

Waseley Hills Country Park Management Plan

April 2022 – March 2032



FIGURE 1 PHOTO SHOWING VIEWS FROM WASELEY HILLS

Worcestershire County Council
Countryside Service
Waseley Hills Country Park
Gannow Green Lane
Rubery
B45 9AT

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

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Purpose of the Management Plan

This management plan has been created to guide the management of Waseley Hills Country Park for the period of March 2022 to February 2032.

The previous management plan was used to guide the management of the site along with a Higher Level Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Part of the previous plan was to install fencing to allow a re-design the grazing regime, protect hedge banks and to plant native, mixed hedging. These changes have improved the diversity of the meadows and enhanced the site for visitor experiences as cattle can be confined to or excluded from certain areas of the site.

This plan will provide a continuation of management to further enhance the grassland diversity, hedgerow, scrub and woodland management. The effectiveness of this management will be evaluated at various points throughout the plan period.

Vision

To provide a site that is a welcoming visitor attraction in North Worcestershire bordering with the Birmingham conurbation. The Country Park will provide a great diversity of recreational opportunities within a countryside setting, from way marked circular walks through to enjoying the wildlife and views from the hill tops.

The site will be managed in a way that will conserve and enhance its biodiversity as well as providing high quality visitor facilities. The land will be managed to enhance many of the traditional farmed landscape features, with an irregular pattern of pasture fields bounded by well-maintained hedgerows and historically important ponds. The grassland will be managed to enhance its value as predominantly species rich, dry acidic grassland and wooded areas will be managed to favour native species.

Introduction

Waseley Hills Country Park is situated on the Worcestershire side of the Worcestershire/ Birmingham border 1km from Rubery, 4km from Bromsgrove and 13km from central Birmingham. Junction 4 of the M5 is approximately 3km from the main site entrance giving excellent local and national links to the Country Park. Brown and white signs are in place from the motorway junction to the Country Park.

A large proportion of the regular visitors to the Country Park are dog walkers who enjoy the open nature of the site, the views over Birmingham and towards Wales as well as the wildlife. The site is also very well used by families, dog walking groups and school groups. There are two well used way marked circular walking routes on the Country Park. The Country Park is also crossed by long distance footpaths and a bridleway.

The North end of the site provides the main focal point for most visitors to the Country Park. There is an adventure play area with a toddler section, pay and display car park, toilets, a large picnic area and the visitor centre housing the Windmill Café. The main administration office, meeting room and Rangers House are also at the north side of the site. The meeting room is available for hire seven

days a week and is used by local groups, charities and private businesses. At the south end of the site, there is a small, informal car park.

Most of the Country Park land is taken up by dry acidic and neutral grassland which includes an area around the top of the hills designated as a Special Wildlife Site. The grassland is grazed by cattle under licence with a local grazier. The rest of the land is covered by scrub which is controlled to provide a varied age structure, woodland of varying ages and species, ponds and springs.

Waseley Hills Country Park is largely owned on a freehold basis by Worcestershire County Council; approximately 14ha of the Country Park is owned by the National Trust and managed by Worcestershire County Council on a long-term lease. The areas owned by the National Trust are the Narrows and South side of the Country Park and the Southern part of Segbourne (Map 8.10).



FIGURE 2 SHOWING CATTLE AT THE COUNTRY PARK

Site Description

Size

61.14 Ha (151 acres)

Grid reference

OS 972778 (centre of site)

Administrative Areas

County	Worcestershire
District	Bromsgrove District Council
Parishes	Romsley, Belbroughton and the unparished area of Bromsgrove

Special Wildlife Site

An area of 12 Ha was designated as a special wildlife site on 28/9/1990

Local Nature Reserve

Waseley Hills Country Park; whole site excluding developed sections (60.76ha) declared as local nature reserve on 19/2/2003

Tenancies

Rangers House	(tied property) Katherine Galbraith
Windmill Café	Helena Pearsall
Grazing	Stuart Geggie has a rolling 12 month grazing licence
Offices	Ground floor occupied by countryside staff First floor occupied by Integrated Therapy Solutions
Byelaws	The standard County Council byelaws apply

Site Information

Access and Facilities

WHCP is managed in line with the County Council's Greenspace Team Visitor Care Plan (see Appendix), which sets out the authority's approach to sites management for visitors.

The Country Park has 2 car parks. North car park is situated adjacent to the visitor centre and toilet block and has spaces for approximately 70 vehicles. It is signposted with brown and white tourist signs from main routes. It is open from 8.00 a.m. and closes at different times of the year. The car park gate is opened by the cleaning contractors and closed by the resident caretaker.

This is a pay and display car park, with up to 2 hours or all-day tickets and the opportunity to buy an annual permit. Income from car parking charges helps with the maintenance of the car park and site facilities and this information is shown on the pay and display machine. The machine is mains powered and issues paper tickets. The current machine was updated in June 2021 to accept card only payment and is on a service contract with Metric. Payment compliance is high (>90%). Staff undertake periodic checks and attach notices to vehicles not displaying a ticket. This results in most people paying for their parking. The response to car park charging is variable; most visitors understand that the fees contribute towards the ongoing maintenance of the car park, and Country Park as a whole.

Car Park provision for the Country Park is generally sufficient in the week however, at the weekends and school holidays, it is not. There is a separate car park for staff and deliveries. This is used as an overflow car park at busy times. On occasion the area adjacent to the barn is used as overflow parking. Notices advising drivers that they still need to pay for parking when in these areas are installed

South car park is located off Holywell Lane, with spaces for approximately 20 vehicles. It is free to park there and tends to be used by local, regular visitors. It is signposted from the adjacent housing estate. The South Car Park is opened at 9am by Countryside Staff and locked by the Resident Caretaker at different times

depending on time of year.

The car park opening times are:

Main (North) car park – open at 8am every day and closes at:

16:30 1st November to 31st March

18:30 1st April to 31st May and 1st October to 31st October

20:00 1st June to 30th September

South Car Park opens at 09:00 every day and closes at:

16:30 1st October to 31st March

16:30 1st April to 30th September

Bicycle racks are situated adjacent to the visitor centre. Cycle access is provided from Frankley to the Visitor Centre via a surfaced path. Cycling is permitted on site and occurs in very low numbers.

A public bridleway from Rubery to Chapman's Hill crosses the site. The 'Green Lane' from Frankley is a permissive horse route. Horse riding is not permitted on the general site and access by horses is restricted by gates.

Walkers can access WHCP through several public rights of way, and the Country Park incorporates sections of the North Worcestershire Path and Monarch's Way. The Illey Way starts/finishes at the visitor centre, joining Waseley Hills Country Park with Woodgate Valley Country Park.

On site there are 2 waymarked circular routes, the Rabbit Trail (3 miles) and the Skylark Trail (½ mile), which provide users with an easy way to explore the site. The topography of the site means there are limited opportunities for access for people with mobility limitations. The link path from Frankley allows easy access from the residential area to the visitor centre and toilets.

The site is designated Access Land under CROW Act 2000 and as such the public have the right to walk wherever they choose, with certain restrictions relating to ongoing work. A network of paths is maintained around the site. Paths are kept free from overgrowing vegetation, in accordance with Worcestershire County Council policy, by the Countryside Sites staff, volunteers or contractors.

A Deed of Grant given by the Bourneville Village Trust in 1995 grants permissive pedestrian access linking Segbourne Coppice with the public bridleway adjacent to the site.

An orienteering course is located across the site. Orienteering information packs can be obtained from the main office. However, the course is used infrequently and has become a maintenance burden. The continuation of the orienteering course will be consulted on as part of the consultation for this plan.

The small field adjacent to the Barn was available for camping, however it was rarely used and ceased totally in 2010. This field is now planted as an orchard with local

varieties of fruit trees and a hazel coppice area. The orchard is surrounded by a laid hedge and has 4 beehives in it. These are owned and managed by a local resident.

33 memorial benches are located around the site, provided in line with the Greenspace Team policy on Memorial Benches (see Appendix). The benches are typically made from green oak by a local sawmill. The numbers and locations of these are reviewed on a regular basis.

Litter bins are located around the picnic area and North car park. These are emptied as required.

Dog waste bins are in North car park, the picnic area and South car park. Bins are emptied by Countryside Staff. Notices around the site encourage responsible dog ownership, including appropriate disposal of dog waste. Organised dog walking groups take their own additional measures to ensure compliance.

Two play areas are located adjacent to the picnic area: one for children aged 18 months to 6 years and one for 6–14-year-olds. The equipment in these areas has been replaced on a rolling programme. The play areas are inspected annually to RoSPA requirements and actions in the accompanying report followed up on. Additionally, they have a basic daily visual check.

The Visitor Centre incorporates the Windmill Cafe, with indoor seating, information about the site and other relevant information and a small sales area, currently used to sell countryside related publications. Property Services have responsibility for maintenance of the fabric of the Visitor Centre and works closely with the Countryside Service to ensure this is sufficient.

Adjacent to the visitor centre is a picnic area with 16 picnic tables. These are being replaced over time with recycled plastic benches. There is a fenced-in eating area with 6 tables giving priority to those eating food purchased from the Windmill Cafe who wish to eat outside, there is also an undercover seating area with 6 benches in it.

The grounds maintenance has been taken out of the Countryside Service Grounds Maintenance Contract and is being carried out by Countryside Service staff.

A fixed, purpose-built barbecue in the picnic area is available for hire through the Cafe.

A toilet block is located adjacent to the north car park with a sewerage system next to it. A mural on the front of the block was painted in a partnership project with the National Trust and a local artist. The back of the toilet block provides storage areas for cleaning materials and for the Cafe tenant's use. The toilet block is often in need of repair which is costly and time consuming for Countryside staff and Property Services. The brickwork and roof is in need of maintenance which should be carried out by Property Services. It will become necessary to update the block soon which should also be progressed with Property Services.

A fenced off area at the top of the staff car park was installed by the café tenant in 2021. This has a storage shed and area for the Café tenant to use along with the bulk LPG tanks for the Café and the office block.

A meeting room available for hire adjoins the staff offices. It accommodates up to 40 people and is booked by contacting Countryside Staff. The meeting room was not used through the Covid 19 pandemic and the current occupancy rates are still very low.

The main site office is located adjacent to the Visitor Centre. This does not have dedicated reception cover but is covered by Countryside Site staff. The first floor of the office building is leased to Integrated Therapy Solutions.

The cafe licence includes requirements to provide basic visitor services, such as first aid and to giving general site information during opening hours. The Visitor Centre was closed for a while during the Covid 19 pandemic and then operated as a takeaway service only. Customers were being served through a hatch and not allowed into the building.

Adjacent to the office is the 'Ranger's House'. This is rented out as private accommodation under a service tenancy; the current tenant is employed by the Countryside Service as a Cleaner/Caretaker

North Car Park does not have any public transport links directly. However, there is a bus stop close to the entrance at the end of the Green Lane. South Car Park is served by bus routes for the residential area.



FIGURE 3 SHOWING CAR PARK

Information, Interpretation and Promotion

The focus for information and interpretation is close to the Visitor Centre where there are large interpretative panels. Other entrances have a wooden monolith and welcome sign, including site contact details, and display byelaws in some locations. 6 interpretation panels are located around the site on the waymarked trails. They offer site users further information about flora and fauna which may be seen and

some of the countryside management practices employed historically and at present.

A toposcope at the top of Windmill Hill provides information on what can be seen from this vantage point.

The Visitor Centre also holds a stock of free guides to the site, including supplementary information on the 2 waymarked trails, although the printing of these is being phased out as the leaflets can be downloaded from the website

There are nationally recognised 'brown and white' tourist attraction signs to help guide visitors to the site from the local roads in the area.

In the past, the site team has developed links with local schools and jointly they have undertaken several interpretative arts projects, such as the toilet block mural.

Communication and Publicity

Website and social media

Waseley Hills Country Park is one several greenspaces that Worcestershire County Council manage. All these Greenspaces have many benefits and opportunities for people that visit, live, or work in the county, such as health and wellbeing, recreation, enjoying local wildlife and play in a safe environment. They also offer volunteering and work experience opportunities, as well as business opportunities for those looking for greenspaces to run events and activities on, such as outdoor fitness classes.

To increase awareness of County Council's services, the primary source for information is the county council website and the Waseley Hills Facebook page. The Windmill Café also has its own Facebook page.

Visitors can download the site map and learn about the site and its facilities, as well as find the use of site application form (to hold an event/activity/class on site) and find directions and location of each County Council greenspace. As well as site information, the website is where the complaints and compliments procedure, job vacancy and contact information can be found.

Visitor Use and Community Involvement

It has been estimated that there are 250 000 visits per annum to the Country Park. There is a vehicle counter at the entrance to North car park, however it is very difficult to accurately assess the number of visits due to the variation of people in a vehicle, the access point being used by all vehicles (including staff, contractors, deliveries and tenants), the lack of data for south car park and number of pedestrian entrances. The best measure to show trends of visitor numbers is through the car park income.

Worcestershire County Council has a [visitor survey](#) on the [County Council website](#), for all of its countryside sites. There will be a strong focus to promote this with QR codes and other signage on site.

Historically, feedback had been collected via paper feedback forms distributed from the site, and data from this input manually into a spreadsheet.

Such data enables Countryside staff to look at trends, such as how visitors are travelling to the site, how long they are staying and what their main purpose of the visit is, i.e., dog walking, meeting friends. Visitors can rate the site for aspects like cleanliness and facilities. The data collected is very useful for site management and understanding what visitors want from their greenspaces. This data can also be helpful when applying for grants and funding.

A weekly volunteer work party runs from the Country Park, working on this and other sites.

The volunteers contribute significantly to the environmental management and operation of the country park, assisting in completing grant funded and other works. They work approximately 360 hours per year on the site. Volunteers benefit through informal and formal training in estate management skills.

Links have been made with local primary and secondary schools, resulting in several arts projects on the site.

The cafe organises a variety of activities and have forged good links with 2 local greyhound rescue groups.

Historically the Countryside Service had community liaison staff that carried out outreach work with local communities. These posts no longer exist so it falls to site staff to undertake this type of work as and when they can.



FIGURE 4 SHOWING A NEWLY LAID HEDGE

Archaeology and Historic Environment (Maps 8.5 & 8.6: Historic Environment Features)

An historic environment landscape survey was undertaken in 2009 by Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment and Archaeology Service. The survey was intended to locate and record all historic environment features within the

site in order to provide a comprehensive dataset and condition assessment that will inform management. The survey was able to build upon existing knowledge of the site's historic landscape morphology by accurately recording, categorising and assessing the range of surviving features. Monuments recorded were divided into three chronological phases: prehistoric, medieval and post medieval to modern. The survey indicated that the overall survival and condition of surviving monuments was moderate to poor, predominately a consequence of invasive scrub and erosion.

The 1st Edition OS Map records post-medieval piecemeal enclosure characterised by medium to large scale fields with sinuous boundaries. Aerial photographic resources record that this is extant.

The 1st Edition OS Map records ponds in parcels 361 (WSM34531) and 5262. A small out farm is recorded in parcel 3854 (WSM41196). Aerial photographic resources record that the pond in parcel 5262 and out farm are lost.

The Historic Environment Record records several features within the holding. Earthworks relating to a pond and water channels are recorded in parcel 5920 (WSM01878). Linear earthworks, possibly represent either an area of forestry or the remnants of steam ploughing, are recorded to the west of this (WSM12197). A historic driveway runs through parcels 4168 and 4181 (WSM41971). An 'Old Quarry' is recorded on the 1st Edition OS Map and Historic Environment Record in parcel 4181 (WSM26424) - it is now filled with water. A prehistoric Ridgeway runs along the western side of parcels 4181, 5106 and 5890 and within parcel 5032 (WSM15569).

Comparison of the 1st Edition and 2007 aerial photographs shows that the historic field boundary pattern is partly intact.

Landscape and Landscape Features

WHCP sits within the Arden Joint Character Areas. Most of the site is of the Wooded Hills and Farmland Landscape Character. The north-eastern part is of the Timbered Plateau Farmland Landscape Character.

Set on a series of hills and valleys, Waseley Hills Country Park enjoys a prominent position within the local landscape offering all-round views and command of the skyline from several different directions. The Park also contains many relict and continuous features of the traditional landscape giving it a special visual and cultural identity.

The overall strategy for the landscape of Waseley Hills Country Park as identified by the County Landscape Character Assessment is one of conserving the existing features and strengthening / enhancing others.

Geology and Topography

The site rises to 998 feet and comprises Keele Beds topped with Clent Breccia. A line of springs around the base of the hills indicates where the two rock types meet. The ridged form of the site makes it a natural watershed; rain falling on the western side drains into the River Salwarpe then to the Bristol Channel whilst that falling to the east forms the River Rea which joins the River Trent and ultimately the North

Sea.

Habitats

(Maps 8.7: Habitats & 8.8: Field Numbers and Names)

Waseley Hills Country Park represents an extremely valuable wildlife resource. Many of the features present are recognised as rare and valuable habitats for wildlife.



FIGURE 5 SHOWING A MARBLED WHITE BUTTERFLY

Grassland

Extensive areas of semi-improved grassland provide habitat for ground nesting birds such as Skylark which anecdotal evidence suggests are declining in numbers at the site although this has yet to be confirmed.

Species rich lowland grassland supports many different types of insect and birds, most notably the Meadow Ant which in turn supports breeding pairs of Green Woodpecker.

Open grassland covers approximately 57ha of the site. An NVC Phase 2 survey carried out in 1999 identified habitats including acidic grassland, neutral grassland and marsh, all of which are listed in the local priority BAP habitats. 12ha of acidic and neutral grassland was designated as a Special Wildlife Site in 1990.

Dry acidic grassland occurs over a large part of the site with the most varied and valuable area in field 0361. This habitat type is rare in Worcestershire, only occurring on higher ground in the North of the county and on the Malvern Hills. The large area at Waseley Hills is an important sample of the National Vegetation Classification U4 (*Festuca ovina*- *Agrostis capillaris* – *Gallium saxatile*) community within the County.

The BAP key target habitat MG5 (*Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centuarea nigra*) can be found in areas of fields 4181 and 3854. This habitat is usually found on the lower land in river valleys of Worcestershire and indicates areas of land that have been managed without agricultural improvement for decades. This is a rare habitat and represents one of the most important communities on the site. Most of the other grassland areas have been classified as MG6 which are slightly less species rich than MG5 habitats. The wet areas, created by springs, of field 1970 and more extensively in field 5920 are classified as MG10 (*Holcus-lanatus* – *Juncus effuses*)

rush pasture which is also a grassland community targeted by the Worcestershire BAP.

The site is grazed under an annual grazing licence by approximately 27 Hereford organic beef cattle. The site is split into several fields following the old hedge banks. These can be grazed or have the cattle excluded at certain times of the year. The grazing licence runs from Easter to October. A hay cut has been taken from several fields every year, with aftermath grazing.



FIGURE 6 SHOWING A WILDFLOWER MEADOW

Woodland

Several woodland areas can be found at Waseley Hills Country Park, ranging from well-established Beech woodland to woodland planted in the 1990s. Most of the wooded areas attract visitors; however, some are not on well-used routes and so, therefore, are not regularly visited.

Hedgerow trees and the various blocks of woodland around the site provide ideal habitat for bats and nesting birds, especially hole nesting species such as Little Owl and Greater Spotted Woodpecker which has been observed, by members of the sites team' nesting in Segbourne Coppice. Signs of deer have been seen in some woodland areas and some visitors report seeing deer at the north end of the site.

Beech Wood (0.15Ha) – field no. 6176 contains Beech trees planted in 1931 and is mainly surrounded by remnant hedgerows.

South Car Park (2.09Ha) – field no 8389 was planted in the mid 1980's with mixed broadleaf trees which surround a small but well used stone car park. The North Worcestershire Path runs through this field with a surfaced section running from the top of the car park to the kissing gate to field 5890. A line of old boundary trees runs

North to South across the top of the car park. Thinning work has been undertaken to open up the car park making it a lot lighter especially round the car park entrance.

Segbourne (1.85Ha) – field no 0361. The majority of Segbourne was planted with mixed broadleaf in 1931 and contains other areas of broadleaf trees planted in 1984, 1994 and a small area of Scots Pine planted in 1994. The majority of the trees are sycamore, beech, ash and oak with a mixed understory starting to develop. A small number of Sycamore were felled between 2005 and 2018 along with some small Alder and Willow to open up the path edges and views down the valley to the ponds. Bluebells attract a large number of visitors, and the two spring fed ponds are also important habitats. As Segbourne is at the bottom of a steep valley, access can be difficult. The Rabbit trail runs through Segbourne and a path leads off the site and joins a bridleway leading to Chapman's Hill. This site entrance is well-used by local visitors.

Narrows (1.11Ha) - field no 4322. The woodland known as the Narrows was planted in 1989 with mixed broadleaf woodland and connects the North and South parts of the site. Hazel has been planted along the edges of the woodland area along with several Cherry trees. A small group of Larch trees, planted in 1931, is situated in the Northern corner of the Narrows. A bridleway and the Rabbit Trail run through the Narrows. Small scale thinning work has been carried out with a new path created to allow a way round the muddiest track between field gates at the top and bottom of the wood.

Rotary Wood (1.25Ha) - field no's 5262 and 5768. Planted in 1993 with a mixture of broadleaf trees around an old, silted-up pond. Two pedestrian gates were installed in approximately 2008 to allow access to the wood and some crown lifting was also carried out to make a path through the wood. However, this woodland is not regularly visited and the gates and path through the wood have become overgrown and impassable. Most of the year, springs flow through the wood making it very boggy and inaccessible to most of the wood. This area has been treated as a non-intervention area since 2012.

Rabbit Bank (0.46Ha) - field no 1084, planted in 1987, mainly with mixed broadleaf but there is also a small area of mixed conifers. This woodland is on the side of a very steep hill, running along the top of the First Valley with a flight of steps on the Rabbit Trail on the Western boundary of the wood. The bank is covered in rabbit burrows causing some erosion in places.

Jubilee Plantation (0.39Ha) - field no 3456 was planted in 1977 to mark the Queens Silver Jubilee. An area of beech trees was planted to eventually mimic Frankley Beeches which is clearly visible from Jubilee Plantation. As the Beech trees were planted on the top of the very exposed hill, a ring of Scots Pine was planted as a shelter belt. The Beech trees have suffered from large amounts of squirrel damage, but most have survived. The Scots Pines have been thinned out but a few round the edges remain. Jubilee Plantation was fenced to prevent cattle accessing the woodland. Unfortunately, this made it very attractive for unauthorised campers and the fence was vandalised to use the rails for lighting fires. The fence was removed in 2010 which has greatly reduced the camping as cattle tend to shelter under the trees

in the rain or on bright, sunny days. The cattle have browsed through the wood which has raised the crowns of the trees and opened the view through the wood.

Corner Wood (0.07Ha) - field no 2832, planted in 1986 with Beech trees. This is a very small corner of field 4033 that is planted up and has no access through it.

Scrub

Areas of predominately European?? Gorse and Hawthorn scrub are present within the dry acid grassland of fields 4181, 3854 and 1970 and Hawthorn and Bramble scrub is present in the wet area of field 5920. The scrub has been managed by rotational cutting to increase the age structure and clearance has been done to keep the scrub off the higher parts of the hills. This has been done in order to protect the surrounding grassland areas while still leaving a varied and valuable scrub habitat for birds to nest in and feed off. Cattle grazing the site have had a limited effect on scrub control; the main method has been manual cutting with the aid of volunteers and mowing regrowth.

Scrub in field 5920 was greatly reduced in 2004 to preserve the archaeological interest in the north-eastern corner of the field. This field was fenced to allow grazing to keep the area open. Low numbers of cattle tend to graze this area which helps to maintain the open aspect and not cause any damage to the archaeology.

The areas of Gorse scrub provide a valuable habitat for a wide variety of birds and insects including species such as Linnet and Stonechat.

Ponds and springs

Waseley Hills is formed from two rock types: the lower layer is impermeable Keele Beds and the upper layer is permeable Clent Breccia. Water is forced out of the ground in springs where the two rock types meet, creating several wet areas and pools around Waseley Hills Country Park. The most notable pools are the two pools in Segbourne Coppice. These pools were created originally to be stocked to feed inhabitants of the house further down the valley and are noted on the archaeology management plan; they are currently not stocked. Springs in field 1970 feed into the pools and run steadily all year round. Brick overflow chimneys are in both pools to allow water to continue to flow down the valley. In 2013, the pond side edges of the dams were lined with a geotextile fabric and the dams were topped up with stone to prevent any further erosion. At the same time, a large number of reeds were cleared from the pools. Every autumn, the reeds have been cleared by hand to prevent too much encroachment into the pools. Small scale work has been carried out to fix erosion due to dogs entering the pools as and when needed. The banks of the dams are trimmed regularly to keep them open.

The Newlands area of the Country Park, field 5920, has the remains of a pool complex which is noted in the archaeology management plan. Rotary Wood also has a spring fed pool, noted in the archaeology plan, but this has silted up and is currently an overgrown wet area. A small pool is situated in the corner of field 4181 which is surrounded by mixed broadleaf trees and is used as a drinking bay by the cattle.

Field 3701 is a small, fenced area which contains the source of the River Rea. A

very small pool was dug in 2011 and enlarged in 2020 to show the spring coming out of the ground. This spring is very important as the River Rea flows into Birmingham and was used as power for the mills in Birmingham. Scrub clearance is periodically carried out round the spring.

Springs in field 1970 are used as drinking bays for the cattle. Some work has been carried out to prevent erosion to paths running past the springs especially leading from the first valley into the Northern end of Segbourne Coppice.

In 2002, some very limited survey work was done on the pools. Common frog tadpoles, smooth or palmate newt tadpoles and rigid and soft hornwort were identified. Several species of dragonfly have also been seen around the pools.

The whole of the Country Park falls within 4 surface water Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ). The Eastern side of the site is in the River Trent NVZ, the Northwest corner is in the River Stour NVZ and the remainder of the site is in the River Salwarpe NVZ. The Stour and Salwarpe zones also form part of the West Midlands NVZ.



FIGURE 7 SHOWING SEGBOURNE POOL

Hedgerows and Significant Trees

Hedgerows represent valuable wildlife habitats offering food and shelter for many different species of birds including Yellow Hammer and Song Thrush listed on the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan.

The historic field boundary pattern, as shown in the Archaeology Management Plan, is marked out with hedge banks, most of which have species rich hedges or remains of hedgerows on them. Hedges were planted at the start of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (2012 to 2013) to create a continuous corridor of either hedge or woodland round the perimeter of the site. The hedges have been managed by laying and or trimming. Rabbits, Badgers, cattle and Country Park visitors were

causing erosion to some hedge banks. This was greatly reduced when new fencing was installed in the HLS agreement. Hedges on the hill tops have not been restored as this would block many of the famous views which are a major attraction to the Country Park. Where possible, hedges have been managed to a minimum height of 2 metres allowing standard trees to grow to maturity.

There are a large number of veteran and significant trees associated with the hedgerows around the site. These have had reactive management in recent years, mainly dealing with any safety issues that have arisen.

Grants, Resources and Funding

In October 2002 a Countryside Stewardship grant was awarded to the site, which part-funds environmental management of the key habitats and features of the site.

In July 2012, the site was awarded a Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) grant to commence in October 2012 (running on from the Countryside Stewardship grant), to continue with, and refine, the sustainable management of the habitats and historic environment on the site. In 2022, the County Council was offered a rolling annual extension of the HLS grant until the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) are launched in 2024.

Additional funds come from the Countryside Service budgets and various income streams.

Natural Capital and Health and Wellbeing

The natural environment provides many resources to society, which are known as natural capital or ecosystem services. Waseley Hills Country Park provides many such resources including carbon storage, renewable energy through wood fuel, clean air and water and reduced soil erosion and flooding. A healthy natural environment can also provide advantages to the economy and regeneration and can improve educational outcomes and quality of life, which help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

The health and well-being benefits of a Country Park like Waseley Hills are many. Mental ill health is increasing research indicates that taking part in nature-based activities can help reduce depression, anxiety and stress. Physical activity among adults and children is declining and there is increase in obesity, diabetes and heart disease as a result. Social prescribing by health professionals, for both physical and mental wellbeing, can involve directing someone to go for a walk, join a volunteer group or a yoga class, all which Waseley Hills Country Park provides opportunities for. These are safe and cost-effective forms of medical intervention that can reverse or prevent serious health conditions.

Awards and Accreditation

The Country Park has held the Green Flag Award, the national standard for

greenspaces, since 2003. It also became one of the first Natural England accredited Country Parks, a reflection of the range of facilities it provides and a recognition of its management as a Country Park, in 2009.

Environmental sustainability is integral to the management approach for the Country Park. For example, the café lease includes specific requirements for fair trade, free range, local, organic and recyclable products to be used wherever possible; seating and other site furniture is manufactured from timber felled as part of the conversation management of countryside service sites.; firewood produced from environmental management of countryside service sites fuels the wood burner in the visitor centre.

Sustainability

In 2010 site managers were approached by the County Council's Environmental Sustainability Team to take part in a pilot scheme looking at developing and designating Eco Centres, an extension of the already successful Eco Schools scheme. This involved conducting an environmental audit, establishing an Eco committee, comprising council site officers and tenants, adopting a waste policy and environmental policy and seeking to reduce the environmental impact of the site, particularly in relation to use of electricity, gas and water. This resulted in an increase in recycling at the site, reduced water consumption and increased awareness amongst staff and site visitors. The site achieved Eco Centre status in 2011.

Working with colleagues across the authority, the feasibility of solar panels and an electric vehicle charging point have been investigated; both are not feasible at this location.

Health and Safety

All the Countryside Service sites have recorded, quarterly health and safety inspections carried out on them. These are undertaken by Countryside Sites or Assistant Sites officers in January, April, July and October. All items on the site are inspected against set standards. Tree inspections are carried out during the October quarterly inspections and in line with the tree inspection policy.

Additionally, Waseley Hills Country Park has daily recorded checks and litter picking of the picnic area, play areas, car parks, toilets, visitor centre and information and hard standing areas adjacent to North car park and weekly recorded checks of key areas, including Segbourne Pools, Skylark Trail, Rabbit Trail and the Green Lane. A site risk assessment has been developed. It is reviewed by the Countryside Sites Team annually.

A RoSPA accredited inspection of the play areas is conducted annually and actions from the report followed up.

Any accident or incident is recorded according to legal requirements and County Council policy. Where appropriate reviews of procedures and facilities are carried out and any works identified completed.

Objectives and Actions

6.1 Access and Facilities	
Objective: To provide an informal recreation site accessible to all visitors	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open areas of picnic area with trees dotted round by regular mowing and planting new trees / maintaining existing trees. • Provide 25 picnic benches on main picnic area, 6 in area outside the café and 6 in the undercover seating area. Replace old wooden benches with recycled plastic benches. • Install large mobility kissing gates when replacing gates. • Look for opportunities to enlarge car park or increase number of bays. • Work with Property services to improve toilet block • Work with Property services to make buildings more energy efficient. • Consultation on the provision of the orienteering course should be carried out as part of the consultation of this management plan with the view to removing it or re-vamping it with input from a local orienteering club. • Maintain current number (33) of memorial benches, review locations and identify any possible new positions, replace when deteriorate. • Manage dog ownership by carrying out regular campaigns on clearing up dog mess and keeping dogs under close control. • Maintain children's play area and seek out any grants to renew equipment. • Maintain café and visitor centre with tenant and Property Services. • Continue to rent out Rangers house, café and office space to raise income. • Daily health and safety checks and quarterly inspections (Jan, Apr, Jul and Oct) to be carried out and recorded. • Tree inspections every 15 months to be carried out and recorded at the same time as the quarterly inspections. • Annual ROSPA approved play area inspection. • Maintain two waymarked trails round site, review routes / erosion issues every 2 years. 	
6.2 Information, interpretation and promotion	

Objective: to provide a well promoted site with onsite information boards and access to digital information	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain main information boards outside visitor centre. • In the short term – replace information boards round the site. • Longer term - look to replace boards with accessible digital information. • Rationalise finger posts and waymark posts round visitor centre and wider site. 	

6.3. Visitor use and Community involvement	
Objective: To maintain a site open for all visitors to use and enhance ways for community to become involved.	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult on draft management plan. • Implement new site visitor feedback system. • Increase use of social media, in particular Country Park Facebook page to gather comments / queries and suggestions relating to the Country Park. • Use social media / apps to record species sightings on the park. e.g., iRecord • Contact Boundless Outdoors (formerly Bell Heath Study Centre) to see if they can make use of the site for their educational courses. • Contact local colleges to promote the site for use as a study base, particularly for environmental/land-based subjects. • Support the café tenant when organising events. • Run weekly volunteer work parties. 	

6.4 Archaeology and Historic Environment	
Objective: to maintain the historic features listed in the Historic Environment report	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain field patterns to preserve hedge banks by maintaining hedges and fencing where appropriate. • Maintain the open nature of the Drove way and Ridgeway through a regime of hedge trimming and scrub clearance, monitor for and repair erosion in a sensitive manner. • Protect culverts and earthworks through a regime of scrub clearance and monitor for and repair erosion in a sensitive manner. • Protect all historic features by not allowing supplementary feeding or positioning of water bowser on or near to features. 	Also refer to the Historic Environment Landscape survey report.

6.5 Landscape and Landscape Features	
Objective: to maintain the parks features that fit in with the Wooded Hills and Farmland Landscape Character	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage woodlands to fit in with local landscape area. • Maintain and manage irregular field boundaries, bounded with native species hedgerows. 	This is expanded upon in the Woodland and Hedges sections.

6.6 Geology and Topography	
Objective: maintain springs and other notable features	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain information at the source of the River Rea. • Manage springs and other features to prevent scrubbing over or damage due to poaching. 	This is expanded upon in the Ponds and Springs section

6.7 Habitats and Species

6.7.1 Grassland	
Objective: to increase biodiversity of grassland, protect Special Wildlife Site area	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey grasslands at regular intervals. • Harvest seed from the best meadows and scatter in less diverse meadows. • Take late summer hay cut from as wide an area as possible. • Graze with native breed cattle, aftermath grazing on hay cut areas. • Review grazing regime at regular intervals and adjust according to conditions – growth of wildflowers, sward height, poaching etc. • Maintain field boundaries to exclude cattle from certain areas at certain times of the year e.g., do not graze areas due to be cut for hay before they are cut. • Do not graze the 'Butterfly Field' (field adjacent to picnic area) before the end of the summer holidays. This allows a cow (and cow pat) free field for families to enjoy. • Retain a maximum of 5% bare ground 	Also see Scrub section

Woodland	
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Objective: to create woodland parcels with a varied age structure of native trees and varied ground cover.	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out tree inspections every 15 months to coincide with quarterly checks, carry out any safety work arising from these. • Thin trees round South Car Park to allow young trees to grow but maintaining open canopy round car park edges and entrance. • Thin sycamore in Segbourne to allow more light to the floor and to favour beech, ash and oak trees. • Thin in the narrows to create open areas and to vary age structure of trees. Monitor erosion of paths and create diversions if necessary. • Manage Hazel by regular coppicing to allow products to be used for hedge laying or stream revetments. • Continue to manage Rotary Wood as a non-intervention area. • Retain dead wood where safe to do so. 	

Scrub	
Objective: to create scrub areas of varying age structure confined to lower slopes, reduce scrub cover in special wildlife site area	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coppice older, leggy Gorse to allow re-growth. • Manage scrub areas to contain approximately 20% mature scrub. • Manage the remaining areas to contain a varied age structure and small areas of open ground. • Clear scrub from higher parts of the hills. • Reduce scrub cover on the Special Wildlife Site area by cutting or pulling where possible. • Create up to 10% open areas amongst scrub. • Manage regrowth by grazing, cutting or flailing, allowing some areas to grow to maturity. 	

Ponds and Springs	
Objective: to maintain pools with open water, surrounded by low level vegetation. To maintain springs and marl pits.	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear reeds from Segbourne pools annually. • Coppice banks round Segbourne pools. • Keep overflow chimneys clear. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor for erosion / dog entry points and repair bank edges as necessary. Use natural revetment or mesh barrier similar to the dam edges. Reeds pulled can be used to backfill some erosion points. • Strim dam banks on a regular basis. • Investigate feasibility of installing pond dipping / viewing platform. • Enlarge pools in second valley. At what point in the plan? • Create small pool in first valley. At what point in the plan? • Monitor springs and marl pits to ensure they are kept free of scrub, especially the Source of the River Rea. • Monitor for poaching round springs and pits, exclude grazing if necessary. 	
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Hedgerows and significant trees	
Objective: to maintain continuous hedgerows to join up woodland parcels round site boundary. Maintain hedges along hedgebanks and to protect significant trees.	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain hedges with rotational programme of flailing, gapping up where needed and laying where feasible. • Maintain fencing to protect hedges and hedgebanks where needed. • Maintain fences but do not plant hedge alongside toposcope to maintain views. • Monitor significant hedgerow / boundary trees in accordance with the tree inspection policy, carry out safety work and work to prolong their lifespan as necessary. • Identify and protect any future significant hedgerow trees • Plant new hedge to replace play area fence. • Plant new hedge along the top of the picnic area to reduce water logging issues. • Maintain hedges round site entrance and amenity areas through a programme of regular trimming. 	

Current management and resources	
Objective: maintain current staff levels, apply for new Environmental Land Management agreement, raise income	
Actions.	Comments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff levels should be maintained as any drop in staff hours would impact on the levels of service provided. • Apply for Environmental Land Management grant scheme in 2024 (current scheme runs until October 2022, and an annual rolling extension has been agreed.) • Maintain Green Flag status. • Review income annually – meeting room charges, car park tariffs, rental income (café, rangers house, office space, grazing licence). • Investigate grants for projects such as play area refurbishment, provision of nest boxes 	
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Flora and Fauna

Flora	
Objective: to increase the floral diversity of the site, in particular over the special wildlife site.	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out annual grassland surveys. • Harvest seed from the most species rich meadows and scatter on less diverse areas. • Monitor grazing to ensure areas are not over or undergrazed, move cattle accordingly. • Monitor site for poaching and move cattle if poaching or erosion starts to occur. • Implement a flexible grazing regime to allow for changes in grass and flower growth and weather conditions. 	See also Grassland section

Fauna. Birds, mammals, invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles	
Objective: to increase the knowledge of fauna on site. To provide more opportunities for fauna on site.	
Actions.	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement recording system e.g. irecord and reintroduce sightings boards in the visitor centre when it re-opens. • Work with local groups to implement surveys and for mapping e.g., badger setts. • Manage grassland to allow some low tussocky areas for ground nesting birds. • Promote responsible dog ownership including keeping dogs under close control in nesting season. • Install a variety of nest boxes and bat boxes round the site. 	Records for all fauna are limited

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage scrub to provide nesting and perching sites. • Retain standing dead wood where possible and create refugia with fallen timber and brash. • Monitor reptile mats (installed in 2020). 	
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Threats to the site

Climate Change and Tree Pests and Diseases

Increased carbon in the atmosphere will mean that climate change will affect the natural environment. In summary this is likely to mean that temperatures will continue to rise and weather patterns will change over time. There are likely to be more extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, which can cause flooding and erosion, storms with high winds which can cause trees to blow over or be damaged. Warmer winters may mean that plant species cannot germinate or fruit, as they require a spell of colder weather. Drier conditions could also cause drought, which may mean that species do not have enough water to thrive.

Pests and diseases are likely to increase in their effect on wildlife, and invasive species may also become more prominent, causing detriment to native species that may already be under stress.

There has been a dramatic increase in the threat of damaging pests and diseases that affect trees, most of which have come from abroad. Examples include Acute Oak Decline (AOD), Phytophthora and Ash Dieback (Chalara). Once infected, after a few years, these diseases are usually fatal to the tree.

The management of Waseley Hills Country Park will need to be adaptive to change to ensure that the park is resilient to the effects of climate change and pests and diseases. For example, if trees become affected by disease or drought and become unsafe, they may need to be pruned or even felled if they are in an area of the Reserve with a level of public access.

Increasing visitor numbers

Visitor numbers to the Country Park have steadily increased over time. While it is great to see the site being used and generating the income used for upkeep of the Country Park, it also puts increasing pressure on the site’s infrastructure.

During the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020-21, there was a large increase in the number of visitors to the Country Park, which was consistent with other greenspaces that the County Council manages, and the national picture. This was largely due to other countryside sites, such as those managed by Malvern Hills Trust, National Trust and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust being closed, during the start of the pandemic. This created a displacement of visitors to Waseley Hills Country Park. However, as the pandemic progressed and other sites were re-opened, numbers gradually fell, although there is no doubt that a new audience of visitors to the Country Park had developed. The impacts on the Country Park of the increase in visitors were

significant and varied. The toilet block and car park were overwhelmed every day with damage caused to toilets, verges, car park edges and ditches.

There was a significant increase in the amount of litter and dog mess on the site. Countryside staff spent most of their time dealing with this, diverting time away from other site management and maintenance tasks on this and other sites. The increased footfall led to many areas of the park becoming heavily eroded, fences, gates and benches being broken as well as having a detrimental effect on wildlife on the site. These effects will be felt on the site for a considerable time and will lead to increased maintenance tasks, for example rerouting paths and moving gates to reduce erosion.

Although the play area was closed for much of the Covid -19 lockdown times, it has been very heavily used since. This has led to increased wear on the equipment and surfacing as well as increased vandalism of the fence. Funding should be sought to replace the fence, preferably with hedging. Funding should also be sought to replace the older equipment or even to revamp the entire area if possible.

The increasing numbers of visitors and the pressure that brings to the site and the staff should not be underestimated. It should be at the forefront of decisions relating to the future management of the park especially with regards to facility upgrades or replacements.

Local development

Waseley Hills Crematorium was built on land adjacent to the Country Park and was opened in January 2022. At the time of writing this plan (March 2022) there has not been any significant impact on the Country Park. With the land protected from housing development and with the sympathetic design of the crematorium, this could prove to be beneficial to the Park and the wildlife on it. The café could benefit from the Crematorium in the way of catering for wakes which may use the Country Park as a venue.

There are currently no other proposals to develop land immediately adjacent to the Country Park, but this could have a significant impact on the park if it were to happen.

Maps
Site Context

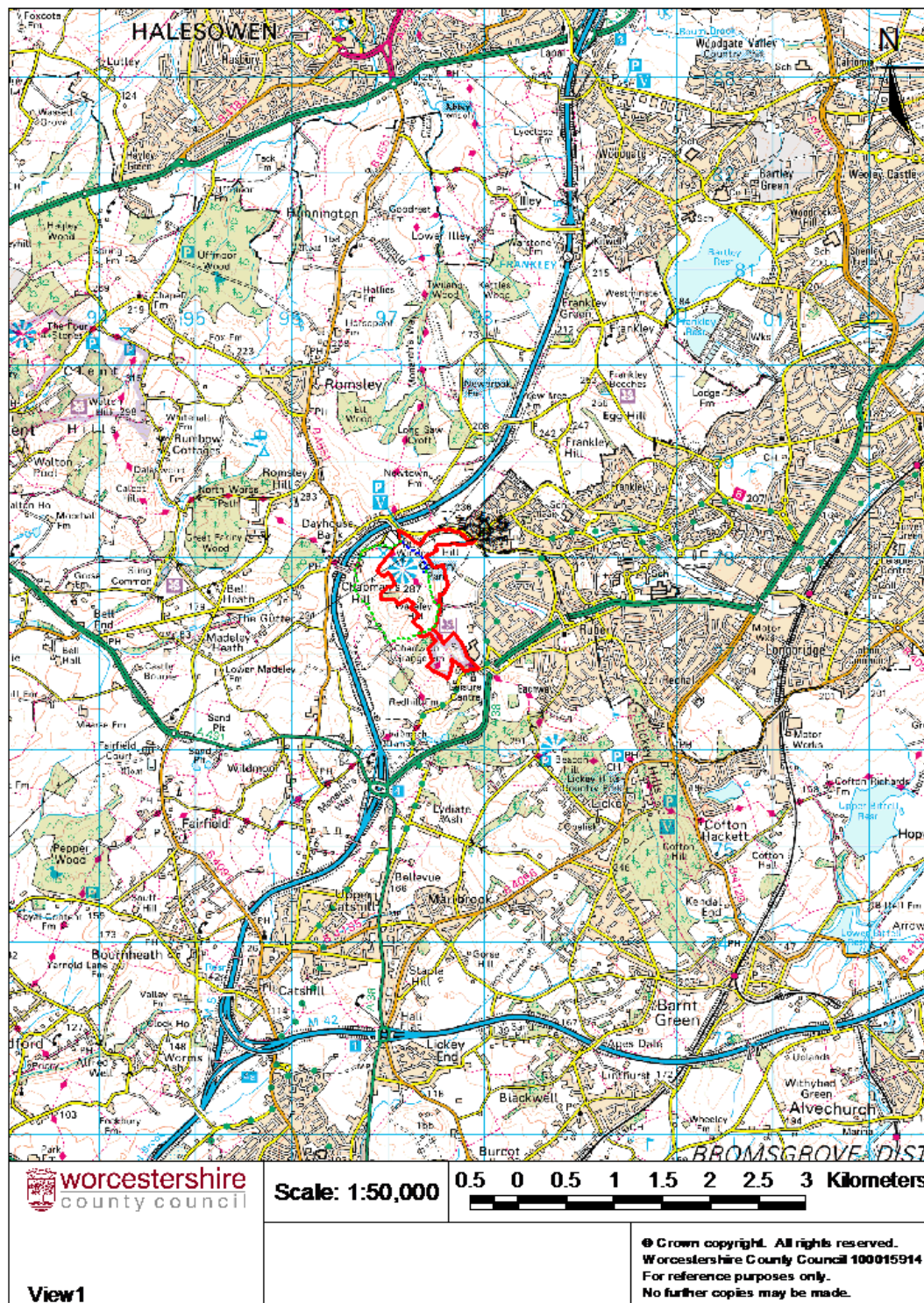


FIGURE 5 MAP SHOWING AREA AROUND WASELEY HILLS COUNTRY PARK

Special Wildlife Site

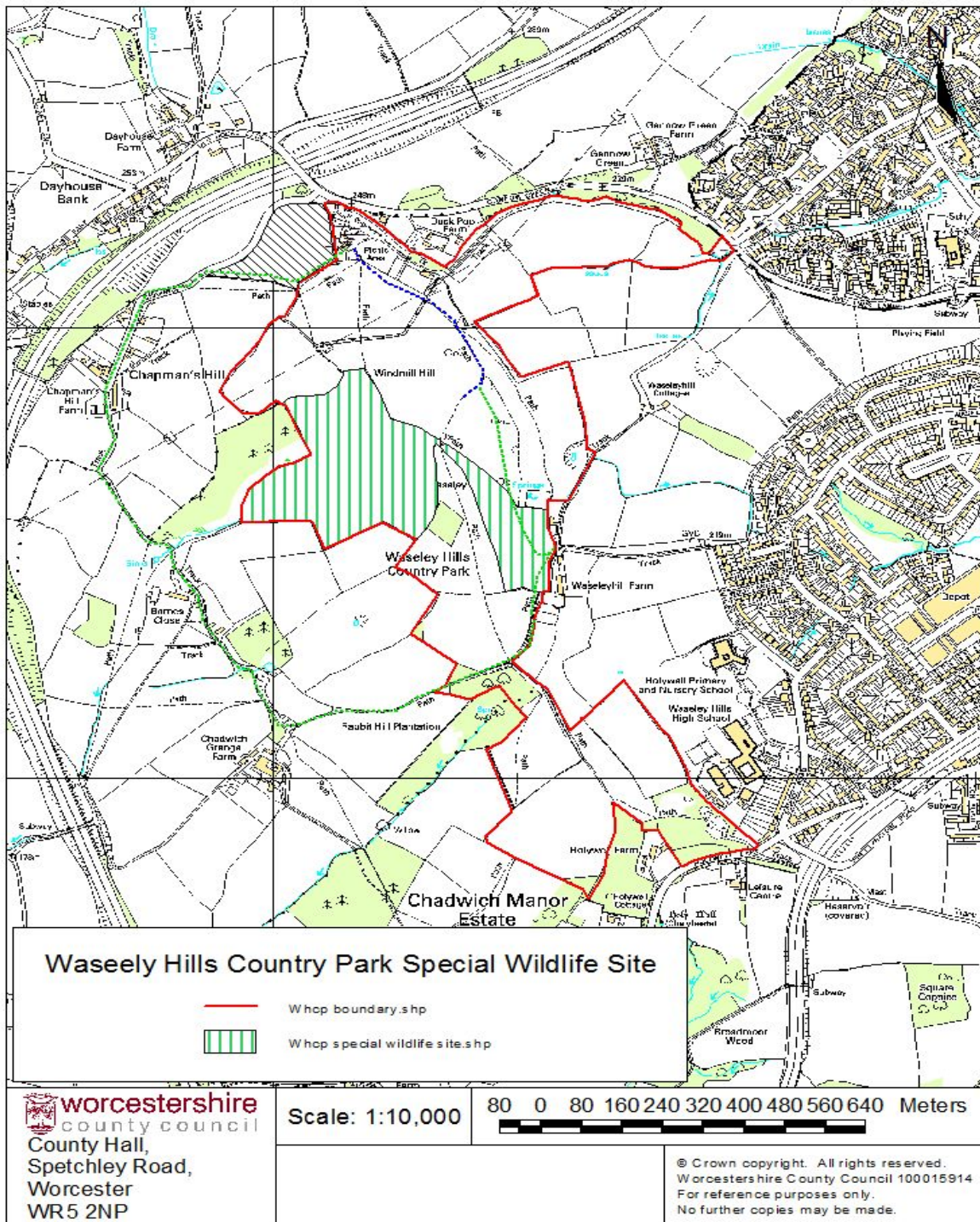


FIGURE 6 MAP SHOWING SPECIAL WILDLIFE SITE

Waseley Hills Country Park

Orienteering Course

£1

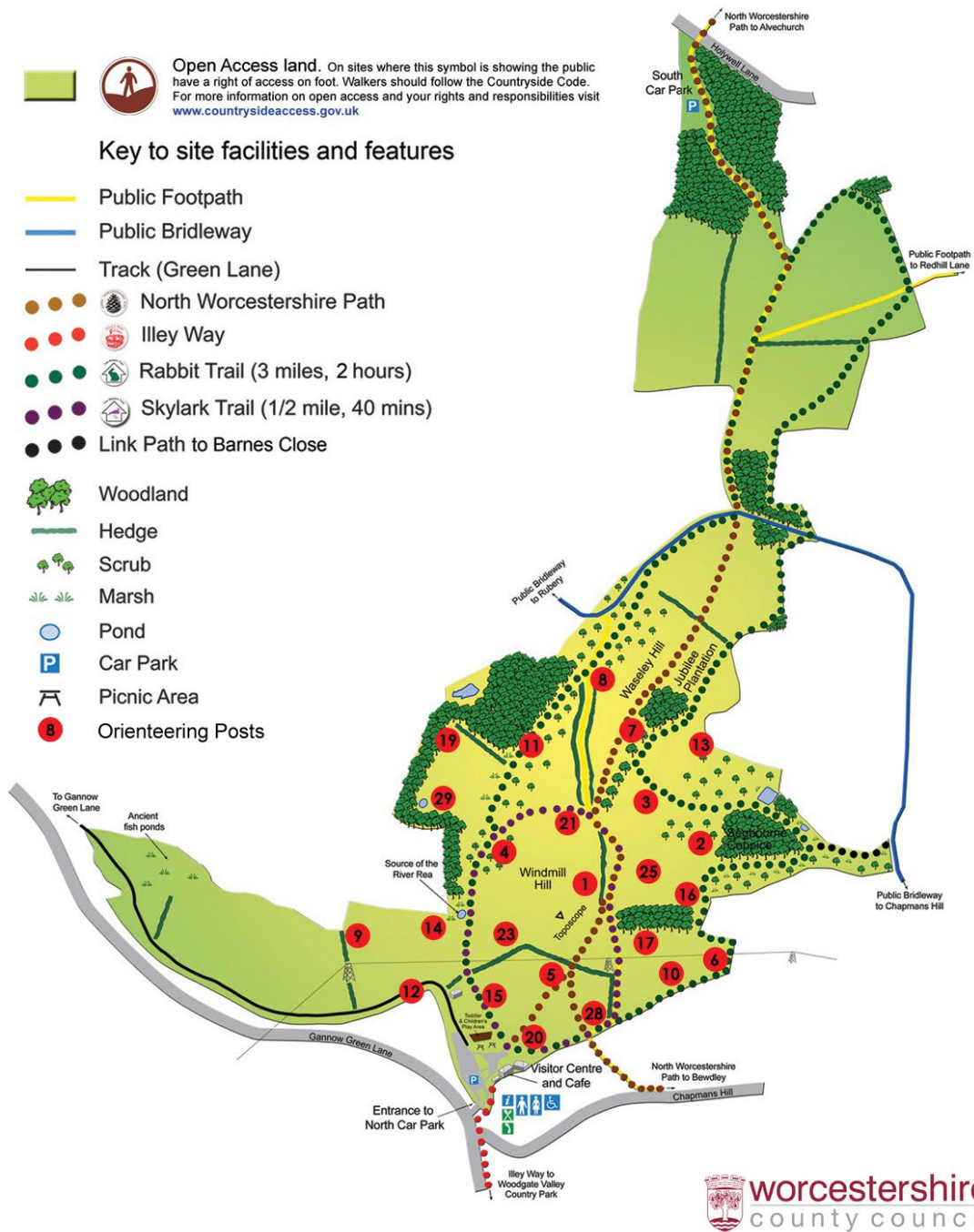


FIGURE 7 ORIENTEERING MAP

Country Park Buildings

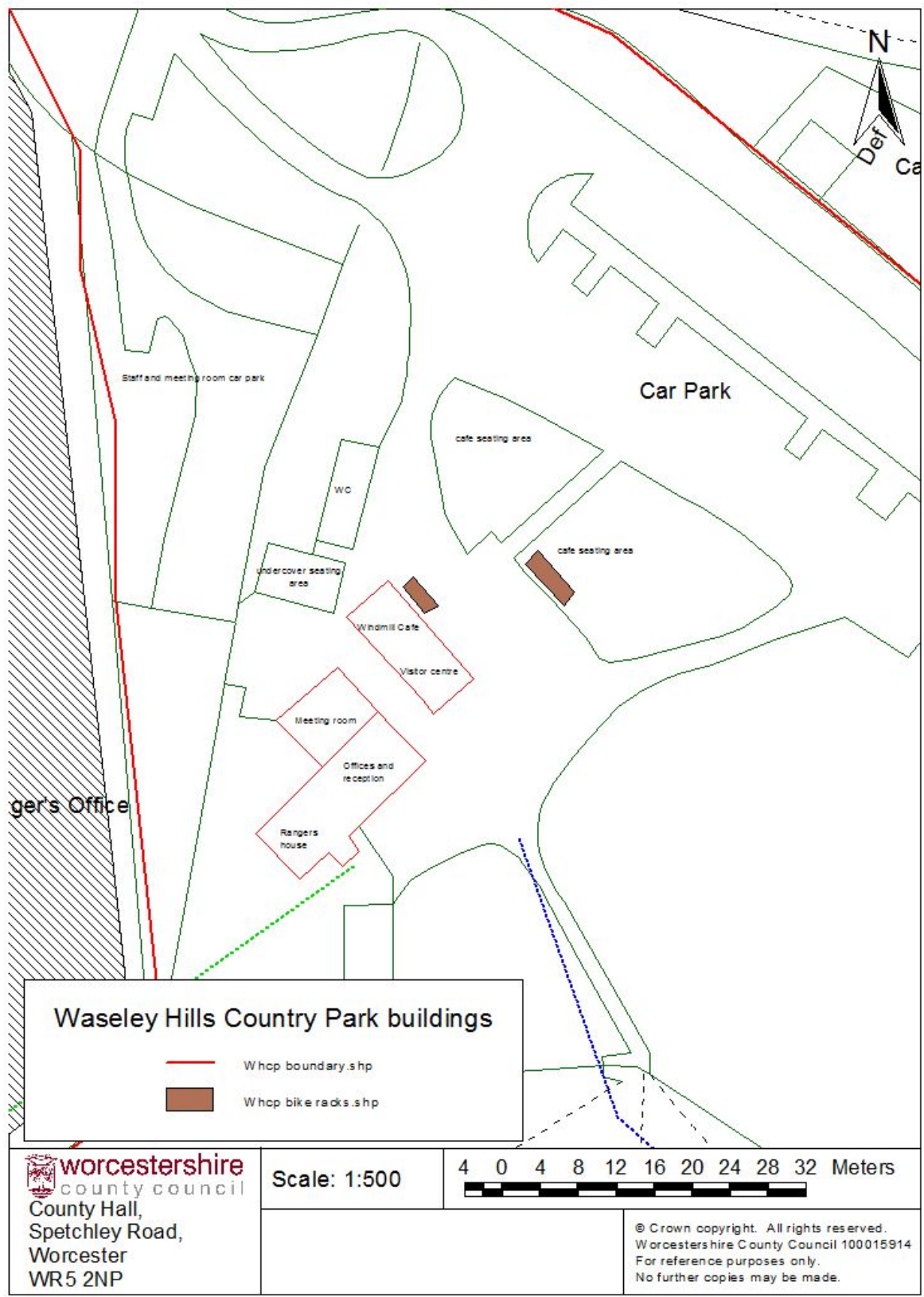
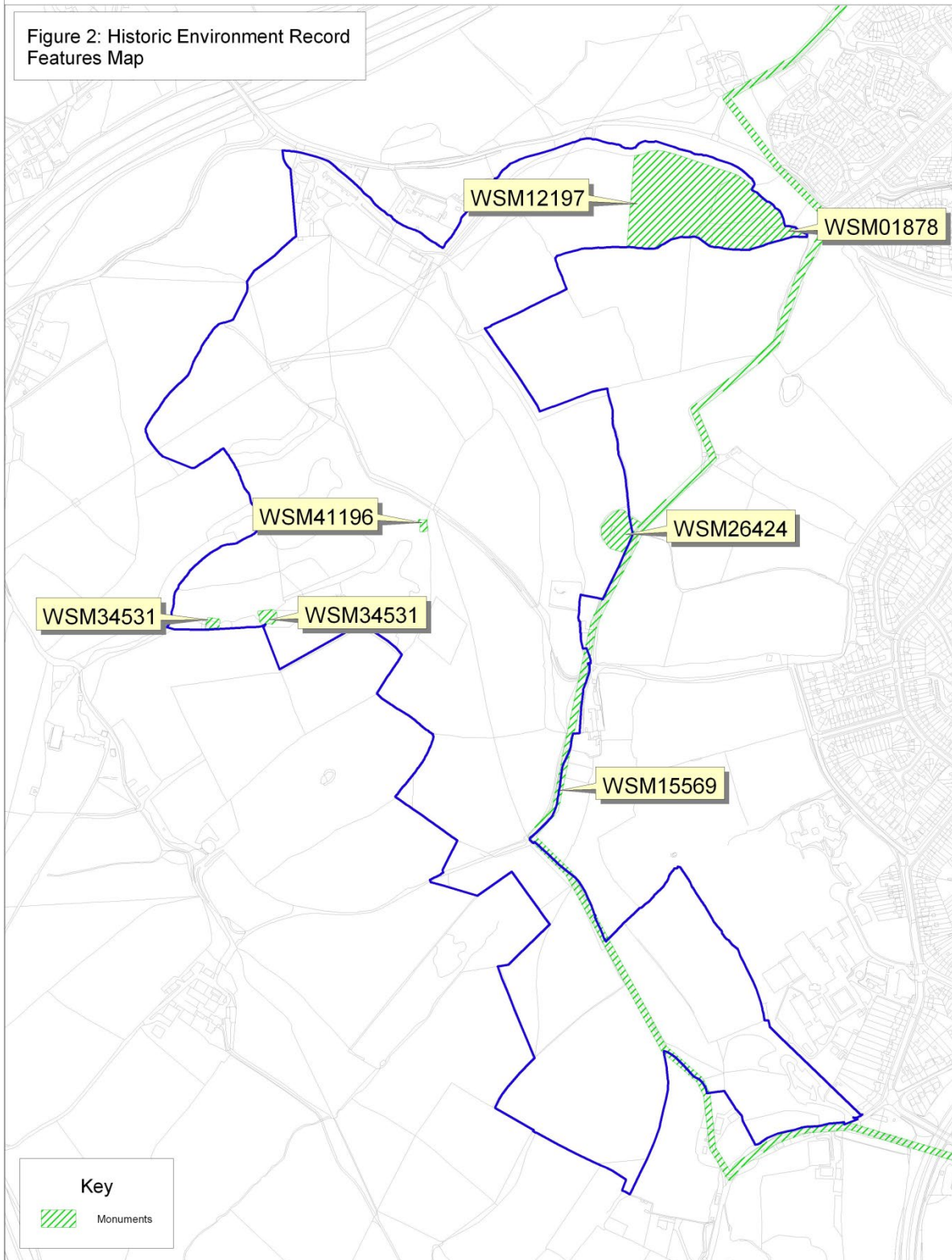


FIGURE 8 MAP SHOWING BUILDINGS ON SITE

Historic Environment Features 1

Figure 2: Historic Environment Record
Features Map



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0 200 400 Meters
Scale 1:5000

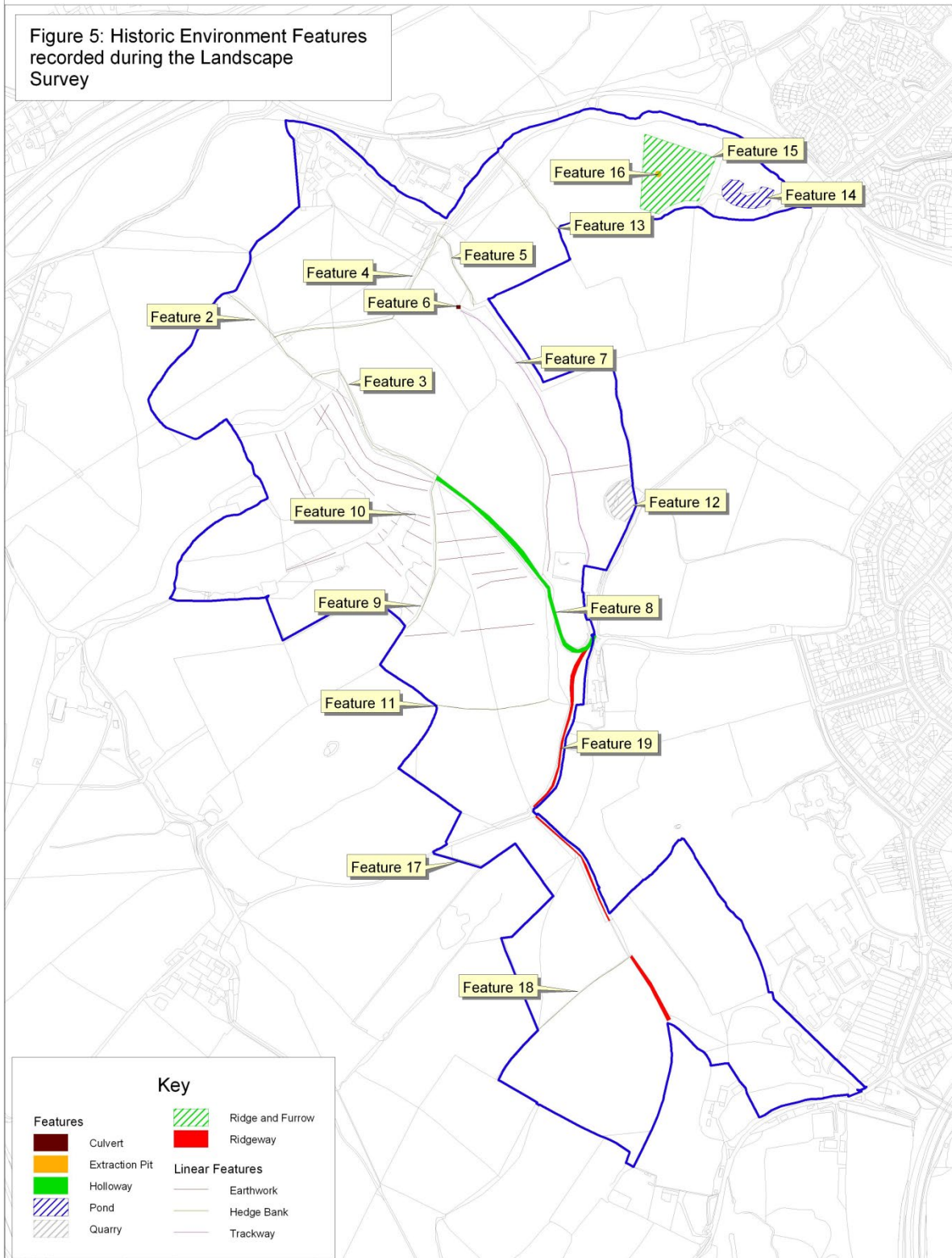


Map produced:
30/10/2009

FIGURE 9 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORDS FEATURES MAP

Historic Environment Features 2

Figure 5: Historic Environment Features recorded during the Landscape Survey



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0 200 400 Meters
Scale 1:5000



Map produced:
03/11/2009

FIGURE 10 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FEATURES MAP

Habitats

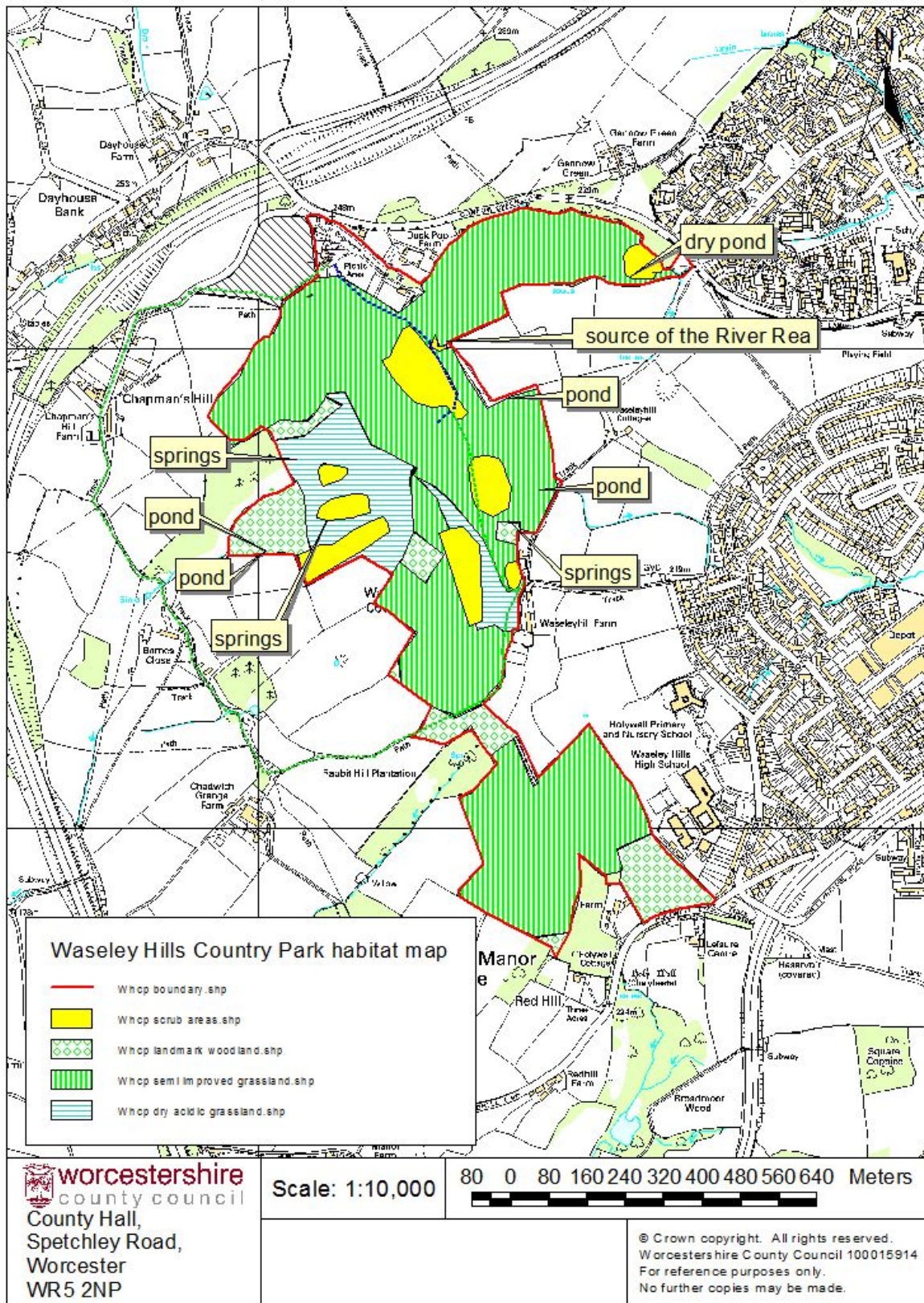


FIGURE 11 MAP SHOWING HABITATS

Field Numbers and Names

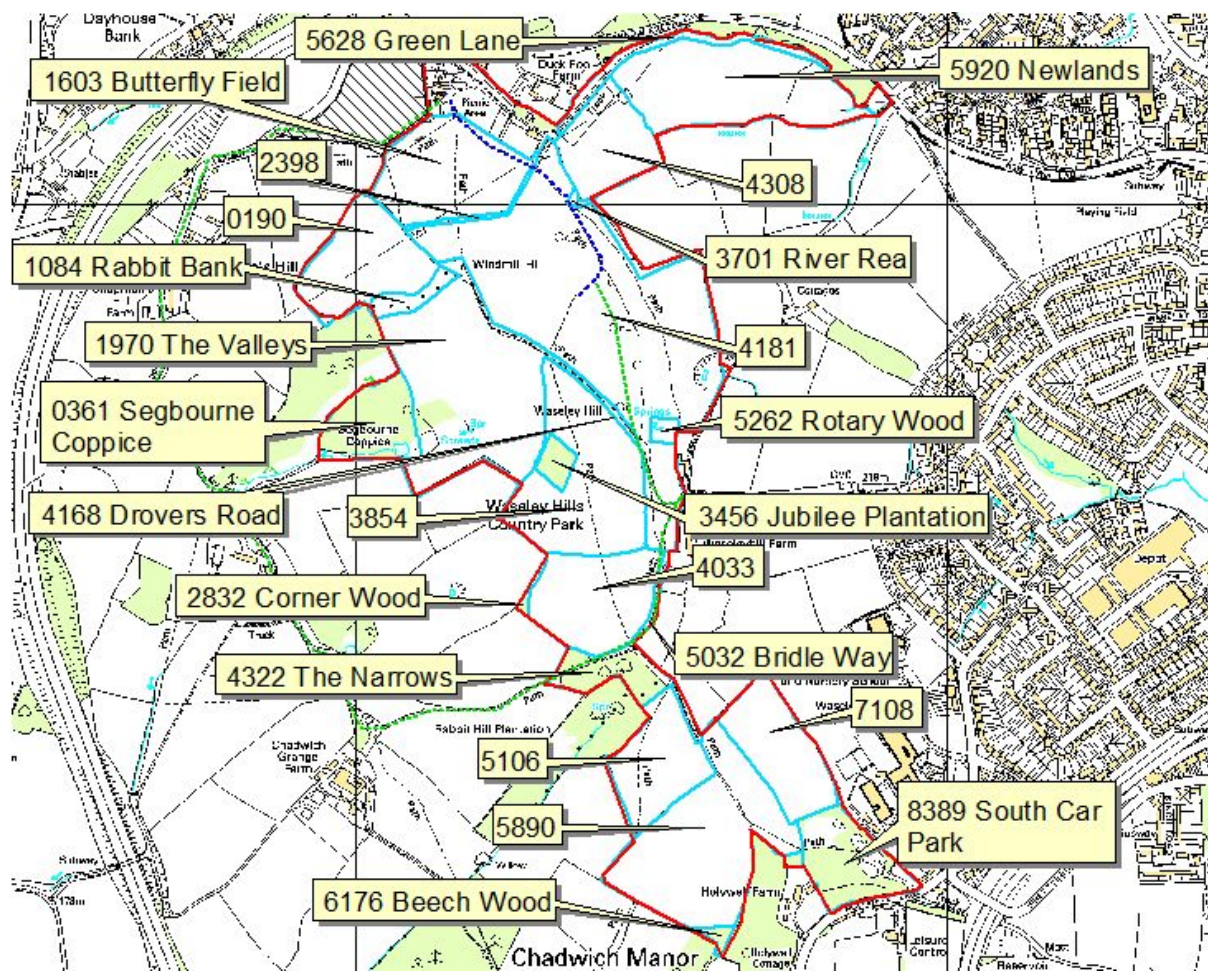


FIGURE 12 MAP OF SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones – taken from Environment agency website

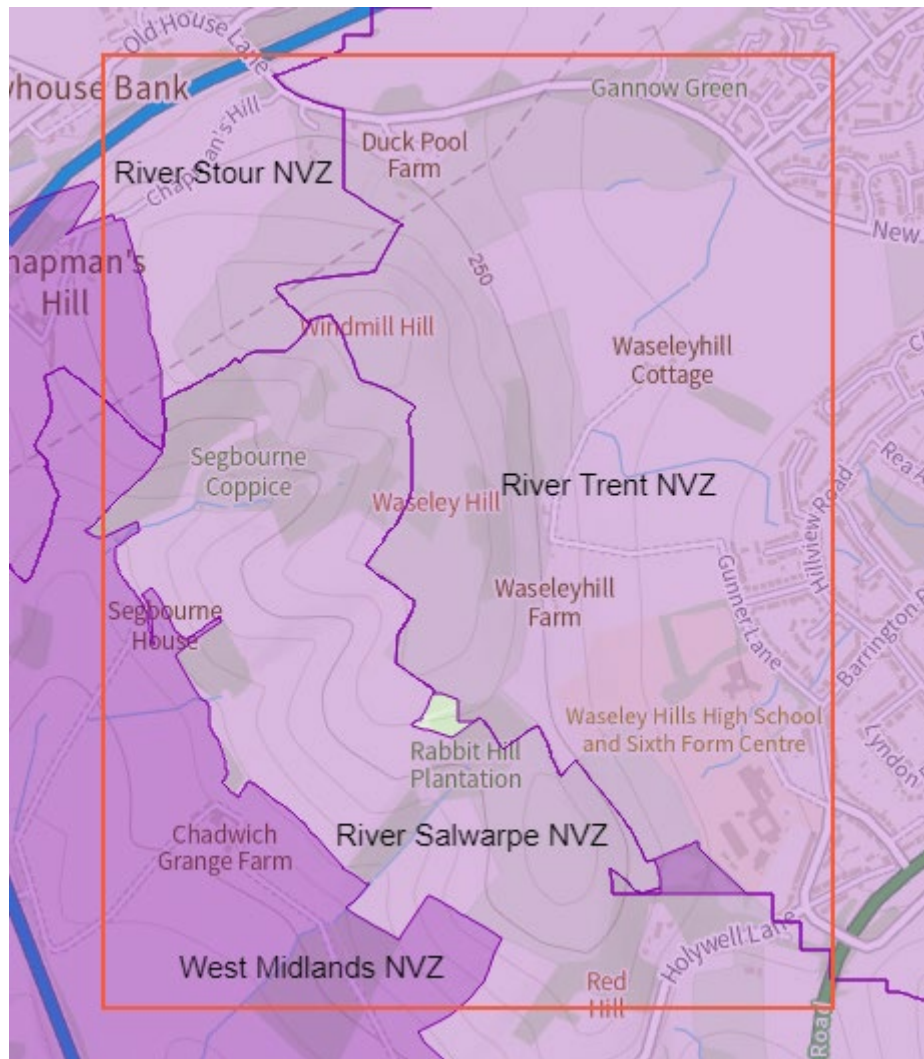


FIGURE 13 MAP SHOWING NITRATE VULNERABLE ZONES

Ownership

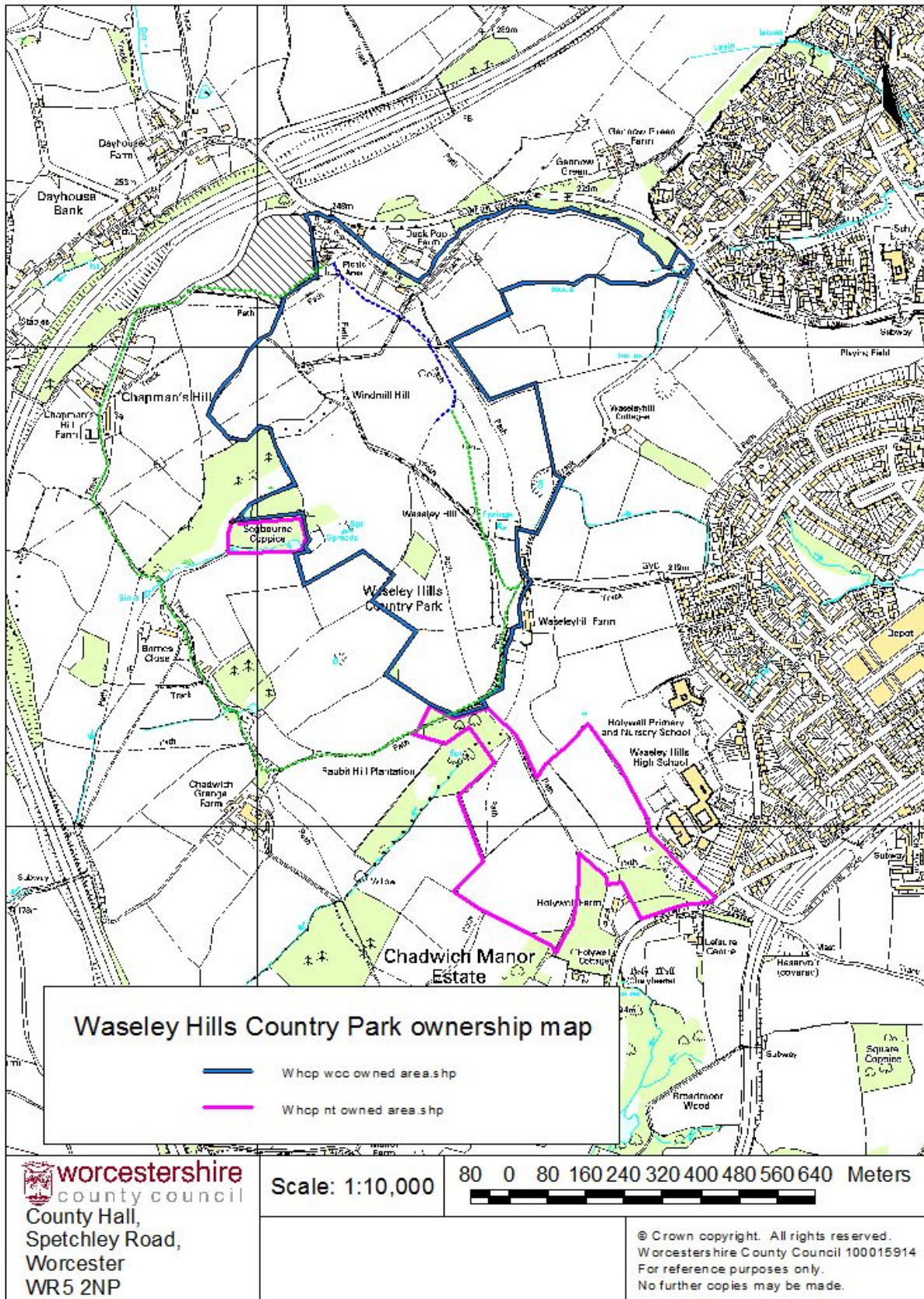


FIGURE 14 MAP OF OWNERSHIP

Appendix

Countryside Service Visitor Care Plan

Introduction

Visitors are central to the work of the Countryside Service's Greenspace Team. For us to continue providing a quality service to visitors, they need to find their expectations met or exceeded. The aim of this plan is to clearly define the standards expected at all the Countryside Service's sites.

The plan details the facilities that should be provided on different categories of sites and the standard to which they should be maintained. It also details the information and interpretation that should be provided on and about sites. The plan provides a framework for the Standards for Countryside Service Sites and uses the existing standards and safety checks to monitor performance against these standards.

Background

Scope and definitions

This plan covers sites managed by Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service, where these are open to the public.

Site – This includes country parks, commons, nature reserves, forest and riverside parks and picnic places.

Visitor – This includes residents using the site, regular visitors and first time or infrequent visitors.

Why we provide sites

The concept of Country Parks and Picnic Places emerged from the Countryside Act of 1968. This gave Local Authorities the power to create these sites to meet the needs of townspeople for recreation and to prevent the countryside being spoilt by ad hoc recreation. The act led to improvements of facilities at existing sites such as the Clent Hills (now managed by the National Trust) and the creation of new country parks, such as Waseley Hills.

The Countryside Access and Recreation Strategy (2004) gives a framework for site development. Whilst there are many government policies that broadly recognise and support the provision of countryside sites, there is little guidance on location and standards. In the national arena there has been guidance provided on customer care by the former Countryside Commission (Visitor Welcome Initiative), and through the Keep Britain Tidy's Green Flag Award. Worcestershire County Council has also carried out a survey on visitor (and non-visitor) perceptions regarding site titles and what they convey.

Sites are now provided for a wide range of reasons, which have greatly expanded on the vision of the Countryside Act:

Social Inclusion – Countryside Service sites offer free-to-use facilities within easy reach of many urban and rural communities. Many sites are accessible on foot, bike or by bus, not just by those with cars. Sites offer opportunities for people of all ages, genders, abilities, races, and levels of education.

Health and Well-being – Because sites are accessible the benefits of exercise and relaxation can be enjoyed by anyone. This is particularly important for children who may have few other opportunities to be active in safe open areas.

Economic Regeneration – visitors use facilities such as cafes and mobile food trailers, which benefits local businesses. Visitors are also encouraged to explore the local countryside and villages from the sites. Local people are employed at all levels by the Greenspace Team.

Education – the sites are used as an educational resource, both informally by local schools and through children’s activity packs at Waseley Hills and Worcester Woods Country Parks.

Recreation and Access – sites still provide a valuable leisure resource for visitors. This can range from country parks, which are a destination to the smallest sites, which provide convenient access to the Rights of Way network.

Conservation of habitats and features – management by a local authority also offers scope for protection of features of importance, whether by managing such features on sites in a sensitive manner or providing recreation opportunities away from other more sensitive areas.

The Countryside Service’s sites cater for different demands at different types of site. Four demands have been identified: informal recreation sites with facilities (Category A), relatively large, quiet sites away from it all (Category B), smaller sites which can be a destination in their own right and/or a place to start a walk (Category C) and small sites to park the car or bike and go for a walk (Category D).

Why visitors are important

Our sites receive over one and a half million visitors a year. As a front-line service, visitors are key to the provision of sites. The primary reason for providing most sites is therefore as a resource for visitors. The satisfaction of visitors has a direct effect on the resources of the Countryside Service, from core funding to grants. Visitors also help to generate income for managing sites, both directly through car park charges and indirectly through café rent.

A balance needs to be found between the needs of visitors and biodiversity, landscape and archaeology. Where there is a need to restrict access or activities to protect these other objectives, there should be information available on the site to explain why.

Countryside Service Vision and Aims

To help make Worcestershire a place where:

- Citizens’ health and well-being is improved through informal countryside recreation
- There are positive relationships between Gypsy & other communities through the provision of residential Gypsy sites and where support and advice is available to all parties regarding unauthorised encampments on the county council’s land
- The local economy is supported, principally through countryside-related tourism
- People relate to their natural environment through guided walks, talks, events, information, and interpretation
- The county’s landscape and biodiversity is protected through the careful management of county council countryside sites and support for communities who manage their own greenspaces
- A service is provided which is both sustainable and available to all.

Greenspace Team vision – “To manage country parks, picnic places and other sites to a high standard of appearance and safety, providing access for everyone while protecting wildlife and landscape interest.”

Aims and priorities

- To provide and promote opportunities for informal countryside recreation
- To protect and enhance biodiversity and landscape character
- To provide countryside sites which meet the requirements of the Green Flag award
- To provide picnic places and other sites where the public have opportunities to enjoy informal recreation in safety
- To implement a programme of continuous site improvement
- To dispose or acquire sites according to the protocol detailed in the Site Acquisition and Disposal Policy
- To provide and promote access to Worcestershire’s countryside
- To secure economic benefits
- To bring money into Worcestershire to benefit sites
- To raise income from reasonable charges and fees
- To encourage community involvement and social inclusion
- To remove barriers to enjoyment of sites where practical
- To manage the Service in a business-like manner
- To seek to continuously improve the service to the public
- To carry out site inspections on schedule to ensure sites are safe
- To obtain and retain the Green Flag award for Waseley Hills Country Park, Worcester Woods Country Park and St. Wulstan's Nature Reserve

Standards

Expected facilities

There are currently four categories of site recognised by the Greenspace Team.

Category A – Country Parks (Worcester Woods and Waseley Hills Country Parks) These should be the flagships as far as countryside recreation is concerned. They should be highly accessible to visitors and should retain high quality facilities including a visitor centre, meeting room, café, toilets, play area, barbecue facilities, picnic area, an orienteering course, at least one well waymarked circular walk and one easy access trail. The sites should be considered as prime venues for walks and events. Their conservation value should be retained and enhanced where possible.

Category B – (Hartlebury Common, St Wulstan's Nature Reserve) These sites are less robust and could suffer from visitor pressure if this is not carefully managed. Sites should have at least one circular trail and/or easy access trail. The sites should accommodate appropriate information and interpretation and are suitable as venues for a limited range of appropriate information and interpretation.

Category C – (Blackstone Riverside Park, Leapgate Old Railway Line, Ankerdine Common, Pershore Bridges Picnic Place, Fish Hill Picnic Place) These sites should have a waymarked trail, interpretive trail or give immediate access to open countryside and have basic picnic facilities. The sites should accommodate appropriate guided walks and events and have basic interpretation.

Category D – (Blackstone, Elmley Castle, Jubilee Bridge, Eckington Wharf, Forhill, Seaford, Shell Ford Picnic Places, Hillditch Pool and Coppice) These sites should principally serve as gateways into the wider countryside or as simple picnic places. They should have a waymarked circular trail from them or give access to open countryside or a regional trail. Basic information should be provided.

Infrastructure

Further detail on standards of infrastructure management is contained in the Standards for Countryside Service Sites. The standards provide a benchmark for the provision of new facilities and the improvement of existing facilities.

Parking

Many visitors arrive at sites by car. Their first impression will be formed at the entrance to the site and the car park. The tidy appearance of parking facilities is therefore essential at these locations.

The locations of car parks will be governed by site characteristics. Car parks should be designed and landscaped to make them as unobtrusive as possible, whilst not enabling theft.

The size of car parks should be sufficient to meet normal peak demands. Space should be used efficiently to minimise the area taken up by the car park, access tracks and landscaping.

The location of fully accessible bays should be clearly marked entrance and should be identified as provision for disabled drivers or passengers only.

The surfacing should be level, smooth and free from loose stones and the transfer area should not have a gradient.

Where it is not possible to provide a parking area close to the facilities, drop off/pick up areas should be provided.

Dedicated provision for coach access and parking should be made at Category A sites. Cycle parking facilities should be available at all sites.

The surfacing of car parks on Category A sites and sites receiving more than 250,000 car borne visitors a year should be tarmac with a durable, attractive top dressing. Loose stone is acceptable for other sites, where visitor numbers are low or a tarmac car park is unacceptable for aesthetic or conservation reasons. Loose stone car parks should be blinded with finer material to improve the surface.

Pay and display will normally be operated at Country Parks. Where pay and display is in operation it should be indicated at the site entrance. Signage should clearly state that income is used to offset the upkeep of the site.

Car Parks should be managed to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Toilets

The condition of toilets is of fundamental importance to the visitor's impression of the site. The aim should be for toilets to meet the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Toilets must be provided at Category A sites. They are desirable at some Category B sites and at Category C sites, but new toilets should only be provided if the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites' can be met. They should be located at the most visited part or parts of the site.

The number of toilets provided will depend upon the visitor carrying capacity of the site. New toilets should follow best design practice. Toilets should have entrances facing well used areas and should not include recesses. Toilet blocks should be set in open vegetation, rather than dense scrub. This will improve safety of visitors and reduce undesirable activity.

Fully accessible facilities must be provided at all toilet blocks. The layout should follow building regulations and best practice. The toilet door should open outwards, and the cubicle area should be free of obstructions to allow easy manoeuvrability. Bolts and latches must be easy to operate.

Soap and water should be provided at all toilets. Hot water should be provided at Category A sites and at other sites where possible.

Hot air hand drying equipment should be provided wherever electricity is available.

Baby changing facilities should be provided at Category A sites and at other sites where possible. Facilities should be in a unisex cubicle or in both male and female toilets.

Sanitary disposal facilities should be provided in every ladies and accessible cubicle. Visitors should be encouraged to 'bag it and bin it'.

Toilets should have adequate heating, lighting, and ventilation.

Outdoor furniture

A range of outdoor furniture will be provided at all sites. All furniture will be thoroughly inspected as part of the health and safety and standards checks. On Category A sites picnic furniture will be inspected daily.

Site furniture should be thoughtfully positioned so as not to cause problems for people with sight impairments or obstruct the passage of people using wheelchairs.

Picnic tables should be designed to allow wheelchair access and should be integrated with standard furniture. Tables should be designed to allow ambulant disabled to slide along the seat rather than step over.

Seats and perches should be placed at regular intervals along routes, especially at the top of rising footpaths, where views can be enjoyed or where waiting is likely. They should be stable and offered in a range of heights. (450-500mm is recommended, with back supports and fixed arms.)

Rest places for people in wheelchairs should be provided next to benches along easy access paths.

Furniture should be managed to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Visitor Centre

A Visitor Centre, including a café, should be provided at Category A sites. The Visitor Centre is to:

- Be a destination in its own right
- Be professionally and attentively managed
- Have a rustic, countryside ambience, reflected in the décor and furniture.
- Be welcoming to all, especially families
- Welcome muddy boots
- Provide information and interpretation to visitors
- Be an outlet for sale of Countryside Service publications and merchandise
- Have a good quality catering facility, appropriate to the location, providing light refreshments, to include such items as hot and cold beverages, sandwiches, cakes, toasted snacks, pre-heated snacks, and confectionery. As far as practicable, all produce used must be locally sourced, free range (all eggs must comply with this), fair trade (all tea and coffee must comply with this), organic

Catering

A café should be provided on Category A sites.

Temporary licences for mobile traders will be considered for other sites. These will not be granted where a facility will attract significant numbers of customers stopping for food only or where the presence of a trader will cause nuisance to visitors or neighbours.

Circular on-site trails

A circular walking trail will be provided on category A, B and C sites, where the site is large enough.

Barriers to access should be minimised by leaving gaps in fence lines where possible, followed by use of gates, followed by kissing gates. Stiles should be a last choice.

Trails for horse riders and cyclists may be provided on category A, B and C sites, where the site is large enough and particularly where this will help to minimise damage to sensitive areas or conflict with other users.

Trails should be waymarked and easy to follow without a map or site leaflet. However, a trail leaflet may exist to provide information and interpretation of the route.

Trails should be maintained to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Easy access trails and routes

Routes to the main facilities on sites will be easily accessible for all visitors.

An easy access trail will be provided on Category A sites and should be considered at other sites, where terrain and habitats permit.

The surface of easy access routes and trails should be firm, slip resistant in all weathers, clear of obstructions and well maintained.

Easy access routes and trails should have a minimum of 1.2m useable surface width. High use sections should allow for two-way traffic with a minimum width of 2m. Routes and trails should be kept free of encroaching vegetation.

To be accessible to visually impaired people the space directly above a route or trail needs to extend to at least 2.1m. A clear walking tunnel must be always maintained, which will require regular cutting back of overhanging branches.

Edging and a contrast in path surfaces will aid people with visual impairments. Textured paving should be used on Category A sites to indicate hazards to visitors with a sight impairment.

Gates should be of at least the minimum width to allow wheelchair access (900mm with 300mm space at the latch side).

Building regulations requirement M2 gives detailed minimum provisions for steps, ramps and handrails and the BT Countryside for All good practice guide gives additional recommendations.

For wheelchair users all paths must be level or ramped. Some ambulant disabled people can more comfortably and safely use steps. Where possible a choice should be provided.

Gradient steeper than 1:20 are classified as ramps. Ramps need flat landings at least 1.2m wide by 1.5m long provided for every 750mm of vertical climb.

Handrails should be provided at any platform or pathway that would otherwise be dangerous. The rail should be 1m high and should continue 300mm past the end of the steps or ramp to act as a warning for visually impaired people.

Where practical, steps should be a minimum of 1.2m wide with a textural change on the path at the top and bottom. The total rise of the steps should not exceed 2m without a level rest area every 2m.

Circular off-site trails

It is aspirational to provide an off-site trail from all sites, giving easy to use access to the wider countryside. Trails will be longer than on-site trails.

Trails should be waymarked and easy to follow without a map or site leaflet.

Barriers to access should be minimised by leaving gaps in fence lines where possible, followed by use of gates, followed by kissing gates. Stiles should be a last choice.

Trails should be maintained by the Access Team.

Barbeques

Barbeques will be provided on Category A sites. They should be available for advanced booking through the café tenant.

Barbeques should be maintained by the café tenant.

Metal barbeque plates will be installed on permanent picnic benches where there is a need.

Picnic areas

Picnic areas will be provided on all sites unless they become subject to high levels of abuse.

Picnic areas will be located close to car parks or visitor centres/cafés. The area used should be flat and accessible to all visitors. Shade and shelter should be available within the picnic area.

Picnic areas should be maintained to the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Play areas

Play areas will be provided on Category A sites. Play areas should ideally cater for children of as wide an age range as practical.

Play areas will be located adjacent to the picnic area of the site, to allow supervision by the accompanying adult.

Play areas will meet relevant regulations and will be inspected annually by a qualified person.

Signage and information

Visitors' impression of a site begins before the site is even reached. Information such as leaflets will affect how a site is viewed and how easily the site is found may influence whether a site is visited or not. Further detail on standards of signage and information management is contained in the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Brown and white tourism signs

These are traffic signs that are erected by and remain the property of the Highway authority. They are used to direct visitors to sites.

The signs should enable first time visitors to find the site without becoming lost.

Signs will be provided for all sites. Within the criteria used by the Highways*, the signs will direct visitors to the sites from all motorways and major trunk roads around the site.

*[Highway's criteria: "The over-riding objective of providing tourist signing is to improve road safety by giving clear information to road users, allowing them to clearly identify the route that they need to follow to reach their preferred destination. Tourist signing should not be used purely as a marketing or advertising tool, a clear road safety and or environmental benefit will need to be demonstrated before signing requests will be approved"]

On-site signs – welcome signs

All sites will have a sign welcoming visitors to the site at the main entrance (usually the car park entrance). This will give information on facilities found on the site. Site bylaws will be displayed at the main site entrance.

Entrances used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders will have smaller welcome signs with welcome information on the front.

On-site signs – directional signs

Category A, B and C sites should have directional signs between the main visitor attractions. These should include toilets, visitor centres/cafés, trails, and picnic areas. Signs should be to the standard design, easily read by most visitors. Directional signs are routed fingerposts with bright yellow lettering on treated timber.

Information boards

All Category A, B and C sites will have a detailed map of the site positioned at the main visitor entrance. The map will show the location of the information board and any visitor centre/caf , toilets, and trails etc. Any unusual hazards will be indicated on the map.

Modular information will be provided on all sites. This provides visitors with a flavour of the site, including a site orientation map, details of any specific site facilities, local services etc. It also provides a contact number for the Countryside Service.

Web based information

The Countryside Service’s website provides site information including facilities, location, contact details and features of interest. Free site leaflets can also be downloaded.

Waymarking

All public rights of way and trails on all sites will be clearly marked and easy to follow. Where there is a choice of routes they should be clearly differentiated.

When marking public rights of way Access Team best practice must be followed.

Safety signs

Visitors will be alerted to possible hazards on site using standard safety signs. Where standard signs do not exist, signs should include easily interpreted pictograms as well as explanatory text. The necessity for signage will be based on Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group principles, which account for the type of site and expectations of visitors. More information can be found in the Safety Signage Policy.

Temporary notices

Whenever facilities are closed on a temporary basis an explanatory sign will be displayed. Standard signs will be kept at toilet blocks and stocks of other commonly used signs kept at the Teams bases.

Other information

Opening hours of facilities will be displayed on the building.

Country Parks will display information and interpretation on screens in the visitor centre and via a Facebook page.

A reception office will be open at least 3 hours per day Monday to Friday. Visitor information services are included in each caf  tenancy.

Restrictive signs should be positively worded and include an explanation for the restriction.

Interpretation

Further detail on standards of interpretation management is contained in the 'Standards at Countryside Service Sites'.

Interpretation panels

Interpretation of features of interest will be provided on Category A, B and C sites and is desirable on Category D sites.

Interpretation should be located where visitors can safely read it and where it will not interfere with maintenance of the site.

The height of panels should be suitable for people in wheelchairs. Signs on the ground should be tilted to 60 degrees to enable people standing and in wheelchairs to read them.

Panels should be of a simple design and construction. Typically, they are designed to be cheap and easy to replace in case of vandalism. This type of panel should be replaced immediately if vandalism is noted.

Leaflets

Category A sites will have a site information leaflet, including a map of the site, trail routes, hazards, and interpretation of features of interest. These leaflets will be available through the visitor centre/café. The leaflets should be accessible to all, for example with large type versions.

Sites may be promoted by flyers, available free of charge from Category A sites, Tourist Information Centres etc.

Visitor centre displays

Displays contain large format printed interpretation material. Text is kept to a minimum and is above 20pt in size to aid visibility. Where possible the panels are very visual, relying on short messages 'hung' from very strong photographic images.

Displays should be designed to appeal to the visually or aurally impaired in various ways, for example tactile or touch maps, verbal maps, correct use of colour contrast, text sizes and typefaces.

Staff

All staff play a key role in the experience of visitors to our sites. It is important that they are equipped with the necessary information and training to perform their roles in a professional, caring way.

Basic competences

All site staff must have a detailed knowledge of the site, its potential hazards and emergency procedures. New and temporary staff must undertake an induction to the site before carrying out their duties. Staff should be able to convey how to use and enjoy the facilities on offer at the site and in the local area. They should be polite, helpful, and friendly to visitors always.

Training

All front-line staff must be trained in first aid, customer care and disability awareness.

Identification and appearance

All staff involved in visitor care should be identifiable as Countryside Service employees. Uniform must be worn where provided. Uniform and other clothing should be of a clean appearance at the start of each day. Ripped or damaged clothing should be repaired or replaced.

Non-Countryside Service staff

Café staff should be briefed on the importance of customer care and site emergency procedures. They should be able to answer basic questions about the site.

Maintenance

Maintaining sites is key to maintaining visitor satisfaction. New sites and facilities should not be developed unless maintenance standards can be met on existing sites.

The detail the standards of maintenance required on sites. This section of the Visitor Care Plan builds on the Standards for Countryside Service Sites.

It is important that visitors have a favourable first impression on arriving at the site, as this will affect how they view their whole visit.

The site should have a tidy, well maintained, welcoming and cared for appearance. Particular attention should be given to the principal points of entry.

Grounds maintenance

Areas should be maintained to a level appropriate to their location and level of use by visitors. The following broad standards should be achieved:

- a) Category A, areas of high use grass mown frequently, paving and surfacing kept weed free, planting weed free and well maintained
- b) car parks, picnic areas, grass kept short, planting maintained information shelters
- c) areas of less intensive use grass cut as frequently as appropriate
- d) conservation areas grass cut annually or grazed

Weeds such as thistles and nettles will be controlled in high use areas. Ragwort will be controlled as detailed in the ragwort policy.

Litter

The presence of litter on sites gives a poor impression to visitors. Litter should be kept to a minimum, with priority given to Category A sites and to high use areas within them.

At Category A sites with cafés, litterbins should be provided in picnic areas and car parks. At other sites visitors should be asked to take their litter home as bins cannot be emptied and maintained in a satisfactory condition. The exceptions to this are where a food concession has been granted, when the trader is responsible for providing and emptying bins, or where another party is able to take on the role to our satisfaction.

Litter picking should be carried out daily at Category A sites. Litter hotspots on other sites should be litter picked at least fortnightly.

The standard for litter clearance is based on the Environmental Protection Bill code of practice. The aim is for Category A sites to always fall into standard A or B. Litter clearance should be to standard A. If the standard falls below B, staff will act within one hour.

Dog fouling

Most sites are popular with dog owners. Inevitably this leads to dog fouling. Visitor surveys consistently show that dog fouling is a major dislike for all types of visitor. Dog fouling also carries health risks, especially for children.

Dogs should be excluded from children's play areas by suitable fencing and gates. Signs should make the exclusion clear to visitors and explain the reasons for it. Other than guide dogs, dogs should also be excluded from buildings.

Play areas, paved areas, car parks and picnic areas should be kept free of dog faeces by staff.

Where applicable we will work with District Council Dog Wardens in enforcing the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act.

A no-fouling message will be promoted on all sites, with most enforcement aimed at Category A sites. Visitors should be informed of the no-fouling policy through appropriate signage. Dog bins will be provided on Category A sites and may be provided on other sites where a high level of use by dogs is experienced.

Buildings

All buildings that are open to visitors must be attractive and maintained to a high standard. Repairs must be carried out as soon as possible after a problem is noticed.

Buildings are maintained by Property Services.

All toilets should have a notice giving a contact for visitors to report problems to. Ideally toilets should be redecorated annually.

Vandalism and other damage

Repairs should be made as soon as possible.

Cleaning

Public buildings will be cleaned at least daily. Where facilities receive a high level of use the frequency of cleaning may need to be increased. Contract cleaning will be monitored to ensure that contract conditions are being met.

Access for all

We will ensure that all visitor sites are safe and equipped for people with disabilities and that they are not treated less favourably than able-bodied people. This is a provision of the Equality Act 2010

Reference should be made to best practice guides, such as BT Countryside for All and the British Toilet Association guide, when designing any new facilities.

Additional provision should be considered on Category A sites for visitors with disabilities. These may include tapping rails, Braille maps and leaflets, wheelchair loan service, accessible barbeques etc.

Specific standards relating to access for all are included in Section 3.2.

A site that is accessible by public transport will appeal to a higher proportion of visitors and where possible links should be investigated with local public transport providers. Timetables for local transport services should be displayed on sites that can be accessed by such services.

Community consultation

Public meetings should be held where appropriate on sites to enable visitors and residents to discover more about the management of the site and to express their views.

The public are always invited to make comments on management plans, and this is promoted via the website and media releases once a draft management plan has been produced.

Visitor surveys have historically been carried out on Category A, B, and some C sites. However, it is no longer economical to commission such surveys and the visitor feedback system via comment cards has largely replaced the need for such surveys. Visitor feedback via comments cards is designed to find out visitors' perceptions, opinions and experiences of the site, its management, and any future developments as well as some key demographic data about the visitor. Results are fed back to the relevant team for action or explanation.

A visitor feedback system using comment cards has been developed. Comment cards are recorded and analysed on a regular basis, with the results fed back to relevant teams and other parties for action or explanation.

Category A – Country Parks (Worcester Woods and Waseley Hills Country Parks)
Comment cards in visitor centre; QR codes linked to comment card at main entrances and key points around site.

Category B – (Hartlebury Common, Kingsford Forest Park, St Wulstan's Nature Reserve)
Comment cards at main entrance(s); QR codes linked to comment card at secondary entrances

Category C – (Blackstone Riverside Park, Leapgate Old Railway Line, Ankerdine Common, Pershore Bridges Picnic Place, Fish Hill Picnic Place) May have comment card dispenser at main entrance/car park. Should have QR codes linked to comment card at entrances/key points

Category D – (Blackstone, Elmley Castle, Jubilee Bridge, Eckington Wharf, Forhill, Seaford, Shell Ford Picnic Places and Hilleditch Pool and Coppice) May have comment card dispenser at main entrance/car park and QR codes link at entrances/key points.

Appendix

Standards at WCC Countryside Service Sites

(Updated February 2022)

BUILDINGS/VISITOR CENTRES

Clean

Furniture in good condition

Lights working

Bins not full

Push/pull signs in place

Door closers working

Open and closed on time

Info/interp clean

Leaflet racks full and tidy

Bird feeders full

All information and interpretation in date and presentable

No unauthorised notices

Cleaning acceptable

Furniture in good condition

Lighting working

Room temperature appropriate

Equipment in good order

Windows clean

Doors functional

TOILET BLOCK

Clean – outside and in

Odor free

Graffiti free

Soap present, toilet paper present, bins not full

Lights working, door closers working, locks on doors working

Decoration good

Water heaters working, taps working, hand driers working/paper towels available

Baby change facility clean and in good repair

Ladies, gentlemen and disabled signs present

PAVING AND PATHS ADJACENT TO VISITOR CENTRES AND TOILETS Even and without trip hazards or potholes

Clean and not slippery

Not encroached upon by vegetation

No litter or dog mess

FLOWER BEDS AND GARDENS

Weed free

Pruned
Unwanted dead material removed
Litter free
Edging in good order

FORMAL PLANTED TREES

Redundant guards and stakes removed
Dead trees removed
PLAY AREA Equipment well painted or cuprinoled
Rules signs in place
Equipment working properly – no pinch points, splinters or protruding nails, screws or bolts
Equipment clean
Gates in good order
Bark fully topped up
Steps in good order
No litter or dog mess
Annual inspection by a specialist play area safety inspection company to RoSPA standards complete and report received

CAR PARKS

No potholes
Good visibility at exit
No encroachment from vegetation
All posts and fencing in place, straight and in good repair
Ladder boards clean
All signage in good order, including disabled parking bays, pay & display and directional signs
White lines clearly visible
Gates and barriers open and closed on time
Gates and barriers in good working order
Pay & display machine working

RECYCLING POINT

Clean
Not full
No fly tipping/rubbish
No broken glass
BICYCLE RACKS Well maintained
Upright and firmly secured
Free of surrounding vegetation
DOG BINS Clean
Not full
Sign in good order
Straight and firm
In good order

LITTER BINS

Clean
Not full
Sign in good order
Straight and firm

In good order

PICNIC AREA

No litter or dog mess

Grass short

Furniture in place and in good order (stable, anchored, properly maintained, memorial signage in place, no splinters, proud nails or screws, no pinch points)

Litter bins in good order (present, not full, lid present and working, well painted or cuprinoled)

BBQ in good order (clean, litter free, enameled or painted, working properly)

BBQ plate in place

“Provided by” disc in place

MOWING

Completed according to mowing contract

SIGNS & NOTICES

In place, sited appropriately

Clean

Not faded or smudged

Frames in good order

Out of date signs removed

Signs comply with relevant guidelines

VIEWPOINTS AND TOPOSCOPES

Views maintained

Litter and fouling free

Lecterns and toposcopes well maintained and in good order

PROMOTED TRAIL Not unduly muddy

No hidden trip hazards

Not gullied

Gates and stiles in good state of repair

Waymarks and waymark disks in place

Waymark disks clean, undamaged and not faded

Steps in good order

Vegetation not allowed to encroach on path surface or to overhang to obstruct walkers or riders

No litter or dog mess

No significantly hazardous trees

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Fingerposts in place

Not unduly muddy

No hidden trip hazards

All gates and stiles in good state of repair

All waymarks and waymark disks in place

All waymark disks clean, undamaged and not faded

Steps in good order

Vegetation not encroaching

No litter or dog mess

No significantly hazardous trees

PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE TRACKS

(WCC maintained)

Does not include tracks that are solely to private residences. No potholes

Good visibility at exit

No encroachment from vegetation

All posts and fencing in place, straight and in good repair

All signage in good order

Surface markings clearly visible

Gates and barriers open and closed on time

Gates and barriers in good working order

OTHER PATHS

Not unduly muddy

No hidden trip hazards

All gates and stiles in good state of repair

Vegetation not encroaching

Steps in good order

No litter or dog mess

No significantly hazardous trees

STEPS

Risers in good order

Treads topped up, but not overfull

No pins or pegs protruding over risers

Corners of steps not standing proud

Handrails in good order

Vegetation not encroaching

WOODEN BRIDGES & BOARDWALKS

Well maintained

No trip hazard at ends

Not slippery

Handrails in good order

Vegetation not encroaching

Bridge clear underneath to enable flow

DITCHES, CULVERTS, PIPED WATER COURSES

to take flow during usual circumstances (meeting appropriate standard where known)

Entrances & exits clear to allow adequate flow during usual circumstances.

In good repair

Not blocked (e.g., by dam, pile of logs) to prevent water flow

FENCES

Fencing in good order; stock-proof where appropriate; upright and firmly secured

GATES, STILES AND BARRIERS

Gates & barriers easy to open and close

Gateways not muddy

Self-closing successfully

Barriers well maintained
Height barriers displaying accurate height restriction
A-frame barriers can be secured open
Locks in place and in good working order

ISOLATED FURNITURE

Present, stable, anchored, well maintained
BBQ plate in place
“Provided by” disc in place
Memorial signage well maintained
No splinters, proud nails or screws, no pinch points

WATER TROUGHS

Stable
Supply working
Not overflowing

HEDGES

In good order
Well-trimmed (ornamental)
Not encroaching on paths

ANNUAL TREE INSPECTION

Trees within identified vulnerable locations (near to paths, car parks, buildings etc.) maintained to not be significantly hazardous whilst protecting their landscape and wildlife value where possible. See tree safety inspection policy for details.

BOUNDARIES

Free from encroachment

WATER SAFETY FEATURES

Rescue equipment in place (where agreed)
Rescue equipment clearly signed
Warning notices advising of presence of water where this would not otherwise be obvious
Warning notices displayed (e.g., no swimming, do not go on ice)

LITTER/FLY TIPPING/DOG MESS

in areas not covered above Minimal level

TIMBER AND FIREWOOD STORAGE IN PUBLIC AREAS

Stacked safely
Reasonably tidy
Height restricted to minimise the risk of injury
‘Do not climb on timber stacks’ notice displayed

UTILITIES EQUIPMENT

Drain covers in place and in good repair
Meter cupboards locked
Other equipment in good order

OTHER BRIDGES & STRUCTURES

Basic visual check – report any defects or changes to appropriate managing body

GARAGES, WORKSHOPS AND STORAGE AREAS

Routine consumables in good supply and stored appropriately

Shelves, trays and cupboards clearly labelled

Tools hung or shelved in correct place

Log of loaned equipment

Lighting working

No trip hazards

Work benches clear of clutter

Health and safety signs in place

No slippery substances on floor

All chemicals stored appropriately

Exterior woodwork clean and painted

Serviced fire extinguishers in place

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT AND PPE

Properly maintained

Properly stored

Clean when stored

Tools stored with guards in place

Specialist equipment inspected

PPE in date

All damaged tools, equipment and PPE disposed of or withdrawn from service until repaired

SITE SPECIFIC HAZARDS

Identified in site risk assessment

BROWN & WHITE TOURIST SIGNS

In place

Correct logos / information

Pointing in correct direction

"The over-riding objective of providing tourist signing is to improve road safety by giving clear information to road users, allowing them to clearly identify the route that they need to follow to reach their preferred destination. Tourist signing should not be used purely as a marketing or advertising tool, a clear road safety and or environmental benefit will need to be demonstrated before signing requests will be approved"
(<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/transport-and-streets/streets/signage/tourist-signing-policy.aspx>)

INFORMATION & INTERPRETATION

In place in buildings / visitor centre

Ladder boards in place and in good condition

Welcome notices & furniture (monoliths) in place and in good condition

Bylaws displayed at main entrance

Information board & map in place

Routed signs lettering well painted

Info/interp panels undamaged & not faded

Car Park signage in place, including disabled parking bays, pay & display and directional signs

Viewpoint lecterns / toposcopes present

Promoted trail starting point fingerpost in place

Promoted trail summary notice in place

Any items that are not sites team responsibility and do not meet the standard must be reported / followed up with the appropriate team subsequent to the quarterly inspection

Appendix

Policy on the Provision of Memorial Benches at Countryside Sites

The Countryside Service recognises that many people wish to provide memorial benches in the attractive environment of our sites. Although the Countryside Service is sympathetic to this wish, it is important that benches are placed in an appropriate location and are of an appropriate design/variety. Similarly, it is important that the sponsor's expectations regarding the future maintenance and retention of the bench are realistic.

1. Memorial benches will only be accommodated in appropriate locations. It is good practice for the Countryside Service to proactively identify any locations where it would be desirable to accommodate new benches.
2. Where the Countryside Service deems it inappropriate to install additional benches the sponsor will be encouraged to sponsor an existing one.
3. New benches must be of a design/variety approved by the Countryside Service as being appropriate to the given location.
4. Where the site is managed on behalf of another organisation and regulated by a Service Level Agreement, their support for the installation of memorial benches will normally be sought.
5. Benches will normally be sourced by the Countryside Service and will become the property of the Countryside Service.
6. The sponsor will be expected to pay the full cost of providing new benches.
7. Sponsors will be allowed to provide, at their own cost, a memorial plaque for the bench. This must be of an agreed material and size and the wording must be approved by the Countryside Service.
8. If the Countryside Service becomes aware that a plaque has been vandalised or stolen, it will notify the sponsor and give them the opportunity to provide a replacement. The Countryside Service will not undertake to proactively check if such damage or theft has occurred.
9. The Countryside Service will carry out basic maintenance such as weeding, strimming and removal of graffiti. The Countryside Service will not bear the cost for replacing or repairing a damaged, vandalised, or stolen bench. However, if the Countryside Service becomes aware that a bench has been damaged or stolen, it will notify the sponsor and give them the opportunity to fund a replacement. The Countryside Service will not undertake to proactively check if such damage or theft has occurred.
10. The Countryside Service reserves the right to relocate or completely remove benches for operational purposes. Under these circumstances the sponsor will be notified.
11. The Countryside Service will keep a database of all sponsored benches together with the contact details of the sponsor. It is the responsibility of the sponsor to notify the Countryside Service of new contact details. The Countryside Service will not attempt to locate sponsors who have changed address without notifying the Countryside Service.
12. The relationship with regard to memorial benches shall be between the Countryside Service and the original sponsor. The Countryside Service will not normally accept any responsibility for liaison with other parties.
13. Sponsors will be supplied with a copy of this policy and asked to supply written acceptance of it. This could be achieved by asking the sponsor to complete a simple pro forma which includes their contact details, a record of any donations, item sponsored, location and confirming acceptance of this policy
14. The price for the purchase of a bench and installation, and attachment of a plaque will be £500. A receipt must be issued.