostis tenuis*), Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirsute*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). Of note is a localised population of Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium calamintha*), an Essex Red Data List species that occupies sunny locations near the church.

#### **Ownership and Access**

The site is an active churchyard and so under the ownership of the Church of England. There is no public right of access, but the site is freely accessible at most times.

#### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

None

#### **Selection criteria:**

HC11 – Other Neutral Grassland

#### **Rationale:**

The grassland of the site is old and has not been agriculturally improved, but it does not fit within the Lowland Meadows HPIE description.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining

**Management Issues**

Mowing frequency appears to have been increased in recent years, resulting in a lesser extent of long grass sward and fewer flowering stems.

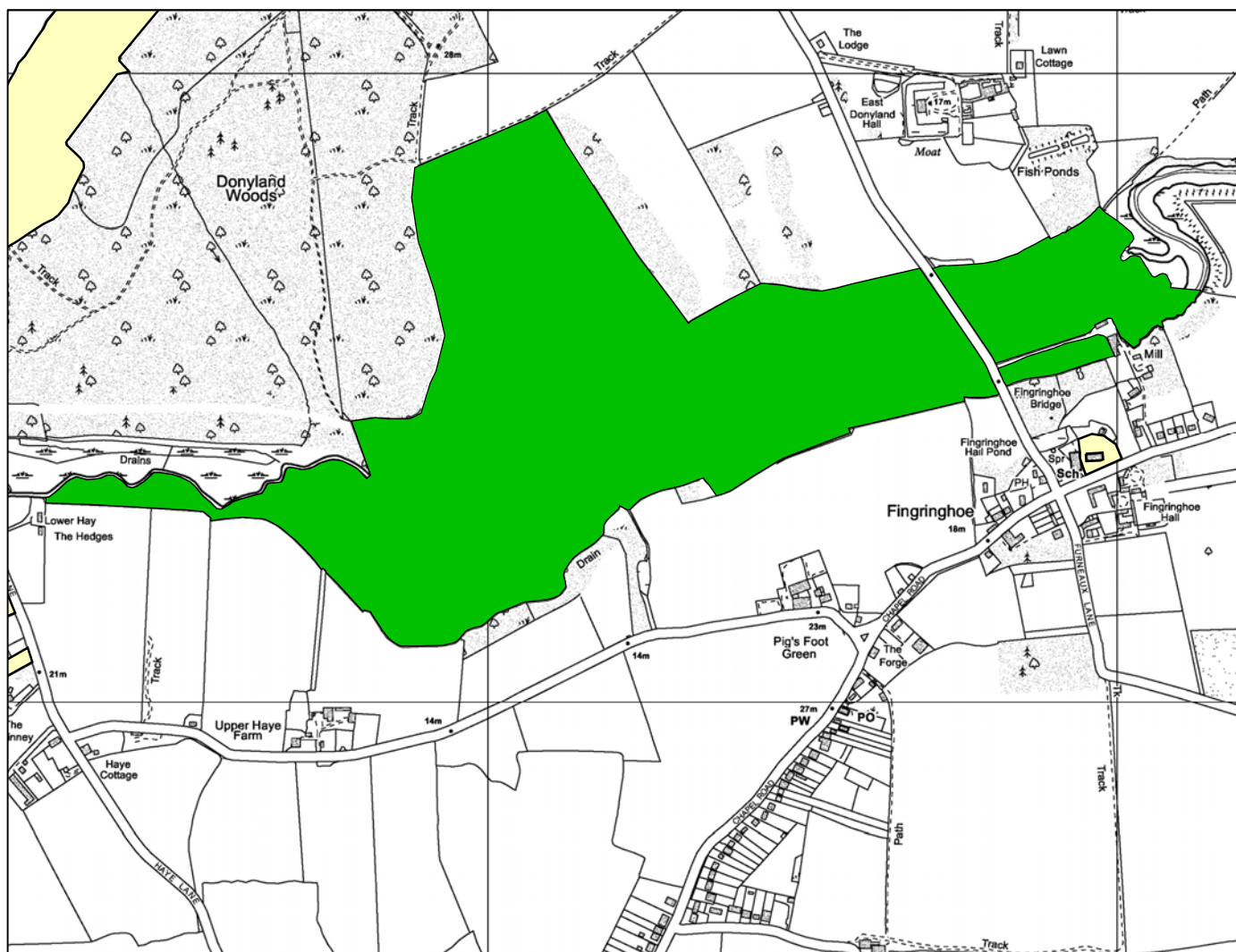
**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)



## Co139 Roman River East, Fingringhoe (49.7 ha) TM 021204



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This site comprises a band of former grazing-marsh bordering the tidal Roman River, together with two valley side pastures with acid grassland vegetation on their upper slopes. The site sits between and connects the Roman River SSSI to the west and the Upper Colne Marshes SSSI to the east.

The floodplain grassland retains a flora characteristic of grazing marshes, including Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*), amongst Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratense*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.). Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*) is found along parts of the associated ditches, which are generally fringed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*), an Essex Red Data List species, is also of note amongst areas of rough grassland. The grassland includes some scattered and dense scrub as well as tussocky sections with anthills, which support resident Common Lizards.

To the north of the river are two large pastures which form part of the flood plain, but also rise to form areas of dry acid grassland on their upper slopes, characterised by Common Bent-grass (*Agrostis capillaris*), Red Fescue, Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). The wet ditch between the pastures supports marsh vegetation including Nodding Bur-marigold (*Bidens cernua*), which is an Essex Red Data List species.

### Ownership and Access

The site is at least partially owned by the Ministry of Defence. There is no formal right of access.

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

**Selection criteria:**

HC10 – River Floodplain

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

**Rationale:**

The lower fields are all originally part of the floodplain, although they are now protected by flood embankments, and are managed by grazing. The upper slopes exhibit acid grassland vegetation, although they are not particularly diverse.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable

**Management Issues**

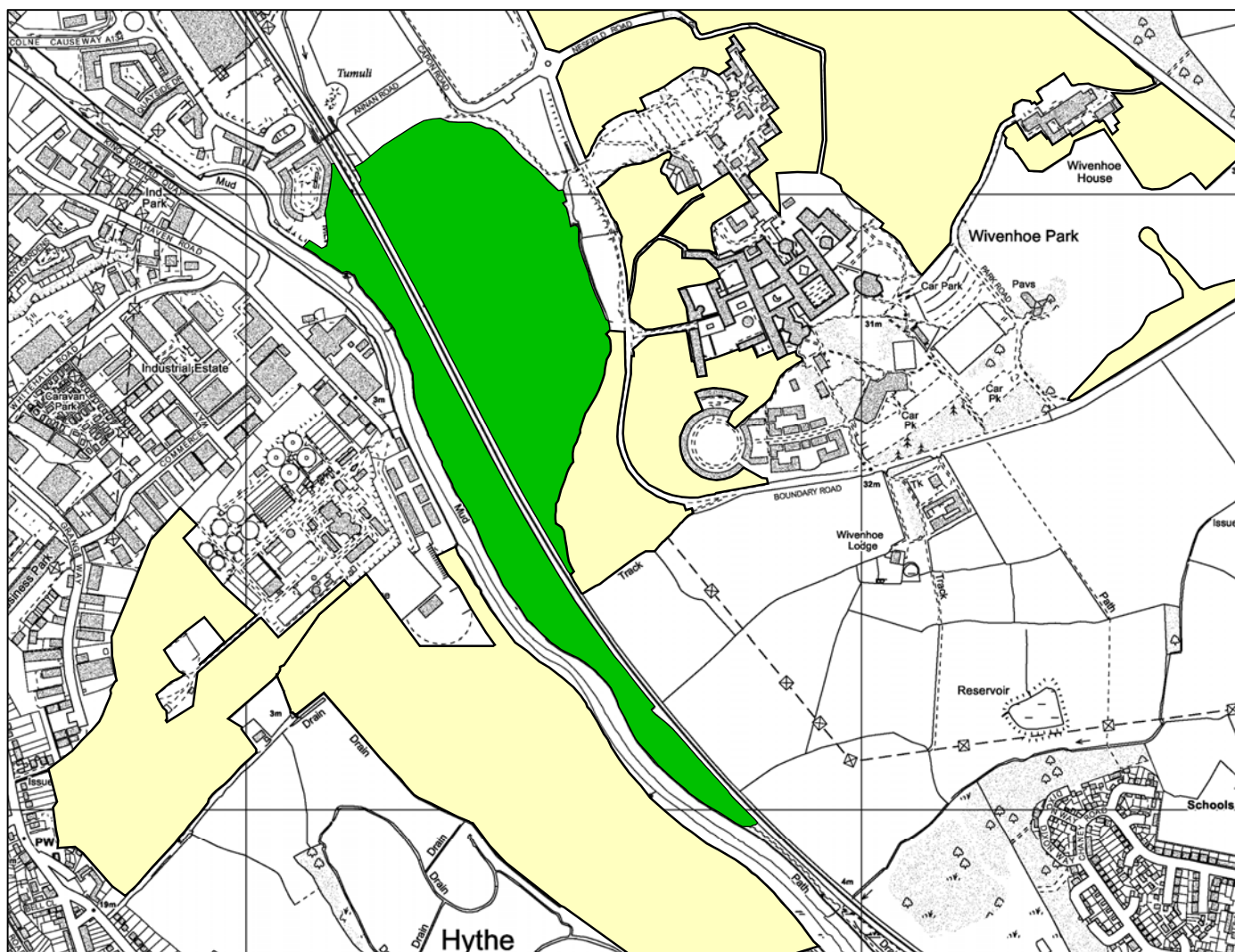
There are no specific management issues, although a conservation based grazing regime would improve their wildlife value.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (no change)

## Co140 University Marshes, Colchester (22.2 ha) TM 023237



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This relict grazing-marsh retains many typical species, such as Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*), Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*) and Divided Sedge (*Carex divisa*), whilst the larger drains support broad bands of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), with Brackish Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus baudotii*) in areas of more open water. The section between the River Colne and the railway line is currently unmanaged and is being invaded by False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and scrub.

### Ownership and Access

The site is believed to be under private ownership. The Wivenhoe Trail runs along the top of the seawall along the site's eastern boundary and allows views across the whole site. The northern edge is viewable from the public highway.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Reedbeds

### Selection criteria:

HC15 – Reedbeds

HC21 – Coastal Grazing Marsh

### Rationale:

The broad fleets of the marsh support a significant extent of reed bed habitat and the whole site is demonstrably old grazing marsh, enclosed by seawalls.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining

**Management Issues**

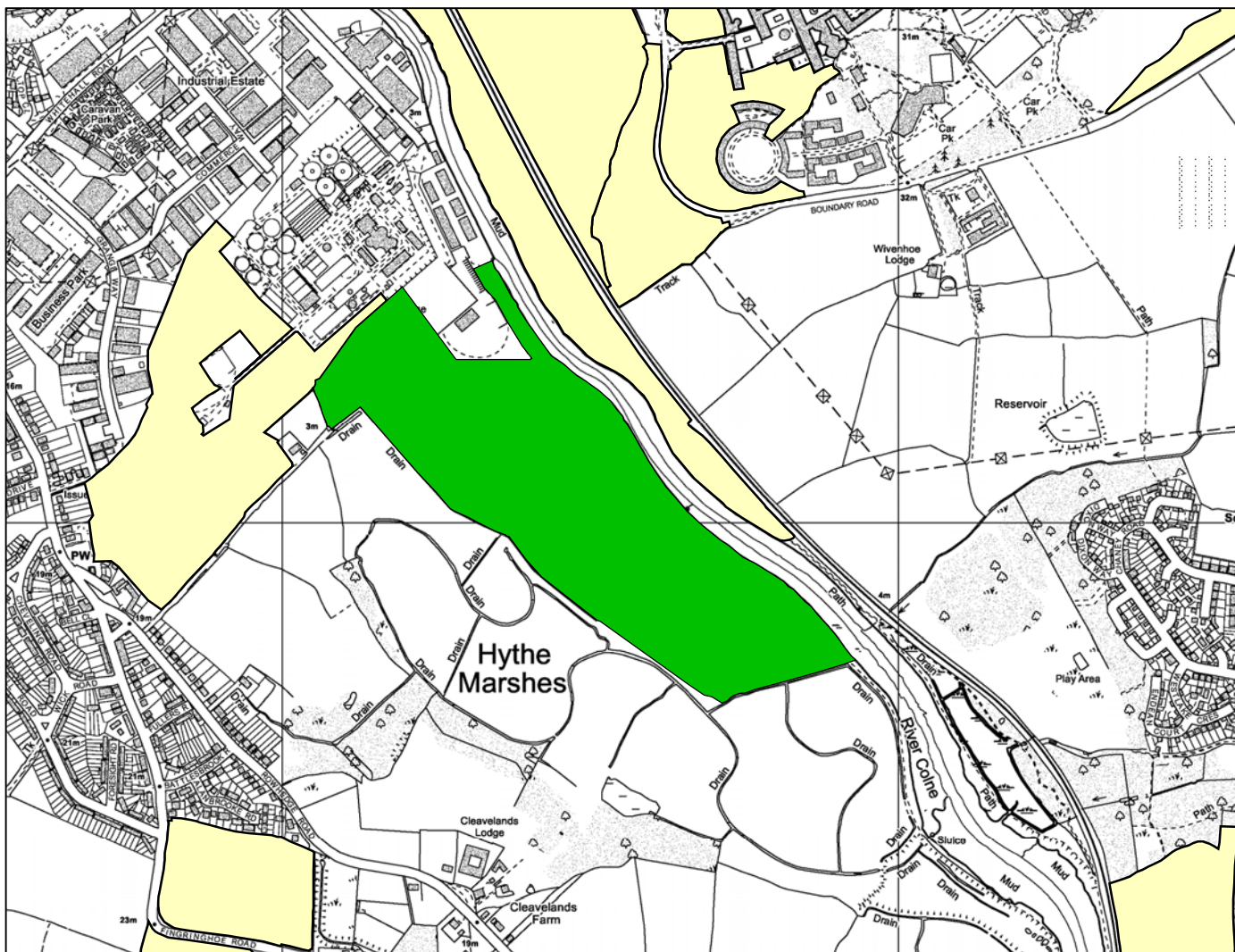
Part of the site has been lost to the construction of university buildings and further expansion plans could jeopardise the remaining area. The marshes are not managed at present and so the grassland habitat has become rank. The area between the river and the railway line has been invaded by scrub that will threaten its condition in time.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (reduced)

## Co142 Hythe Lagoons, Colchester (21.7 ha) TM 025229



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These lagoons are of importance as a breeding ground for Little Ringed Plover and, in some years, Avocet (both listed under Schedule 1 of the wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended)), as well as Lapwing, Shelduck and Linnet. It also provides a high tide roost and feeding habitat for a variety of coastal birds, including a significant proportion of the estuary's population of Black-tailed Godwits through autumn and winter. Although artificially created by the construction of embanked lagoons to take dredging material from the adjacent river Colne, the ecology of this site is very much one of coastal grazing marsh, which was the habitat present before the lagoons were created. It contains habitats that augment the adjacent Upper Colne Marshes SSSI and is now managed by Colchester Borough Council as a Local Nature Reserve.

The northernmost lagoon supports dense stands of Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) with scattered scrub, particularly around its margins.

To the south, the next lagoon is dry for much of the year, but supports stands of Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritima*), Annual Sea-blite (*Suaeda maritima*), glassworts (*Salicornia* spp.) and the Nationally Scarce Sea Barley (*Hordeum marinum*). The habitat of the central lagoon is dry coastal grassland that is equivalent to upper saltmarsh communities, dominated by Sea Couch (*Elytrigia atherica*). The southern lagoon holds a large area of permanent water that draws down to leave broad, muddy margins with fringing stands of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Sea Club-rush. On the eastern edge of the site there is open mosaic habitat that reveals the previous industrial use of the area.

Throughout the site there is an exceptional population of the Nationally Scarce Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*) and significant quantities of another now scarce Essex plant, Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthum*). A large population of Great Green Bush Crickets is also present.

### **Ownership and Access**

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council as a Local Nature Reserve. Access is open and includes a viewing screen in the southeast corner of the lagoon.

### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Saline Lagoons

### **Selection criteria:**

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites

SC1 – Vascular Plants

SC5 – Notable Bird Species]

SC20 – Notable ‘Flagship’ Macro-invertebrates

### **Rationale:**

Although the whole site has been modified for industrial purposes of sewage treatment and river dredging, and some areas consist of artificial substrates, parts have developed typical Essex coastal grassland communities, which do not fit well with HPIE descriptions. The Vascular Plant criterion is applied due to the presence of Nationally Scarce species and the Notable Bird Species criterion covers the presence of rare breeding species and autumn and winter feeding and roosting concentrations. Great Green Bush Cricket is considered to be a flagship invertebrate, with a significant population on this site.

### **Condition Statement:**

Favourable

### **Management Issues**

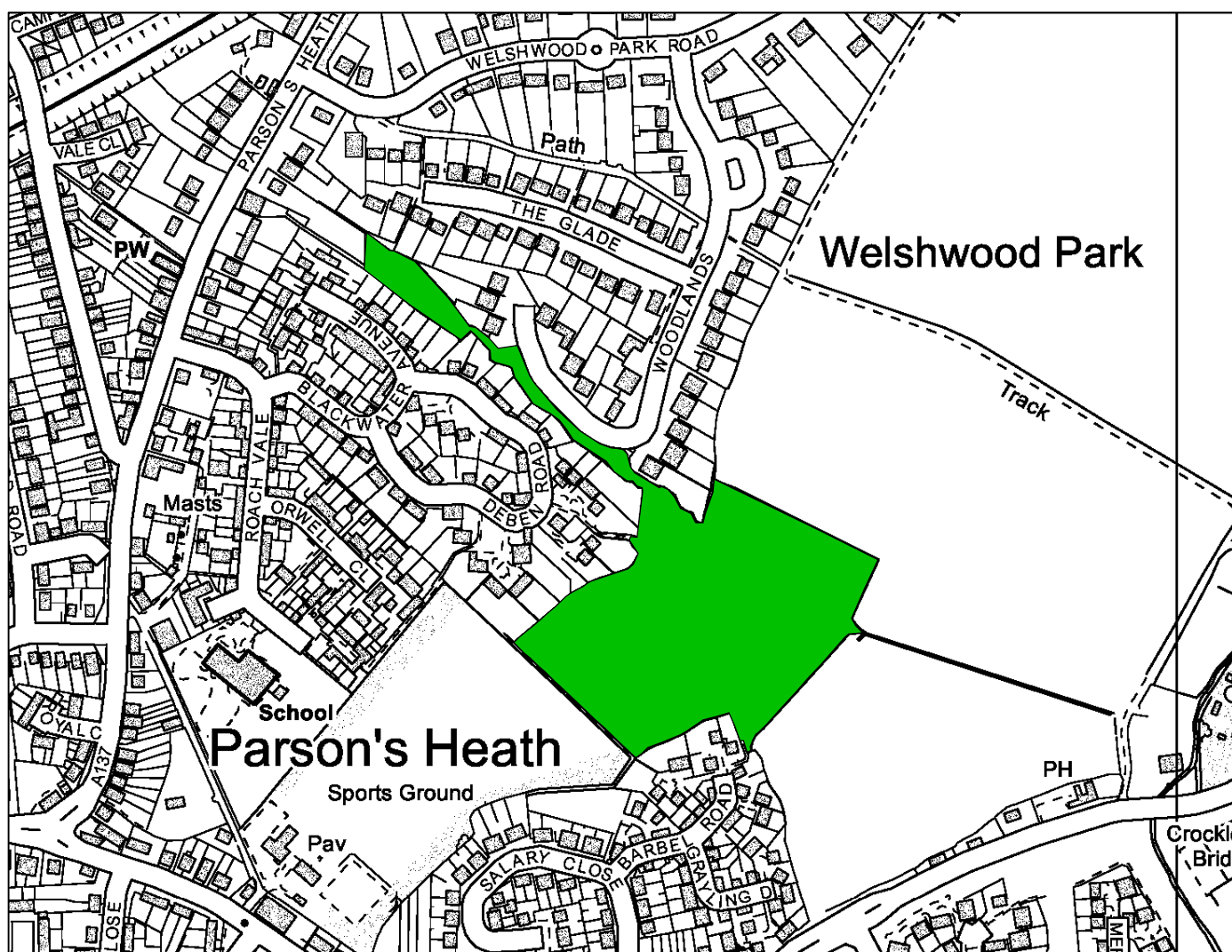
Succession to scrub habitats could reduce the conservation value of parts of the site.

### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (boundary with adjacent LoWS adjusted)

## Co143 Welsh Wood, Colchester (3.7 ha) TM 026265



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This largely ancient wood, a fragment of a more extensive area lost to housing, consists of standards of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) with Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice. Along the south western edge and along the stream to the northwest, Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice replaces the lime. The canopy also includes Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), streamside Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and clones of Aspen (*Populus tremula*) with Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) in the understorey.

The ground flora is surprisingly rich in ancient woodland plants, including Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*), Remote Sedge (*C. remota*), Wood Sedge (*C. sylvatica*), abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*), Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*), Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), Early Dog-violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*) and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), along with Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) and Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*).

### Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and is crossed by permissive footpaths.

### 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:**

Although the majority of the site is on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and has a good range of indicator species, on map evidence, the section to the north of the stream is secondary.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable

**Management Issues**

There is a small amount of Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) near the western entrance to the site and this non-native species can have a negative impact on ground flora if it spreads.

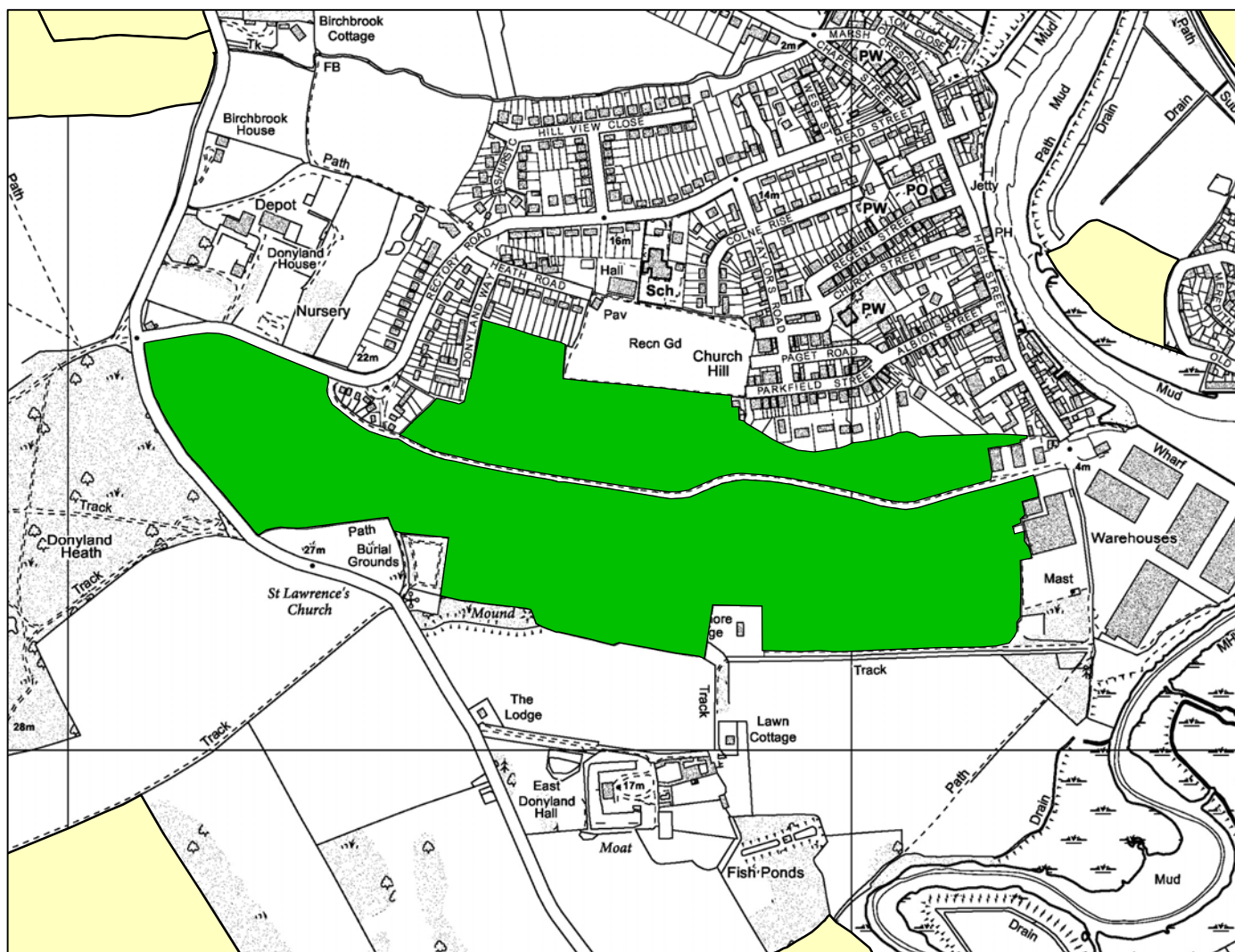
**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)



## Co144 Rowhedge Pits, East Donyland (27.4 ha) TM 026213



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These former gravel pits now predominantly support woodland, with a distinction between lower, seasonally wet land and land closer to the original ground level. Within this are seasonal and permanent ponds, exposed sandy banks and more open grass and scrub mosaics. It is bisected by the former wharf access road.

On the higher ground, the woodland canopy is made up of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with some Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*). The understorey includes willow (*Salix* spp.), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The ground flora is generally low in diversity with Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). Small quantities of *Hieracium sabaudum*, a grassland and heath species, remain in more open areas.

The lower areas, largely with exposed mineral soils, are damp with extensive standing water over the winter months. Silver Birch, Sallow (*Salix cinerea*), and Aspen (*Populus tremula*) have colonised to form a canopy, but there is little understorey or ground layer. Mosses, including *Polytrichum* species, are widespread alongside *Peltigera* lichens with Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Bramble also present. The bog-moss *Sphagnum squarrosum*, which is scarce in Essex and especially in the northeast, occupies several damp hollows in a restricted area of the site.

The water bodies are varied in size and nature, with fringes of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Lesser Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*) and Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*) being typical species.

The few steep, sandy faces that are still exposed provide nesting habitat for solitary bees and wasps, including the Nationally Rare (RDB3) *Nomada fulvicornis*. Great Crested Newts are known to be present.

#### **Ownership and Access**

The site is under private ownership, but there is a public footpath that crosses the western edge.

#### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Open Mosaic Habitats on Post-industrial Sites

#### **Selection criteria:**

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites

#### **Rationale:**

As a former gravel extraction site, Rowhedge Pits satisfies the description of the open mosaic HPIE, supporting key features such as wetland habitats, mineral substrates and dead wood resource.

#### **Condition Statement:**

Declining

#### **Management Issues**

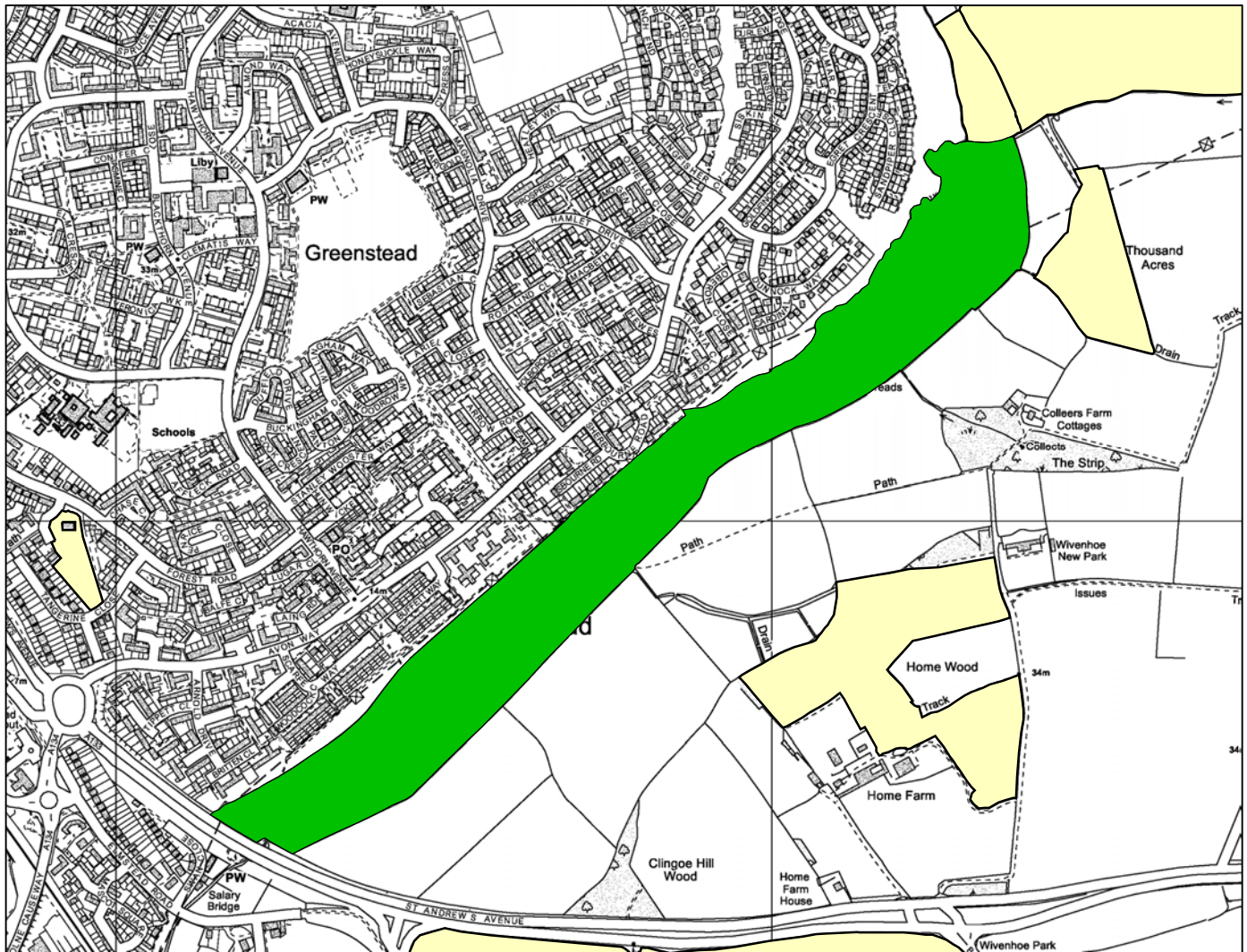
Succession to secondary woodland is threatening the overall diversity of habitats and microclimates found within the site and a programme of cyclical clearance should be introduced, together with specific maintenance of habitat features of importance to invertebrates, *i.e.* cliffs and banks of exposed substrates. The site is also under threat, to some extent, from adjacent house building, the access road being widened at the time of this review. Non-native species such as Sycamore, Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), *Cotoneaster* and Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) could have a negative influence on species diversity.

#### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co146 Salary Brook, Colchester (20.6 ha) TM 028250



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This river valley corridor constitutes an important urban wildlife area, allowing for a variety of informal countryside recreational pursuits close to a large urban population. It is comprised of a mosaic of scrub, woodland and a diverse series of grassland.

The grasslands have variable species diversity, but the flower-rich areas support Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*). Damper areas within the grassland support Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Common Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*), Trifid Bur-marigold (*Bidens tripartita*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Water Chickweed (*Myosoton aquaticum*) and Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) as well as a number of beds of sedge (*Carex* spp.) and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*). The ERDL species, Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) is found in the better quality, northern meadows.

A series of shallow ponds have a marginal flora of Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), rushes (*Juncus* spp.), Branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and Greater Pond-sedge (*Carex riparia*). Most of the ponds are fished.

Scattered throughout are riverside Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willows (*Salix* spp.) with patches of scattered or dense scrub. The northern stream sides are wooded, with large Pedunculate Oaks, Alder and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)

coppice and a ground flora that includes Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*).

Scrub and hedgerow habitats along the brook have recently been found to support a population of Dormouse, which may be associated with nearby ancient woodland sites.

#### **Ownership and Access**

Most of the site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and has open public access, but parts are believed to be in private ownership.

#### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Meadows

#### **Selection criteria:**

HC10 – River Floodplain

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC14 – Lowland Fen Vegetation

HC15 – Reedbeds

SC7 – Dormouse

#### **Rationale:**

The whole of the site would have been subject to riverine flooding at one point, although there are now flood banks in place on the western side of the river. Amongst the diverse grassland communities are areas that still flood, stands of sedge and reed, and also drier areas that do not conform to the MG5 NVC community. A Dormouse population is present.

#### **Condition Statement:**

Generally favourable to the east of the river, but declining to the west of it.

#### **Management Issues**

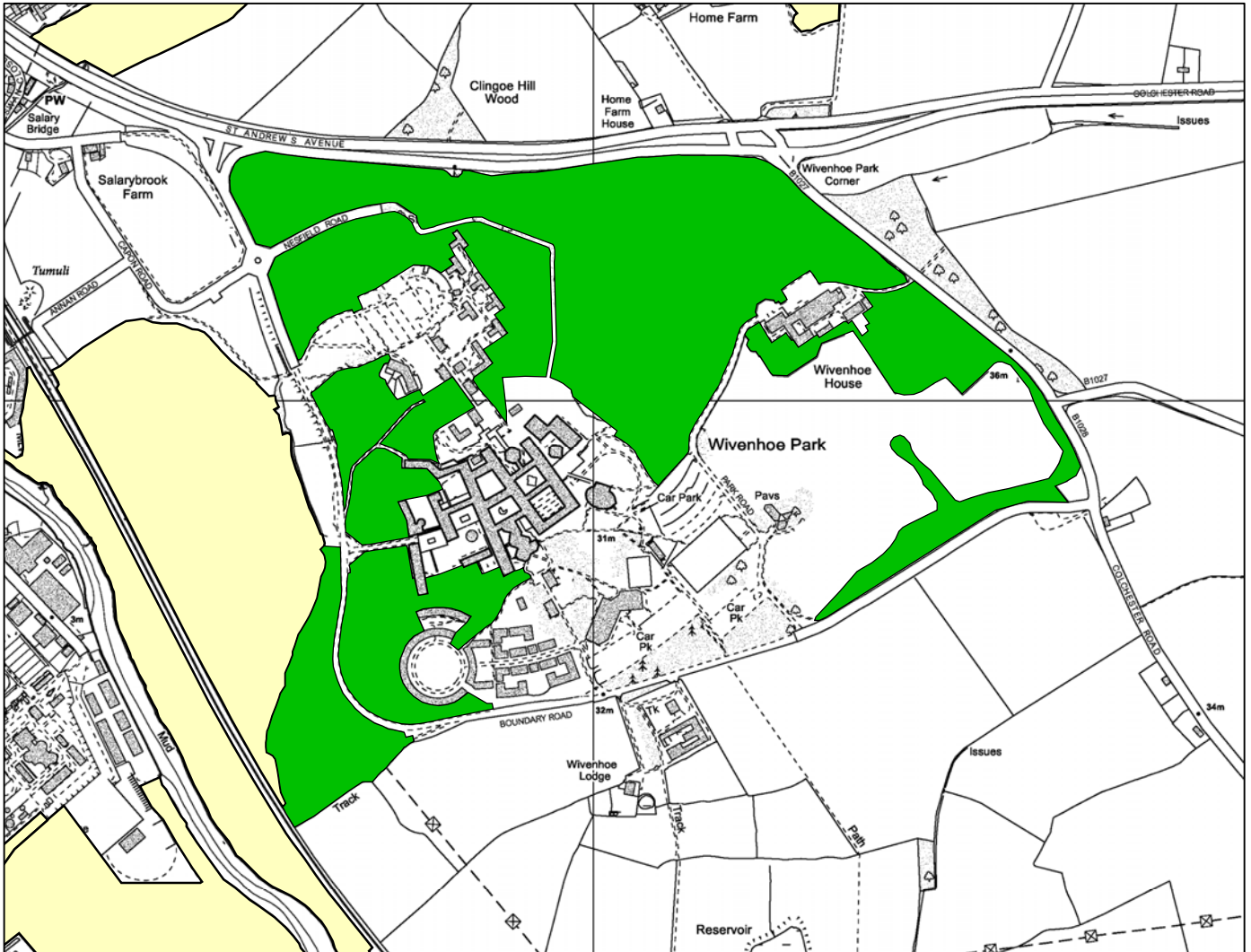
Some of the former floodplain grassland on the west of the river is becoming rank, with False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Common Couch (*Elytrigia repens*) dominant in places and Bramble scrub spreading. An increased frequency of cutting, with cuttings removed, will be needed to maintain diverse grassland communities.

#### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co148 Wivenhoe Park, Colchester (40.3 ha) TM 030240



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This site comprises the modified parkland associated with Wivenhoe House, now dominated by the University of Essex. The parkland includes some oak (*Quercus* spp.) trees in excess of 400 years old, with large specimens of Cork Oak (*Q. suber*), redwoods, pines and cedars. Some areas of woodland appear to be very old, with locally plentiful Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). The intimate association that can develop between wildlife and the built environment of old parkland is demonstrated by the interesting fern fauna that has developed on the ha-ha (sunken wall) of Wivenhoe House, with a significant population of Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*).

Areas of short acidic grassland are dominated by Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Bent-grass (*Agrostis capillaris*), and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) with Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*), Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*) and timothy (*Phleum* sp.). More noteworthy species include Blinks (*Montia fontana*), Slender Parsley-piert (*Aphanes microcarpa*) and the ERDL species Early forget-me-not (*Myosotis ramossissima*) and Subterranean Clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*).

In less free-draining areas, the grassland is more lush and here there are additional species such as Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Hare's-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*), Prickly Sedge (*Carex muricata*), Bird's-foot Clover (*Lotus corniculatus*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*).

The invertebrate fauna includes a good range of butterflies, including White-letter and Purple Hairstreaks, Ringlet, Speckled Wood and skippers. Nightingales regularly occur in an area of scrubby woodland close to the railway line.

The park also supports a rookery, good breeding numbers of Jackdaws and significant numbers of over-wintering Goosander on the lakes.

#### **Ownership and Access**

The site is privately owned, but much of it is freely accessible.

#### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, Wood-pasture and Parkland

#### **Selection criteria:**

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC4 – Wood-pasture and Parkland

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

#### **Rationale:**

There is no record of Ancient Woodland within this site area, but the woodland close to the river and some of the belts of woodland elsewhere in the park conform to the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE description. The parkland dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and includes a number of veteran trees that are likely to be much older. Soil conditions dictate that much of the grassland present is acidic in character.

#### **Condition Statement:**

Favourable

#### **Management Issues**

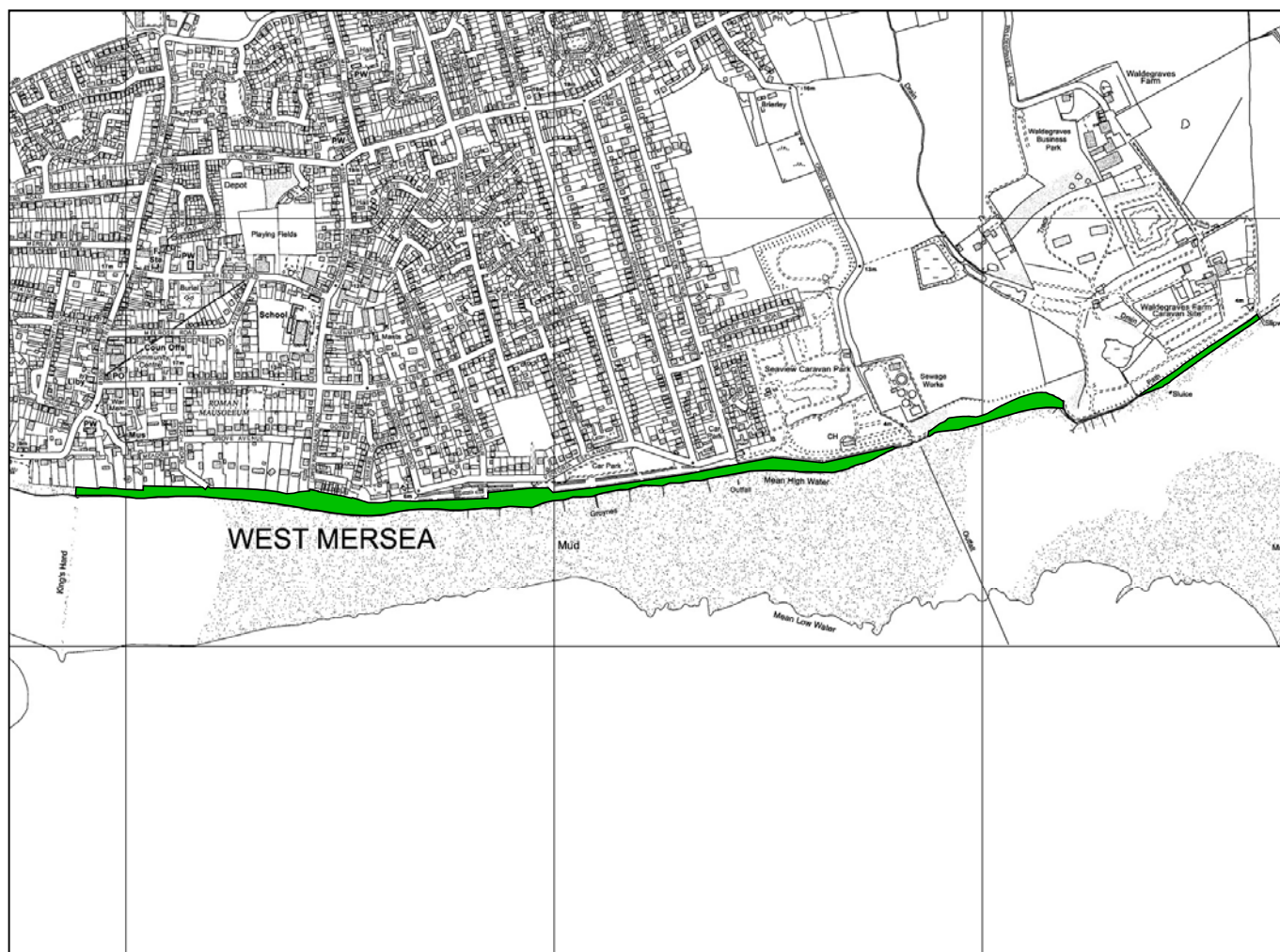
The continuity of veteran trees is a significant issue in parkland habitats, with a need to ensure that sufficient trees of different ages are present in order to maintain the availability of as wide a range of environmental conditions in the dead wood resource as possible. Appropriate grassland management will be required to maintain the diversity of interest in the communities present. Continued development of University buildings continues to threaten the extent of semi-natural habitat present.

#### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (significant changes)

## Co149 West Mersea Foreshore (5.9 ha) TM 020123



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This three kilometre stretch of foreshore by West Mersea has in places an extremely good beach flora, a rare habitat in Essex. The beach is subject to heavy disturbance by visitors in places and the diversity in flora varies accordingly from relatively bare, disturbed areas to herb-rich stretches supporting a variety of species, amongst which the Nationally Scarce Ray's Knotgrass (*Polygonum oxyspermum*) and Sea Barley (*Hordeum marinum*) are most notable.

There are areas of vegetated shingle giving way to long sandy stretches resembling in places a sand dune community within higher portions stabilised by grasses. Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), Sea Couch (*Elytrigia atherica*), Sand Couch (*Elymus farctous*) and Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*) are abundant within this stretch of foreshore, with other typical plants including Sea Sandwort (*Honckenya peploides*), Dune Fescue (*Vulpia membranacea*), Sea Mayweed (*Tripleurospermum maritimum*), Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali*), Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*), Grass-leaved Orache (*Atriplex laciniata*) and Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*).

In addition, the site supports a number of Essex Red Data List species associated with this habitat type: Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*), Frosted Orache (*Atriplex laciniata*), Sand Cat's-tail (*Phleum arenarium*) and Yellow-horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*).

Sea Barley

### Ownership and Access

The site is in Council ownership and there is public access throughout.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Coastal Vegetated Shingle

**Selection criteria:**

HC25 – Sand Dune and Shingle Beach Vegetation

**Rationale:**

The site satisfies selection criteria HC25, supporting areas of vegetated shingle.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable, declining in places

**Management Issues**

This section of beach attracts a number of visitors through the year, particularly during summer months, and is suffering from localised heavy disturbance. Measures to protect the most diverse areas of foreshore should be explored.

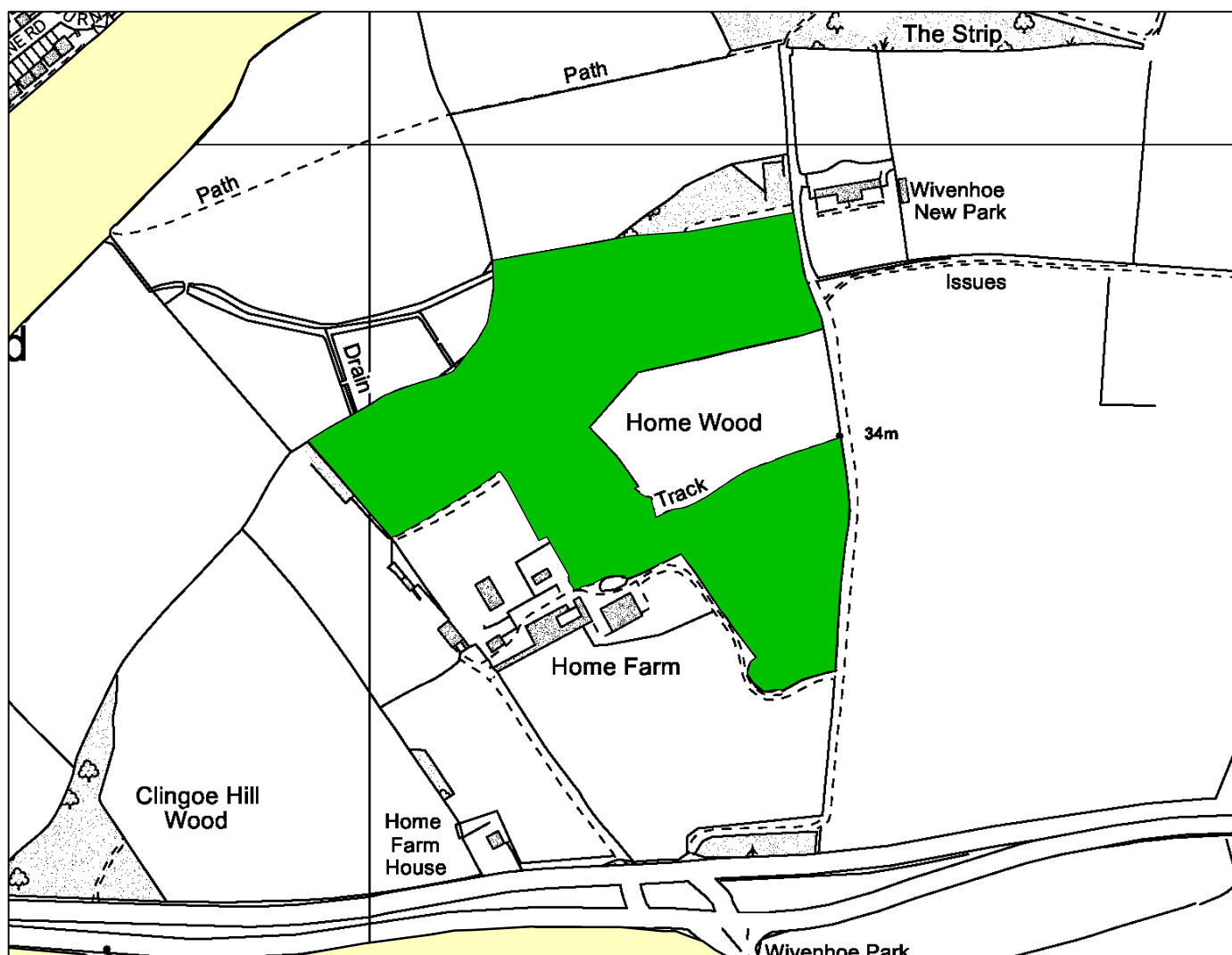
**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (no change)



## Co150 Home Wood, Colchester (7.4 ha) TM 031247



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This ancient wood is what is left of a larger wood, known in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as Hewes's Delight. It has a broadleaved canopy composed of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and some Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and suckering Elm (*Ulmus* sp.) with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice.

The ground flora reflects the light soil conditions, with typical species including Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*). The small internal ditch/stream in the northern section supports Opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*).

### Ownership and Access

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

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

### Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

### Rationale:

The site is included within the Ancient Woodland Inventory.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable

**Management Issues**

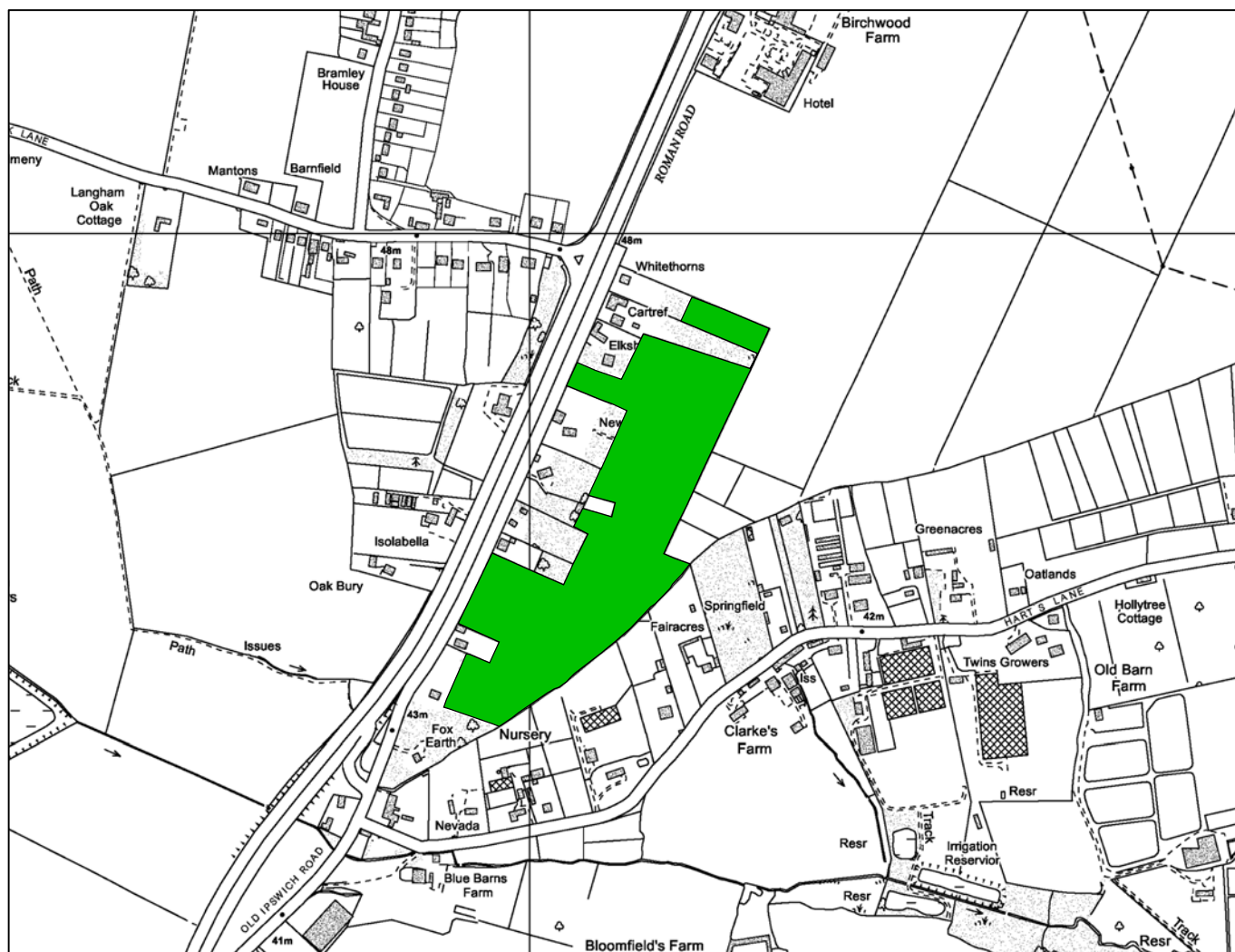
Conifers remain dominant in the southeast part of the wood and, elsewhere, Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) has invaded. The woodland community would be improved by the removal of these trees that are not native to this part of the country. The wood is being managed.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co151 Birch Wood, Langham (8.3 ha) TM 031306



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This ancient woodland has had a long history of piecemeal assimilation into the gardens of adjacent houses and the boundary illustrated here should be regarded as provisional, since it is not always possible to tell where residential curtilages end.

The northern end of the wood is composed of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) with an open understorey featuring scattered Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The ground flora is also sparse, being dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Further south the canopy includes Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), the understorey is thicker and the ground layer is more diverse, with Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and some Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

### Ownership and Access

The site is in multiple private ownerships and there is no public access.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

### Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

### Rationale:

The site is included in the Ancient Woodland Register, although its extent is now much reduced.

**Condition Statement:**

Poor

**Management Issues**

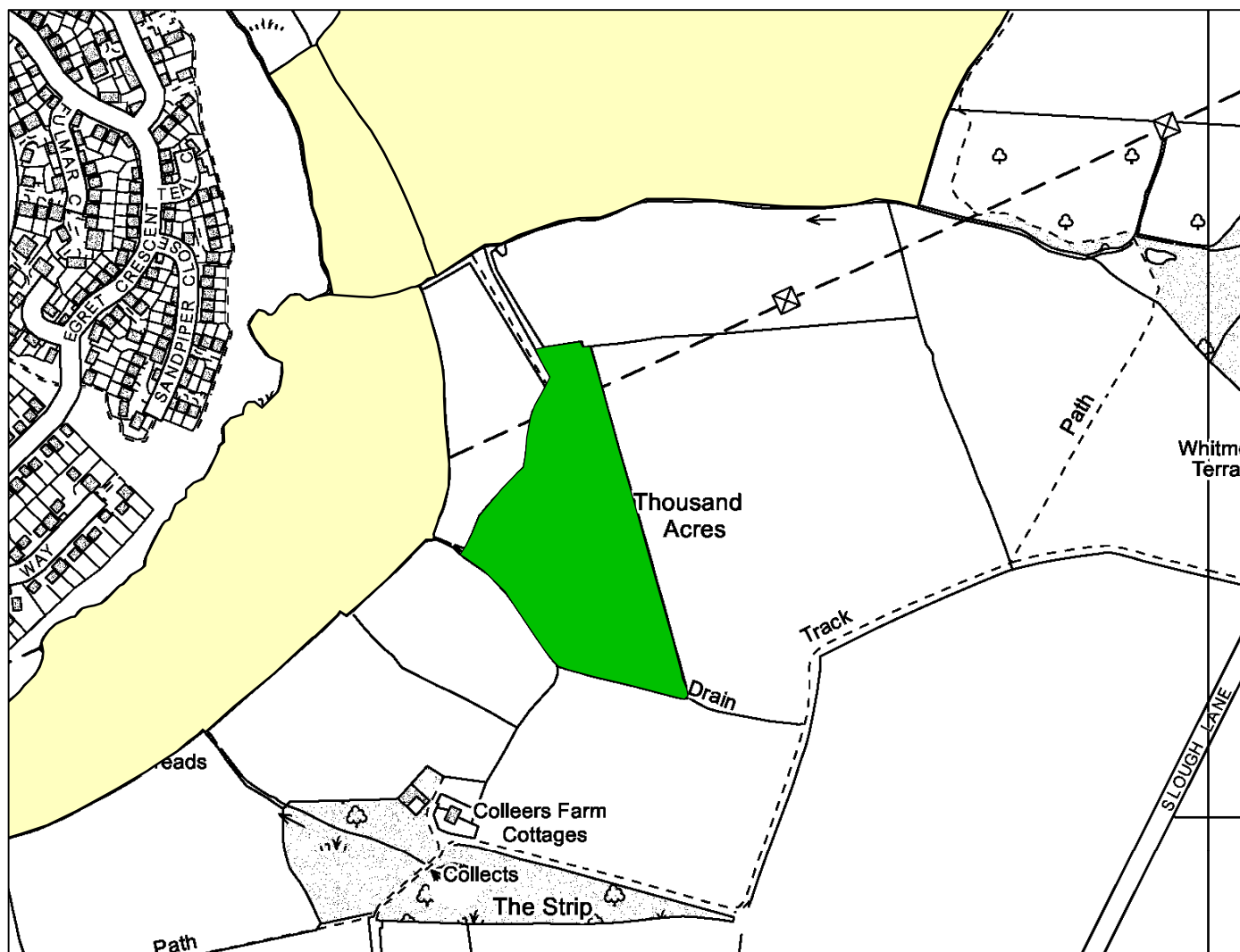
There have been further losses of woodland to garden since the review in 2008 and some other areas are being managed inappropriately. Part of the site has become a local tourist attraction, Gnome Magic.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (reduced)

## Co152 Thousand Acres, Colchester (2.6 ha) TM 035253



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The original canopy of this mainly ancient wood comprises Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) as standards and overgrown coppice, with locally frequent Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*). Now, however, the canopy and understorey are dominated by Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with some planted Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*).

The ground flora includes abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), with some Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*). This site includes a small strip of recent secondary woodland along the north, western edge, which comprises a mature canopy of Pedunculate Oak and Sweet Chestnut and now forms an integral part of this small wood.

### Ownership and Access

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

### 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 bulk of the site is recorded as Ancient Woodland, but the northwest strip is shown as part of a field in late 19<sup>th</sup> Century mapping, so both woodland criteria apply.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining

**Management Issues**

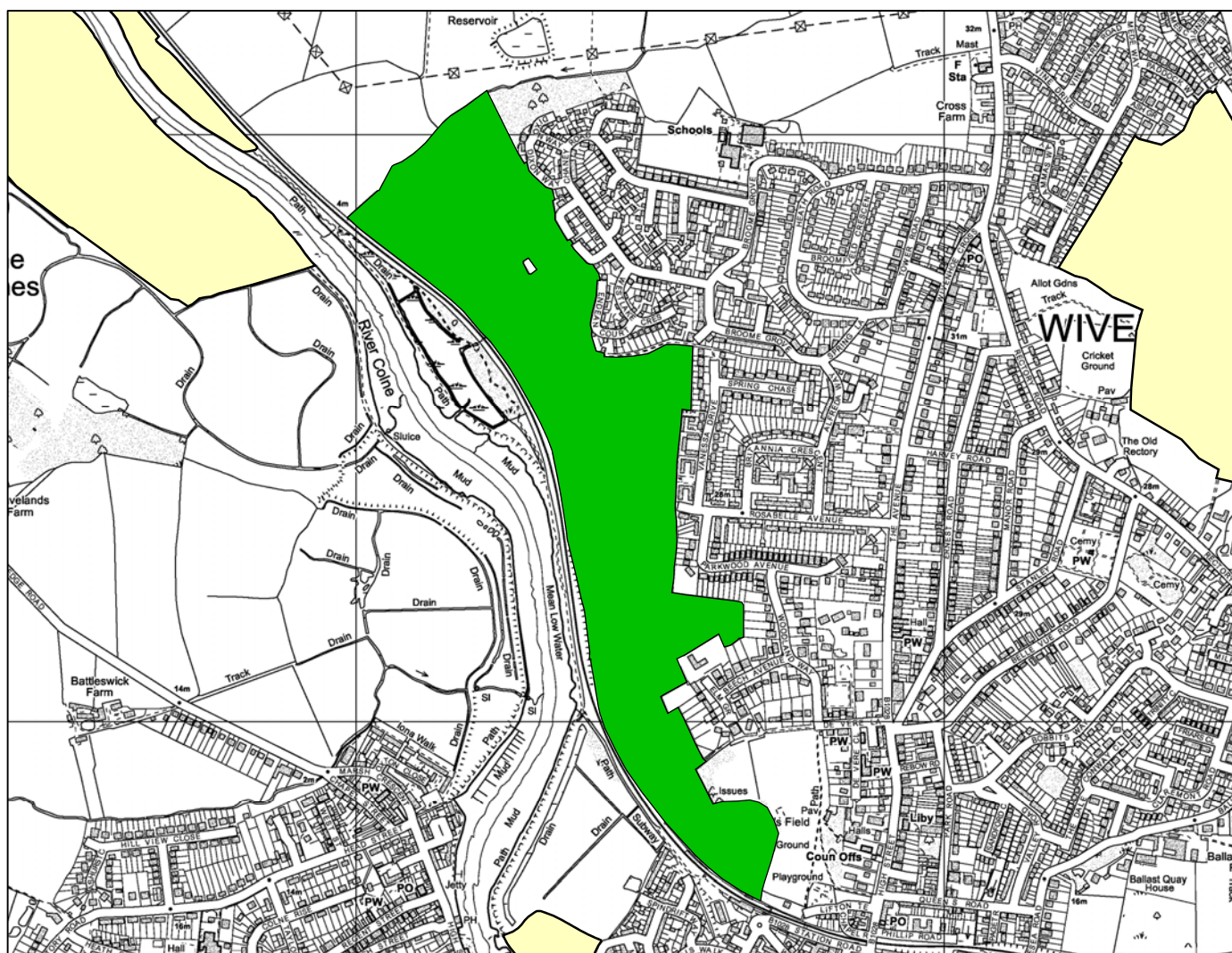
The invasion of the wood by Sycamore is the main management concern, as this species will increase shade at ground level to the detriment of the woodland flora.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

## Co154 Wivenhoe Wood (27.2 ha) TM 035222



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The central part of this site is ancient wood, the remainder consisting of more modern secondary cover of different ages, with a mosaic of scrub, grassland and parkland style scattered trees at Lower Lodge Farm to the north.

The original canopy cover of the southern section comprises Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) but is now co-dominated by Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) following the great storm of 1987, which opened up the canopy to these invasive species. The ancient section includes a good deal of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), some of which has been recently coppiced.

The ground flora is diverse, with Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Hairy Wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*) and Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendria*).

Younger woodland blocks consist of Pedunculate Oak, Ash and Sycamore with Hawthorn and a ground flora dominated by Bramble, Nettles and Ivy. There is localised heavy trampling pressure, although it is recognised that this wood has an important role to play in the countryside experience of local residents. Within a clearing in the northern part of the site is an area of dry grassland With Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*).

Lower Lodge Farm consists of amenity-mown and rough grassland sloping down to the railway line, with the tidal River Colne beyond. There are abundant, maturing Pedunculate Oaks scattered throughout the grassland giving a parkland feel. The rough grassland is variable, but in places includes species such as Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Common Knapweed, Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) amongst Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Timothy

(*Phleum pratense*) and Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*). At the top of the slope there is a strip of apparently old woodland containing some large Pedunculate Oaks, Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Field Maple (*Acer campestre*). Great Green Bush Cricket is present and a population of Common Lizards has been translocated to the site.

### **Ownership and Access**

The whole site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council, with public access throughout.

### **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

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

### **Rationale:**

The core part of Wivenhoe Woods is a block Of Ancient Woodland that is included in the Inventory and it is extended by blocks of established secondary woodland. Parts of Lower Lodge Farm support grassland of good diversity, but that don't conform to the Lowland Meadows HPIE. The remaining, sections of the site are not of sufficient quality to justify the use of habitat criteria, but they do combine to provide an extensive natural green space that is directly accessible to a significant proportion of Wivenhoe's population. This value is augmented by the proximity of the Upper Colne Marshes SSSI, which can be viewed from the site.

### **Condition Statement:**

Favourable

### **Management Issues**

The ancient part of the woodland is under favourable coppice management, although localised heavy public use has affected the ground flora. Management of the grassland at Lower Lodge Farm is necessary to prevent the dominance of coarse species and the invasion of scrub and to maintain its suitability for the translocated reptile population.

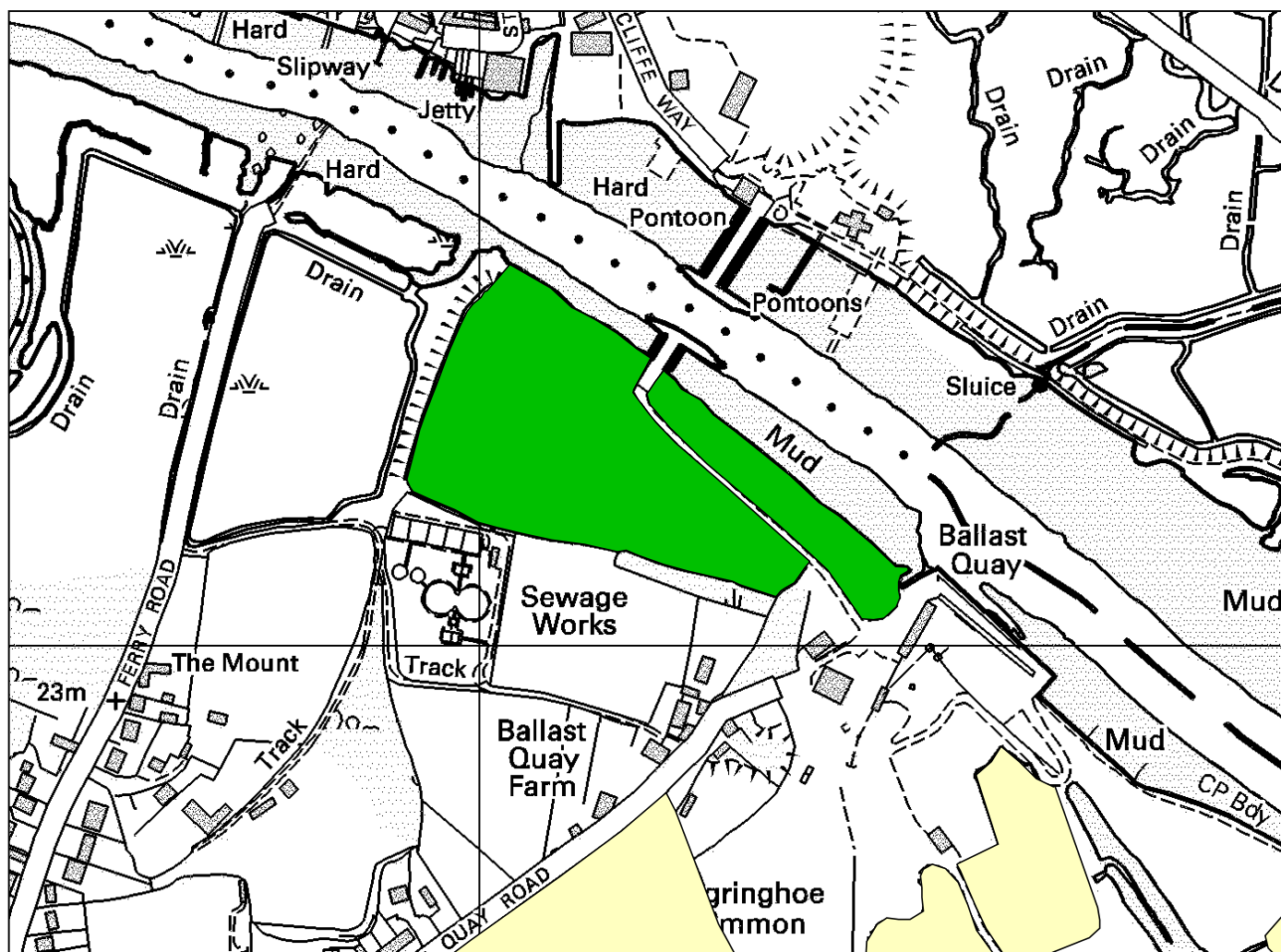
### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended to the north)



## Co158 Barrage Marsh, Fingringhoe (3.6 ha) TM 040211



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This horse grazed pasture exhibits shallow undulating topography characteristic of old ridge and furrow grassland sites, prior to which the site was likely claimed from former saltmarsh.

The grassland is short grazed and relatively herb-poor, supporting species such as Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*), Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*), a Nationally Scarce Essex Red Data List plant, and along a series of shallow damp drains to the west, Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*).

Included in the Local Wildlife Site is the adjacent sea wall, which supports herbs such as Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and Common Century (*Centaurium erythraea*), and a small area of saltmarsh within the River Colne tidal range. Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and birch (*Betula* sp.) are becoming established along the seaward banks of the sea wall. The saltmarsh supports typical species such as glassworts (*Salicornia* agg.), Common Sea-lavender (*Limonium vulgare*), Annual Sea-blite (*Suaeda maritima*), Sea Wormwood (*Seriphidium maritimum*) and Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*).

### Ownership and Access

The site is privately owned and there is no public access.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Coastal Saltmarsh

### Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

## HC23 – Saltmarshes and Mudflats

### **Rationale:**

The grassland satisfies HC11 criteria of largely unimproved grassland that is not NVC MG5 community. The small saltmarsh area is included as HC23, matching the corresponding Habitat of Principal Importance in England.

### **Condition Statement:**

Unfavourable, declining

### **Management Issues**

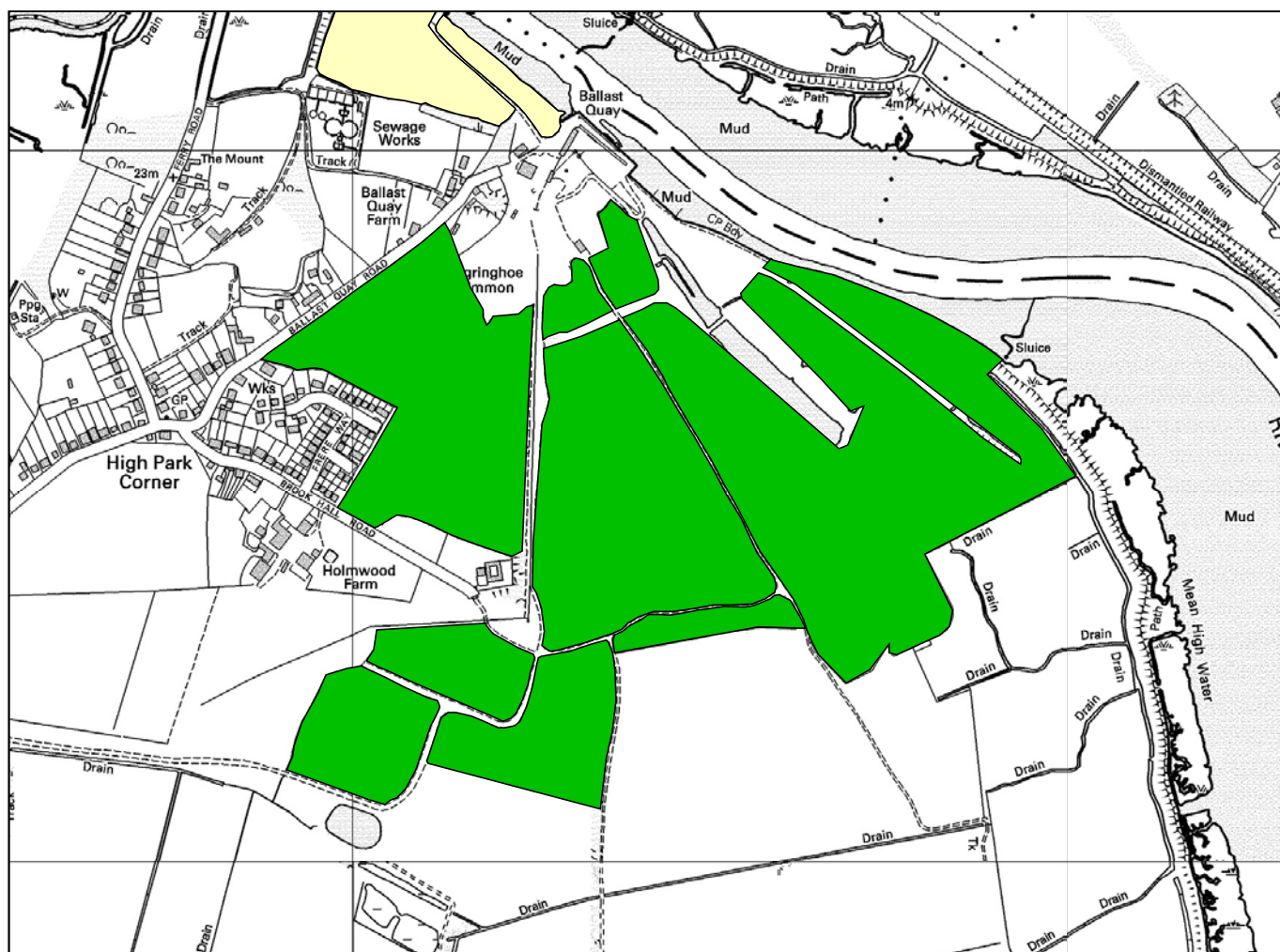
Overgrazing by horses and improvement by fertilisers would appear to be the greatest threats to the grassland habitat, and its condition will be largely determined by the year to year horse stocking densities; a small amount of grazing through the year is desirable. The birch should be cleared from the sea wall before it becomes further established.

### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

## Co159 Brickhouse Farm Pits, Fingringhoe (51.9ha) TM 041205



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This large site comprises areas of worked gravel pit in varying stages of succession, containing a mosaic of scrub, woodland, reedbed, grassland and freshwater habitats as well as recently disturbed sand and gravel substrate.

The area to the west of the conveyor has been left largely unmanaged since it was abandoned in the 1970s and now contains areas of tall Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and birch (*Betula* sp.) woodland as well as dense Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and willow (*Salix* sp.) scrub, this vegetation having naturally colonised the undulating sand/gravel slopes. Additional habitats of interest here include an area of wet willow woodland with reeds (*Phragmites australis*) and an open sandy area subject to regular disturbance, which supports early colonisers including Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*), Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*) and Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*). An area of common land to the north contains oak woodland with some large standards and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Spurge-laurel (*Daphne laureola*) amongst the ground flora.

Sea wall and borrow-dyke make up the eastern boundary of the site which abuts onto the River Colne Estuary SSSI, and this habitat supports typical species such as Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*) and Narrow-leaved Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus glaber*). Adjacent to this lies an extensive area of reedbed that is still in active use as a filter bed system associated with the active parts of the quarry. Here, willow scrub is becoming well established in places and Gorse and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) are found on higher ground. In central areas, rough grassland and shorter grassland on free-draining soils provides additional habitat for wildlife such as invertebrates and reptiles; all four species of Essex reptile have been previously recorded within Brickhouse Farm Pits. Purple Hairstreak butterfly is amongst the diverse invertebrate fauna.

**Ownership and Access**

Most of the site is owned and managed by an aggregate company. Aside from Fingringhoe Common, public access is restricted to a bridleway running east from Brook Hall Road and then south to Wick Lane.

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land  
Reedbeds

**Selection criteria:**

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites  
HC15 – Reedbeds

**Rationale:**

The site supports a mosaic of habitats associated with a post-industrial gravel extraction site, and satisfies criteria HC27 by including a diversity of ecological features that are likely to support “brownfield” wildlife. The large areas of reedbed are included under criteria HC15. There is no available data that could allow one of the invertebrate criteria to be applied, although it is likely, given the habitat and the location, that nationally significant species are present.

**Condition Statement:**

Unfavourable, declining

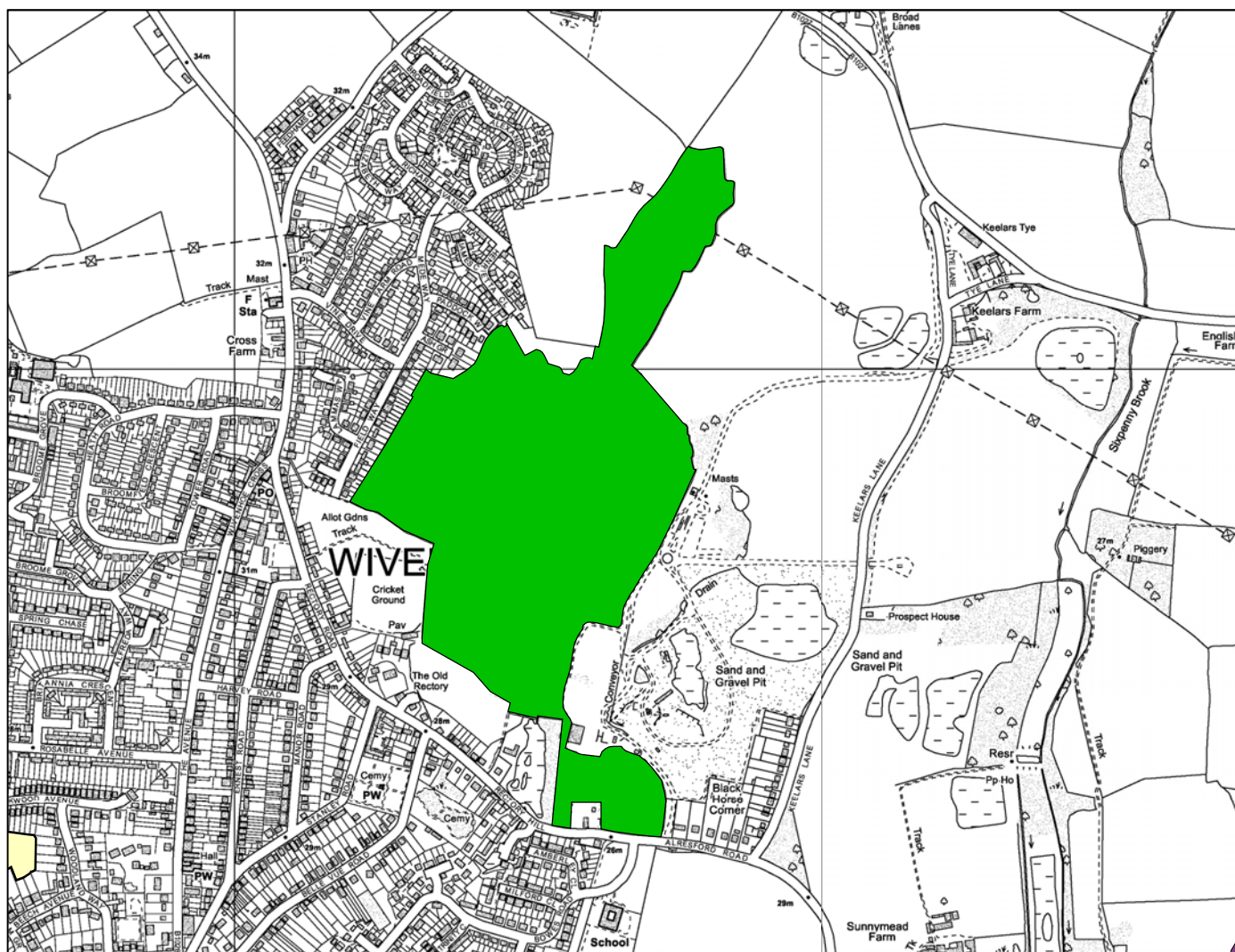
**Management Issues**

The condition of the site is declining due to natural succession of its vegetation, in particular with increasing cover of oak and birch woodland in the absence of active management in some areas. Maintenance of open conditions with bare substrates is important within these open mosaic extraction sites. The site would benefit from a conservation management plan to inform management and maximise potential for invertebrates and other wildlife.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2008  
Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

## Co161 Wivenhoe Cross (29.4 ha) TM 046230



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This site is a complex mosaic of scrub, woodland and grassland habitats on land mostly affected by aggregate extraction, centred on a stream valley.

The northernmost field is former arable land now supporting a flower-rich community of tall ruderals such as Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) and Square-stalked Willowherb (*Epilobium tetrapterum*) with lower growing species such as Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*), Common Centaury (*Centaurium erythraea*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Scorzoneroides autumnalis*), Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*) and *Cladonia* lichens.

To the southwest is an area of uneven, disturbed ground with exposed banks and damp hollows, within which the SPIE digger wasp *Cerceris quinquefasciata* (RDB3) and its brood parasite cuckoo-wasp *Hedychrum niemelai* (RDB3) have both been recorded. A number of other Nationally Rare and Scarce invertebrates have also been observed here. The vegetation includes acid grassland species such as Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) with Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Weld (*Reseda lutea*) and, in damper hollows, Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*).

To the east is a small damp field corner that supports a lush vegetation of Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Smooth Tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and abundant Fleabane. Similar vegetation is found in fields on either side of the stream valley, which itself supports a belt of wet willow (*Salix* sp.) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) scrub and woodland.

The field to the west of the stream valley slopes up towards the houses of Field Way and, away from the damper low ground, it is dominated by coarse grass species with willow and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) scrub. In the lower, damper area of this field there are colonies of the ERDL species Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) and the Nationally Scarce Divided Sedge (*Carex divisa*).

Flooded gravel pits on either side of the stream valley are used for fishing and fringed with mature willows.

At the southern end of the site is Gravel Pit Grove, an area of old woodland occupying a low lying gravel working. Its canopy is made up of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), with Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Alder and Aspen (*Populus tremula*). The understorey is sparse, but includes Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) with invading Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). Ground flora include Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) with localised Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Bramble. A damp hollow towards the southern boundary holds Sallow (*Salix cinerea*) with Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*). Of particular note is an extensive population of Common Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*) on the southern boundary bank.

### **Ownership and Access**

The majority of the site is under mixed private ownership. Apart from an area of public open space associated with the disturbed ground in the northwest, the only official public access is via a public footpath that runs along the western edge of the site, from the allotments northward, before turning east and crossing the stream valley to join Keelars Lane.

### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Wet Woodland, Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

### **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  
HC27 – Post-industrial Sites  
HC28 – Small-component Mosaics  
SC1 – Vascular Plants  
SC18 – SPIE Invertebrates

### **Rationale:**

Gravel Pit Grove is old secondary woodland that conforms to the Lowland mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE description, while much of the Alder and willow scrub along the stream valley fits the description for the Wet Woodland HPIE. The more species rich grasslands within the site are of sufficient interest to warrant selection, but they do not represent the NVC MG5 community. Much of the land is post-industrial, but this criterion is specifically used to select the extent of nesting habitat that would support *Cerceris quinquefasciata*, which triggers the SC18 criterion. Populations of Southern Marsh Orchid, Divided Sedge and Common Polypody are significant enough to justify the SC1 criterion. Other parts of the site are of insufficient quality to justify their own habitat criterion, but contribute to its overall wildlife interest and are included here using the Small-component Mosaics criterion.

### **Condition Statement:**

Variable

### **Management Issues**

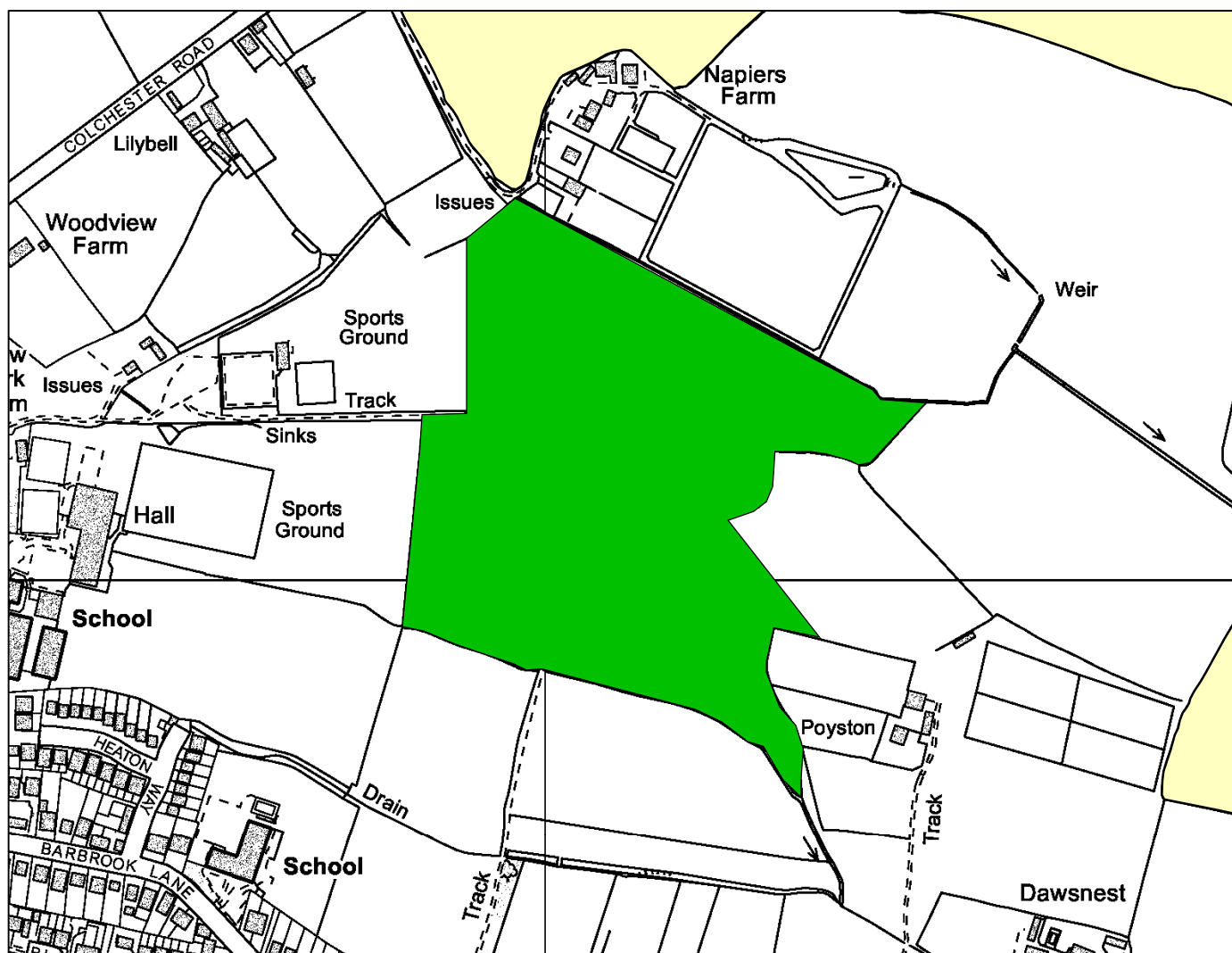
Much of the grassland habitat, and the disturbed land in the northwest, is lacking the management necessary to maintain it in good condition, with more frequent cutting required to maintain a good diversity of plant species and an appropriate habitat structure. Removal of Bramble and other scrub would also be of benefit as would thinning of the woodland.

### **Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (considerable extension to the south)

## Co169 Warriors Rest, Tiptree (10.5 ha) TL 998262



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This site is a mosaic of acid grassland, scrub and young woodland with evidence of ground disturbance in the northern part in recent years, leaving an uneven topography of banks, hills and hollows.

Open areas support an acidic grassland community featuring Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), bent (*Agrostis* sp.), Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) with Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acris*), *Polytrichum* moss and patches of *Cladonia* lichen heath in less vegetated areas or where Rabbit grazing is more intensive. Damp spots support lush grassland that includes Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

The scrub habitat is made up of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Sallow (*Salix cinerea*), rose (*Rosa* agg.) and Bramble with denser growth associated with old boundary hedgerows. The northeast part of the southern field has been managed more recently and contains scattered scrub within rough grassland, partly grazed short by Rabbits.

### Ownership and Access

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

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

**Selection criteria:**

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

**Rationale:**

Open areas support an acid grassland community typical of the area, with the addition of lichen heath and bryophyte dominated patches where there has been some recent disturbance. These habitats meet the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Habitat of Principal Importance description. The HC28 criterion is used to define the limits of the site, taking in the scrub and young woodland habitat, which augment the diversity of the site.

**Condition Statement:**

Declining

**Management Issues**

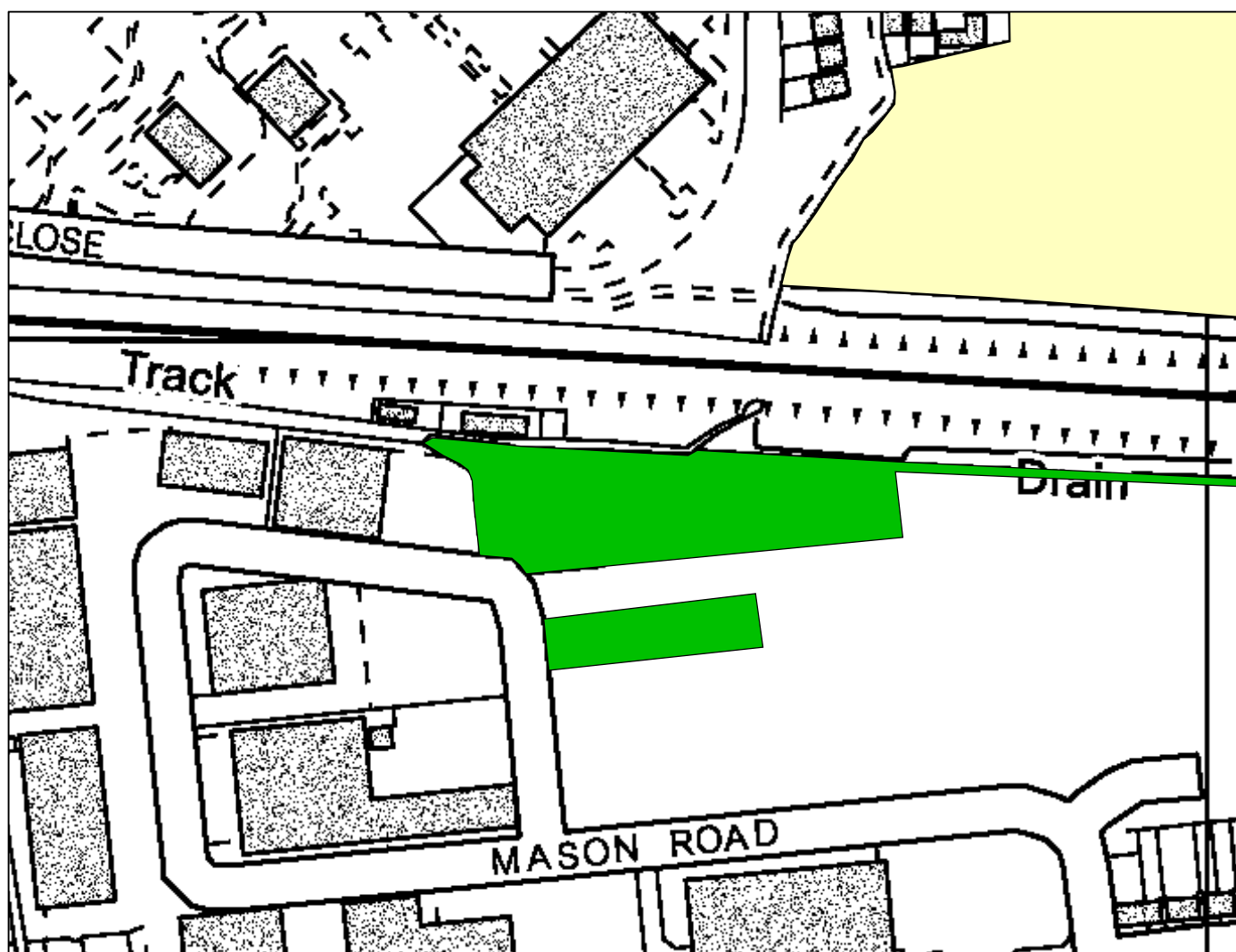
Part of the site is currently used for leisure purposes, but other areas are becoming overly dominated by scrub, shifting the balance from an open, diverse mosaic of habitats to a dense, uniform community. Scrub clearance and improved grassland management would restore favourable condition.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2015

Reviewed: -





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This site has established over time on frequently disturbed ground associated with now demolished industrial buildings. With the cessation of disturbance since the buildings burnt down, Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), willow (*Salix* sp.), birch (*Betula* sp.) rose (*Rosa* agg.) and Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*) scrub is becoming established over a flowery, diverse ruderal and grassland mosaic. A wet ditch runs along its northern edge. More noteworthy plants species include Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acris*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) and Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). The Nationally Scarce Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*) has been recorded here, as have Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*).

The site also includes habitat features created for invertebrates along the base of a retaining wall that runs the length of the wider site, although the extent of their significance to local invertebrate populations is not known.

A recent invertebrate survey (Green Environmental Consultants/Colin Plant Associates, 2015) revealed the presence of two SPIE invertebrates: a grassland fly *Dorycera graminum*; and the Horehound Longhorn moth (*Nemophora fasciella*). In addition, the national Red Data Book species *Cistogaster globosa*, a parasitic fly, and *Ceratina cyanea*, the Blue Carpenter Bee, were recorded together with 23 Nationally Scarce invertebrates and 45 that are Nationally Local. The SPIE wasp *Cerceris quadricincta* has been recorded on the adjacent railway line.

#### **Ownership and Access**

The land is under private ownership. There is no public access, but the site can be viewed from a public footpath to the north.

**Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

**Selection criteria:**

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites

SC18 – SPIE Invertebrates

SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

**Rationale:**

The site is clearly post-industrial and this habitat criterion has been used to delineate the site's area, but the more significant criteria are the invertebrate ones, justified by the results of the survey carried out this year to inform a planning application.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable, but declining

**Management Issues**

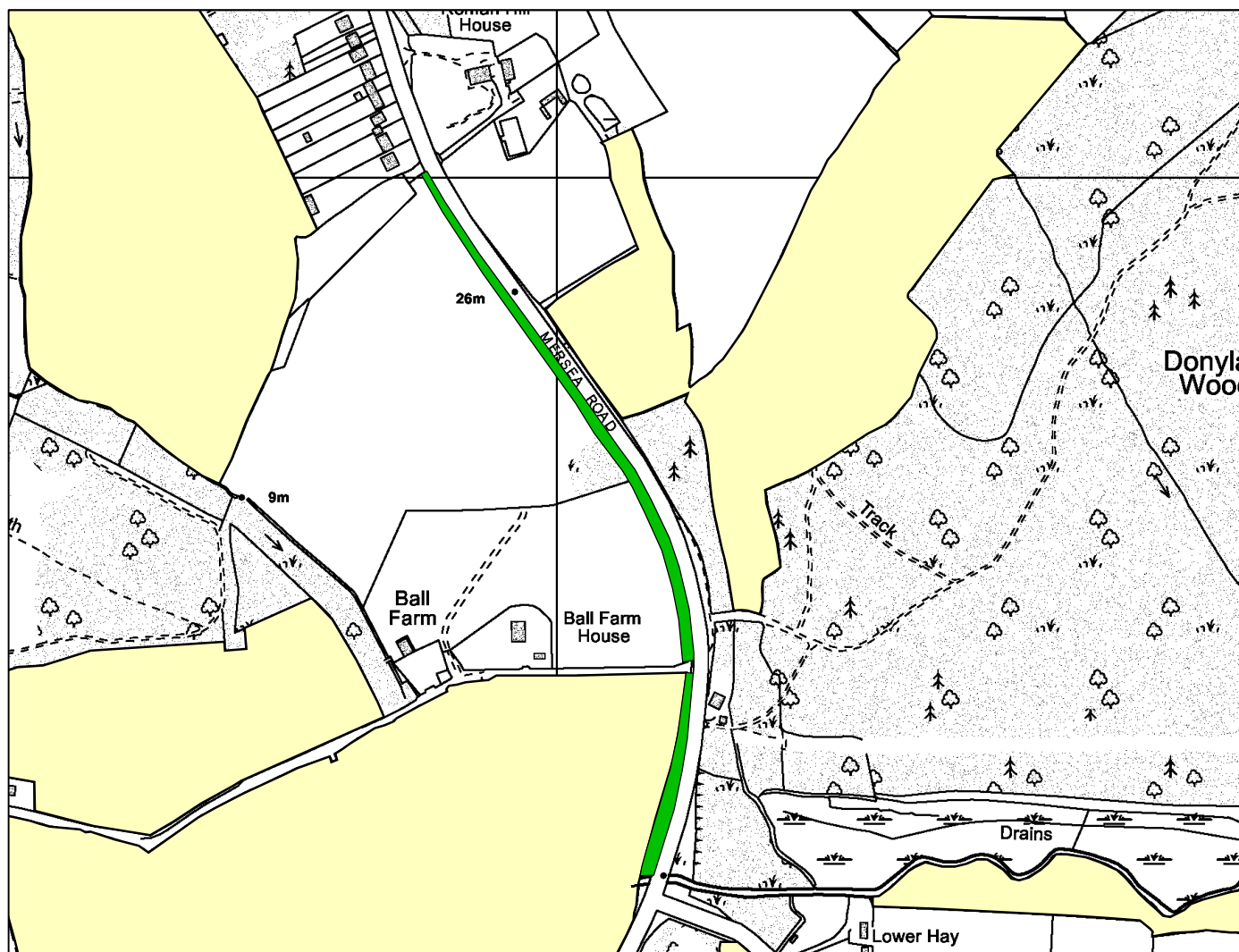
The site is subject to a planning application that is currently under consideration. It is proposed to retain part of the site as wildlife habitat. It is the nature of this type of habitat to deteriorate over time, as scrub takes over and simplifies its structure, reduces plant species diversity and shades the ground. A limited amount of active management is needed to maintain favourable conditions.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2015

Reviewed:

## Co171 Manwood Road Verges, Colchester (0.7 ha) TM



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This road verge supports patches of moderately diverse grassland with a community that reflects a lack of agricultural improvement. Typical plant species include Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*) and Smooth Tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*).

The reasons for its selection are a large and significant population of the Nationally Scarce Lesser Calamint (*Clinopodium calamintha*) in its northern half and a population of Glow Worms in its southern half, on either side of Ball Lane.

### Ownership and Access

Ownership is unknown. Access is possible, with care, from the adjacent highway.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

### Selection criteria:

SC1 – Vascular Plants

SC20 – Notable 'Flagship' Macro-invertebrates

### Rationale:

The Lesser Calamint population on this verge is one of the most extensive in the Borough. Glow-worms are culturally significant and this site forms part of the more significant of the two known populations in the Borough.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable

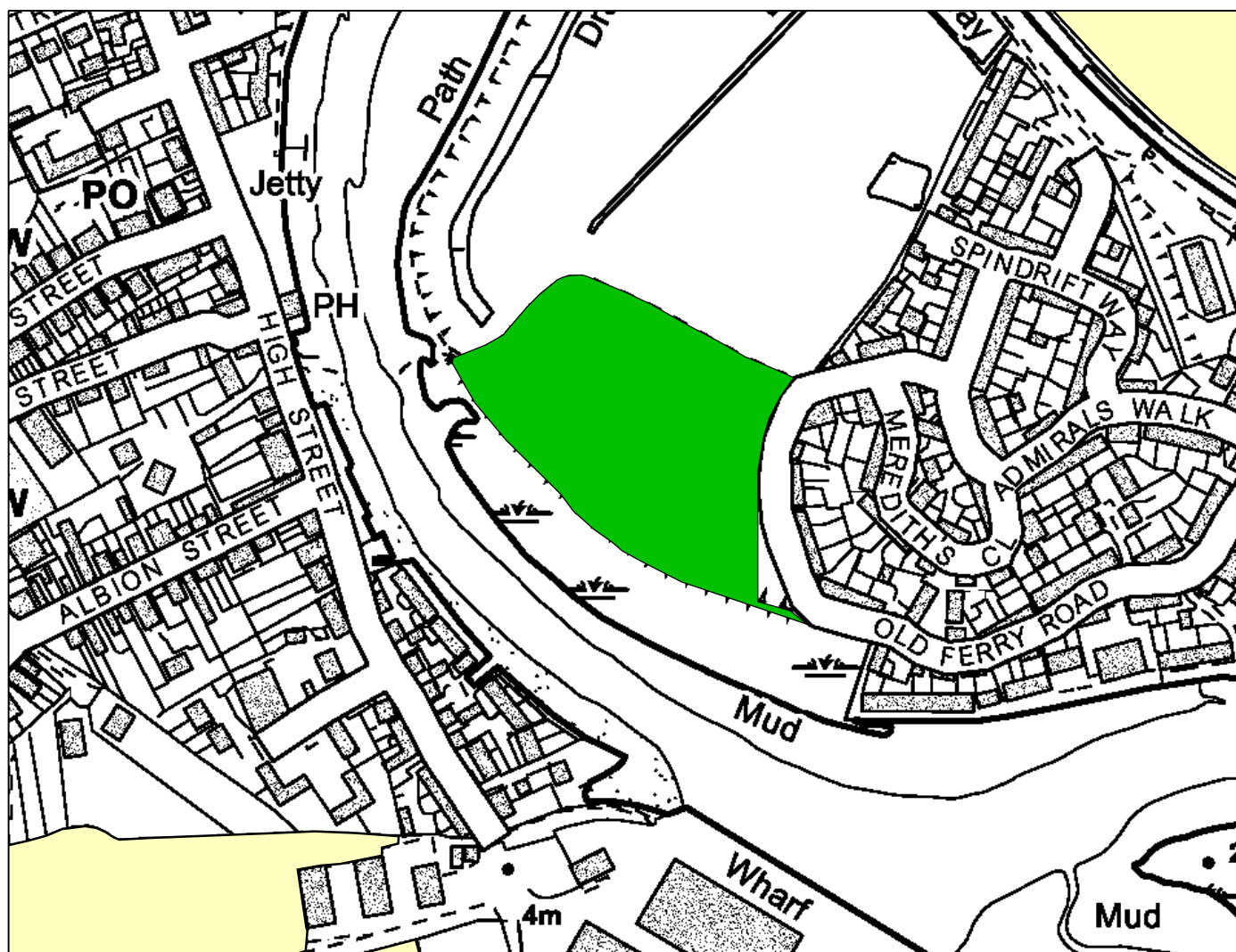
**Management Issues**

As with all road verges, this site is vulnerable to inappropriate cutting and to disturbance associated with highway work. At present the cutting regime appears to suit Lesser Calamint.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2015

Reviewed:



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This site is part of Ferry Marsh, an area of former coastal grazing marsh, the remainder of which is within the Upper Colne Marshes SSSI and has been designated as a Local Nature Reserve. It consists of a small area of rough grassland and scrub, bisected by a Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) fringed ditch. The Essex Red Data List Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*) is present along with Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*).

It is dominated by Sea Couch-grass (*Elytrigia atherica*) with scattered Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), willow (*Salix* sp.) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) scrub.

#### **Ownership and Access**

The land is under private ownership. There is a public footpath along the seawall to the south of the site and a permissive route runs around the western and northern boundaries.

#### **Habitats of Principal Importance in England:**

None

#### **Selection criteria:**

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

#### **Rationale:**

The site is of marginal conservation significance, but the combination of grassland, reed and scrub is of some value, particularly in view of its location adjacent to a SSSI.

**Condition Statement:**

Unfavourable

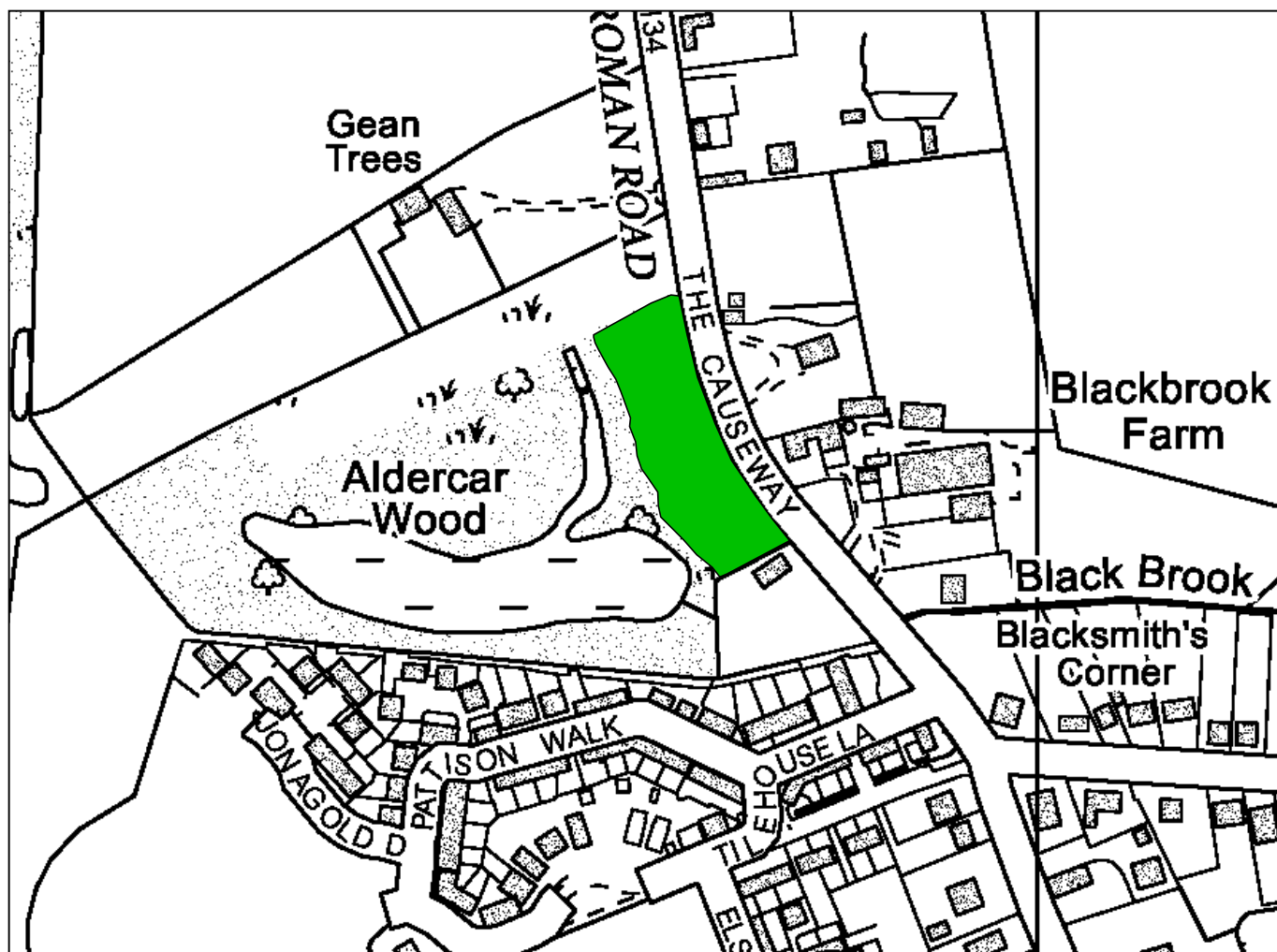
**Management Issues**

The site does not appear to be managed and the grassland structure is poor as a result, Sea Couch being dominant to the exclusion of most other species.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2015

Reviewed:



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This small secondary woodland compartment is situated in Great Horkesley to the east of what was previously, as the name suggests, semi-natural Alder carr. The woodland contains a mixed canopy of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with some planted Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). The understorey includes Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

The relatively sparse ground flora reflects the freely draining soils, with Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg), Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) and Male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) are also present.

#### **Ownership and Access**

The site is in private ownership. 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:**

Although the site is not ancient, it has a relatively varied canopy and ground layer and satisfies the definition of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England.

**Condition Statement:**

Unmanaged

**Management Issues**

No action is immediately necessary, although some coppicing or thinning may be advisable in future years.

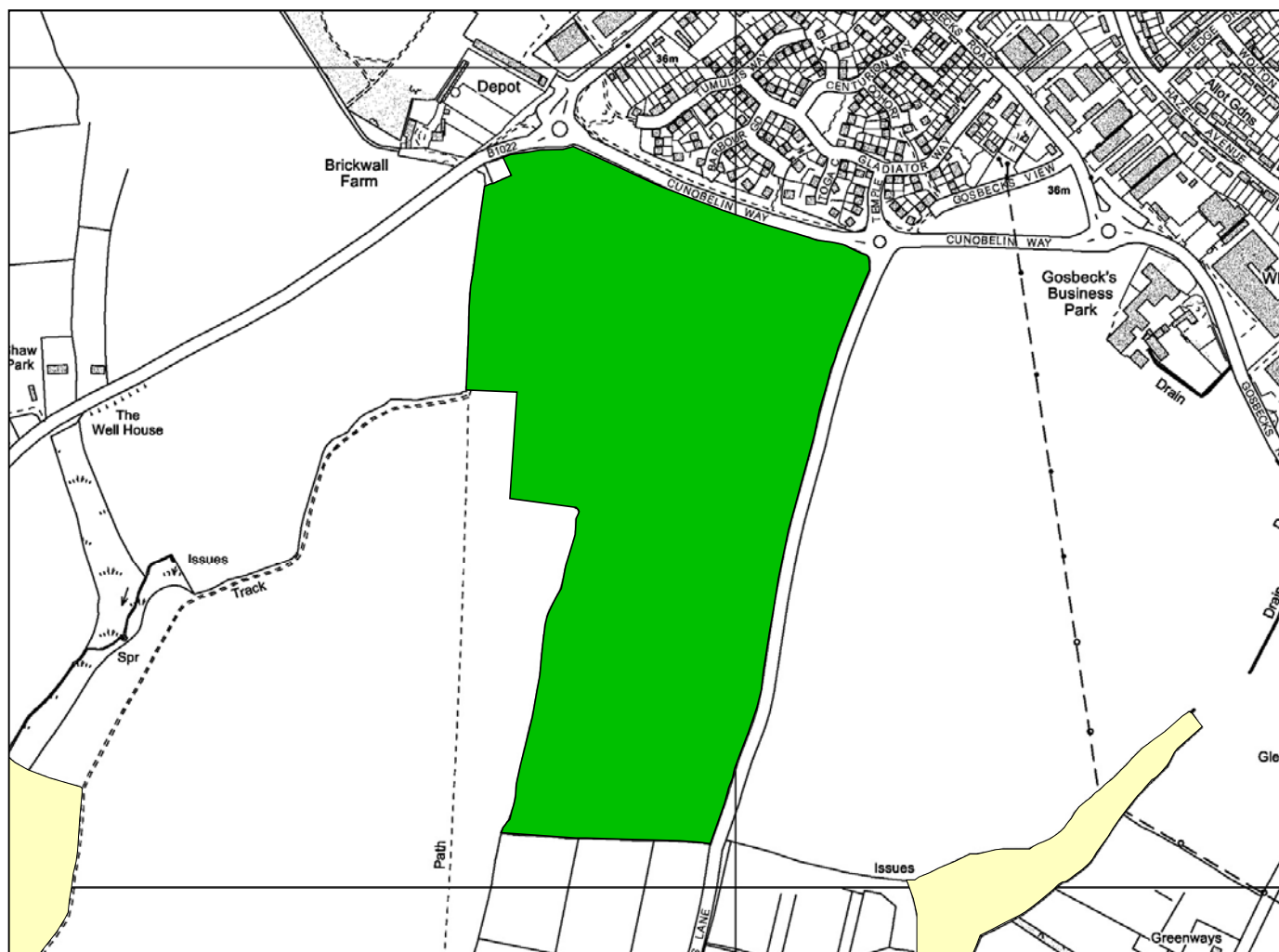
**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2015

Reviewed: -



## Co174 Gosbeck's Park, Colchester (27.0 ha) TL 968225



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Gosbeck's Park comprises a large area of species-rich seeded grassland that represents an extensive resource for invertebrates as well as providing an open green space that is easily accessible to Colchester residents.

The grass component comprises mainly tall, coarse grasses such as Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) with areas of meadow grasses (*Poa* sp.). In contrast, the herb layer retains a great abundance of flowering plants resulting from the original seed mix, which have become well established and continue to flourish. Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) occurs in locally dominant patches and Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) are abundant throughout. In addition, other characteristic herbs include Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Dwarf Mallow (*Malva neglecta*). The area around the Roman Temple is more intensively managed than the adjacent tall grassland, but the short turf here supports locally abundant Common Bird's-foot-trefoil.

### Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council and a network of wide, regularly mown rides within the grassland provides access to a large number of visitors.

### Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

### Selection criteria:

HC31 – Accessible Natural Greenspace

**Rationale:**

The site supports diverse grassland of recent origin that provides a large area of accessible natural greenspace adjacent to a large residential area, and so satisfies criterion HC31. At present none of the habitat criteria can be applied to this relatively new habitat and there is a lack of species data, but there is clear and significant value to wildlife.

**Condition Statement:**

Favourable

**Management Issues**

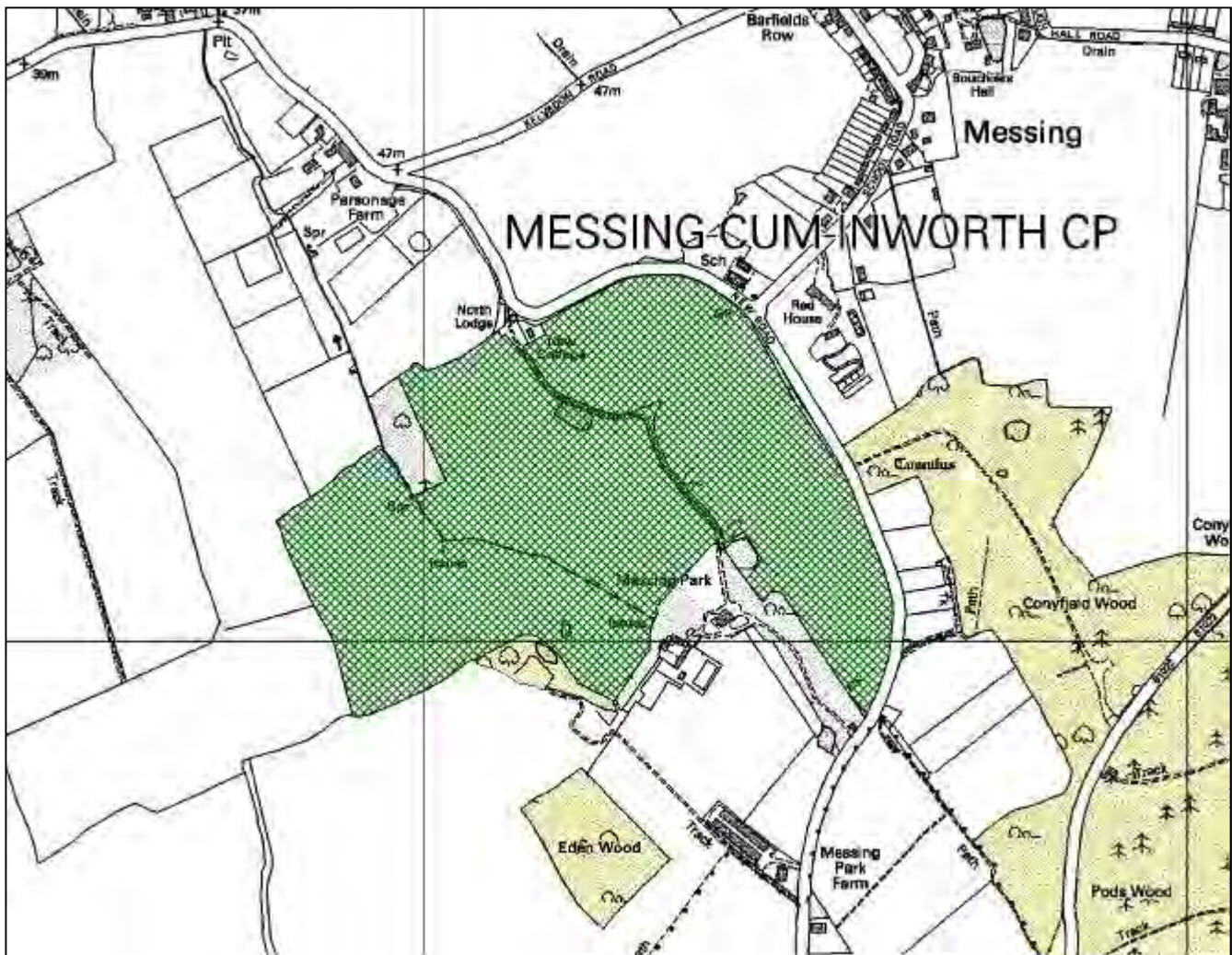
The current management regime appears to be maintaining the site's interest and sympathetic grassland management should be continued. This should include provision for invertebrates, mowing in rotation so that there is always a large area of grass left for overwintering invertebrates. Localised nutrient enrichment by dog fouling is a concern, demonstrated by patches of Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and Wall Barley (*Hordeum murinum*), and measures to discourage this should be further explored.

**Review Schedule**

Site Selected: 2015

Reviewed: -

PCLoWS1 Messing Park (27.4 ha) TL 891182

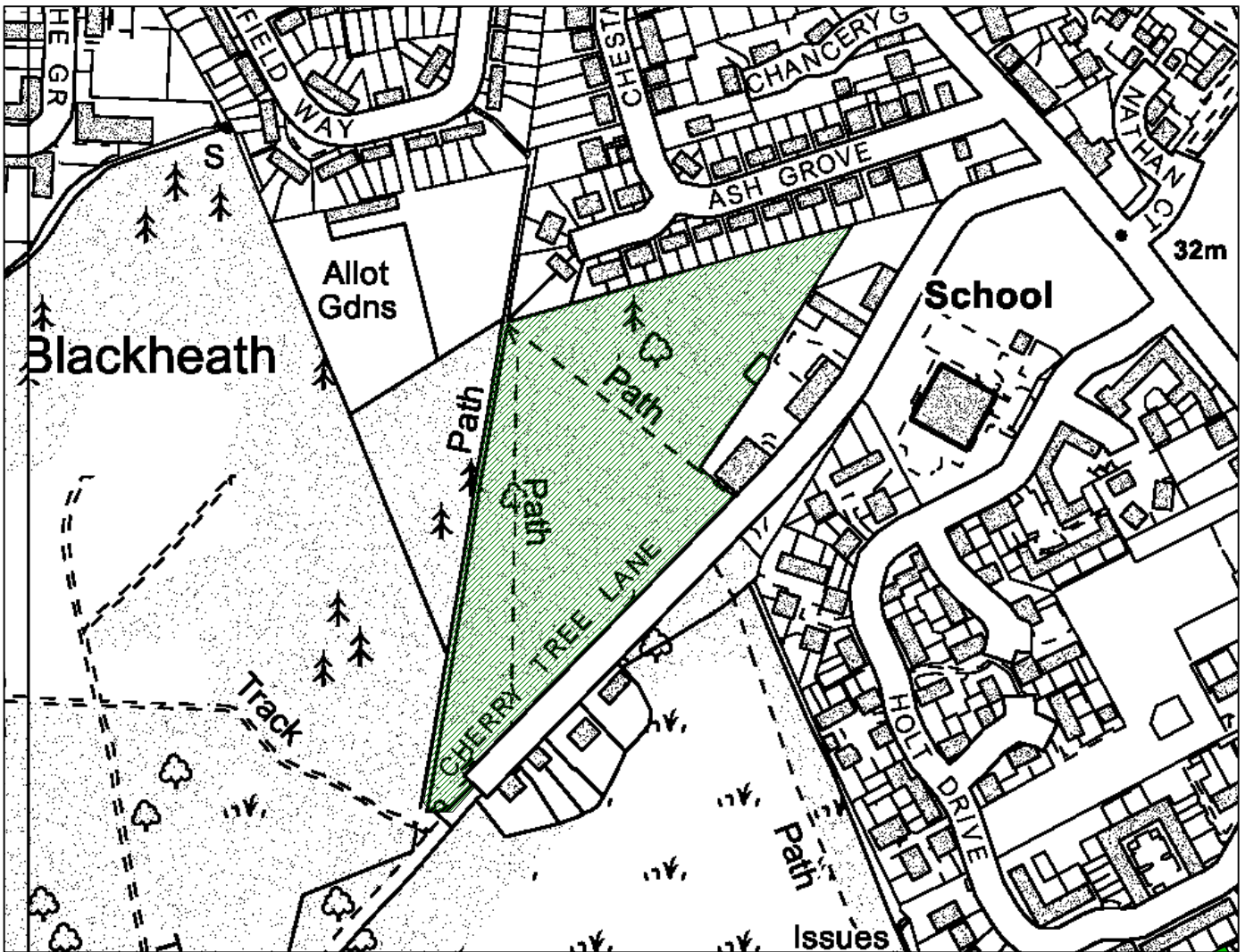


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This area of parkland is likely to meet the HPIE

**Potential Interest:** Dead wood invertebrates associated with isolated trees; grassland flora.

**Action Required:** Further survey work, especially for invertebrates.



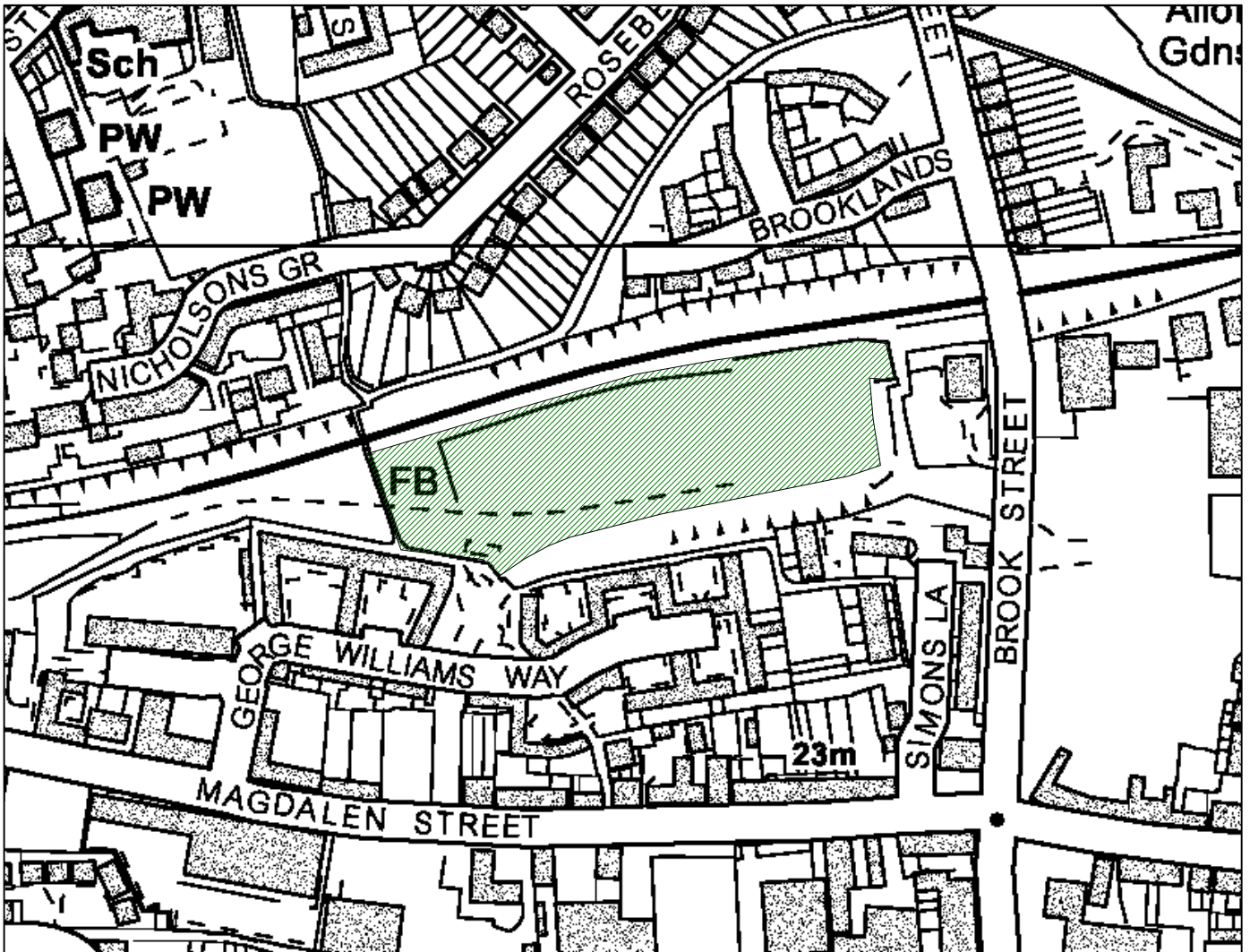
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Old maps show this area to be the last surviving remnant of Black Heath, a large heathland waste that gave its name to this area of urban Colchester. Despite having been planted with conifers and with plentiful Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), the site still supports a few plants of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), which is a rare species in northeast Essex, as well as the hawkweed *Hieracium sabaudum*. Common Calamint (*Clinopodium ascendens*) is also present, but may have been introduced with garden rubbish, as the habitat is not what would be expected.

**Potential Interest:** Heathland

**Action Required:** Restoration of the heath by removal of tree cover, Bramble and Bracken. This ground disturbance may stimulate the seedbank of heathland plants in the soil. Ongoing management would then be required to maintain the site largely free from scrub in order to encourage the development of acid grassland.

PCLoWS9 St Botolph's Sidings, Colchester (1.2 ha) TM 004249



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This is an area of “brownfield” land comprising sparsely vegetated waste ground, which may be of importance for invertebrates and reptiles, although it is being overtaken by scrub.

**Potential Interest:** Brownfield ecology; invertebrate populations

**Action Required:** Surveys for invertebrates, flora and reptiles.