

# Essential Reference Paper 'C'

## Parks and open Spaces

### Project Reviews and Achievements 2013/14

Parks & Open Spaces programme additional ad-hoc works are carried out each year. These are often small scale projects that develop from open space inspections around the district which identify problems or possible improvements.

#### The Firs, Bishops Stortford

Continued partnership work with the Friends of The Firs group (FOTF) has moved conservation in the area forward. The site now benefits from being part of the “and beyond” project to link outlying open spaces with Southern Country Park as part of a circular walking route.

More than 20 new trees have been planted over the past 2 years which complement the original intended theme as planted by the Gilbeys Family. Limes, Firs and shrubs, both native and some more formal in nature have been added.

Bollards have been installed to the entrance to minimise unwanted access and un-authorised parking by school users and shrub beds have been planted to frame the entrance.

#### Further Development

The Firs will benefit from new interpretation signs through the “and beyond” project. Continued work with the Friends Group will help maintain and enhance this centrally located Bishops Stortford woodland. We will cut larger areas of grass to our conservation standard within the site and perennial wildflower seeds will be sown throughout the space as part of an initiative from our grounds contractor.



#### Hartham Common, Hertford

The development of the Management plan for Hartham Common is underway with the Countryside Management Service taking a lead role in rolling out a plan which identifies the landscape character, the access and recreation constraints and infrastructure. This will go live in 2014 and will run for a minimum of 5 years.

Interpretation signs for the park have been tendered and agreed and implementation will take place during the summer of 2014.

Grounds Projects completed have been to replant or plant drought tolerant shrubs around the curved wall to the front of the leisure centre and also “gap up” the ailing shrubs in the car park.



Over the winter period all of the previously felled Poplars that surrounded the car park were replaced with common Hornbeam, a species that was chosen by the councils Arboriculture Officer.

A large area of Hartham Common was affected by storm damage and flooding across the open space this winter with many trees needing to be felled. All works are now up to date.

Possible future projects will be identified within the Management plan and worked through as set out.

### Further Development

Tree planting will need to be considered for 2014/15 and remedial works to re-level certain areas of the football pitches needs to take place outside of the playing season.

## Hartham Sculpture, Hertford

The entrance to Hartham Common has been greatly changed by the new Sainsbury's development and part of the enhancement was to create something to capture the feel and history of the Open Space.

A sculpture was installed to mark this; however the ground around the sculpture was not returned to grass and has become increasingly unsightly. Repair to this area has proved difficult because the weather over the 2013/14 winter period was particularly wet and grass regeneration did not occur.

## Further Development

The sculpture area has been earmarked for further improvements this year.

Low growing shrubs in a colour that brings out the sculpture and sensory planting is to be considered along with a “Breedon Gravel” footpath and additional seating.

Planning and implementation is set to occur between April and May 2014.



## Kibes Lane, Quaker burial ground, Ware (Truth, Equality-Simplicity, Peace)

Kibes lane is on the site of an old Quaker meeting house and has been an on-going project over the past 3 years. It started life, over crowded with trees and badly arranged shrubs. The area was a litter trap and offered a low level of amenity value to the surrounding area.

The Council has developed the area into an open space by removing the “self-set” trees and tired shrubs and have levelled the uneven ground. The landscape design has been sensitively considered with Quakers in mind creating a simple knot garden as a natural memorial to the Quaker society.



The service has continued to maintain the space to a very high standard which has helped Ware in Bloom obtain a silver guilt award.

This joint project working with the Quakers and the

Ware society has recently been completed with the installation of memorial stones to mark the site's historical importance. This has enabled us to complete the development of Kibes lane and to strengthen partnerships within the town.

A media opportunity to officially open the burial ground was organised with the Quakers, the Ware Society, Ware In Bloom and the Council all represented.



## Further Development

Monitoring of the planting will take place as we have identified various issues with some of the infill planting within the box hedging and a small failure rate of the planting on the periphery of the site. Alternative plants may be required in consultation with our Landscape Officer to achieve a complimentary change over.

## Lower Bourne Gardens, Ware

Lower Bourne Gardens benefitted from improvements with steps set into a slope in 2013 that was identified as part of the open space risk assessment.

Two areas where small tree groups had failed have been removed and new trees planted opening and tidying the area up and safety works to the steps that lead to Demontfort Rise have been under taken. The play area has benefited from new equipment and an increase to the fencing to enlarge and soften the play area.



### Further Development

The space has been earmarked for further improvement with the addition of a tarmac footpath meandering around the space to increase access, works to landscape the bunded area to provide more natural play and more trees will be planted to soften the area and improve the perimeter as this has been identified as failing.

## Library Car Park, Burgage Lane, Ware

In 2012 the viewing area above the moorings at the end of the car park was found to be over crowded with the wrong plants obscuring the vista over the river and beyond. A project guided by the Council's Landscape Officer was implemented. The removal of the shrubs and a replant of the trees were initiated. A "Breedon Gravel" base was constructed and two trees that complimented the other trees on site were planted to open the



site up. A curved wavy line had been witnessed on the railings on the other side of the river and so in 2014 the same wavy lines were copied onto the railings within Burgage Lane to give the site more continuity with the surrounding area.

To finish this off two “Celebration” seats were installed these being the same in style as Tudor Square and Kibes Lane to provide continuity throughout the town.

### Further Development

On-going maintenance to trees and surfacing

## Maltmaker Square, Ware

Maltmaker Square, owned by East Herts Council is in the centre of Ware and is a prominent open space used and seen by a large number of people.

The space was looking tired with trip hazards within the Indian stone paving area and the planting was reaching the end of its vitality. The decision was made to rejuvenate this space and to select a more inviting planting scheme.

A project to remove and replant was developed and a full overhaul of the site was adopted. All existing plants and shrubs were removed along with the top soil and recycled away from site.



With careful selection of species a planting plan was carried out with the contractor. The top soil was replaced and the site was planted up.

The area also benefited from a street washing program arranged by the Waste Services team however, with the paving stones natural colour being enhanced and now clean it was evident that the “joint work” needed attention as some trips were found. The work was undertaken by a local builder and the site is now back up to standard.

### Further Development

Continued maintenance, no further development.

## Obrey Way, (SCP) Bishops Stortford

Obrey Way is located east of Southern Country Park and is on the main link road around Bishops Stortford.

The site was a ditch line (not working and polluted from a nearby sewage treatment plant) and a footpath leading in from a sheep grazing area. The area is a corner of the park which had not yet been developed as an area of interest for visitors.

Investigations were undertaken to ascertain responsibility for the treatment plant and once determined 'The Friends of Southern Country Park'(FOSCP) worked with the Council to consult with the Environment Agency (EA) and the local housing association (HA) to advise them of the issue as a joint working project. Works by the HA were carried out to try to negate the pollution issue and another ditch was dug out, linking it into an existing pipeline. These works were agreed by the EA and carried out between 2011 & 2012. This though had not been entirely successful and traces of pollution continued to flow into the ditch.

At one end of the ditch line lies a small flood basin which intermittently fills up with water in times of flood and carries much of the surrounding farmlands water run off before running into the same pipeline.

The Council's Land Drainage team provided their expertise and advice on solutions to improve the containment in this corner of the park. However this winter was the wettest on record and it soon became apparent that the drainage was operating effectively and the pipe not able to deal with the water flow. The area flooded across the road.

A decision was made to carry out remedial works and a longstanding idea to create a pond there developed into a project to create a flood storage system.

Emergency repairs to a blocked pipeline including jetting and a CCTV survey were carried out by the Environment Agency and the widening and clearing of the ditch line was carried out by the Council to relieve the area from flooding and to erase the issue of water from EHC land running across the carriageway. A design was drawn up for a pond/storage system and work began.



All vegetation was cleared from site so the contractors could work safely and the design put into action. A weir was included to hold back water allowing the sub-standard pipeline to cope with the water flow. A second ditch for overflow and additional storage was added as a contingency plan. A head wall was constructed.

The site has now been contained with stock proof fencing and wild flower seed spread across the site to encourage wildlife. The resulting drainage solution creates an attractive pond and wildlife habitat in the park. Dogs are excluded unlike other



ponds in the park to ensure habitats can establish unhindered.

The whole area has been added into the main Grounds contract for future maintenance and the Friends Group are keen to develop this new habitat.

## Future Development

The site will continue to be monitored and a routine maintenance for the pipeline has been set up. It is planned to plant a hedge / tree line in the Autumn of 2014 and the FOSCP will take over maintenance of the pond area.

There is an independent project to install a new “Bio disc clargestor” for the houses feeding the Sewage treatment plant which will end the issue of foul water in the ditch line on Obrey Way. This is currently being scrutinised under the planning process.

## The Shearers, St James Way, Bishops Stortford

The Shearers is an estate near to Southern Country Park (SCP). Its grassland make up is the same as





that of SCP and is viewed as a continuation of the main park. It has also been added as a linking route for the “and beyond” project.

The space has an EA main river running through it although it would be locally viewed as a ditch line. This ditch line widens towards the estate and had an overgrown pond area with fallen willow trees interrupting the water flow. Further up the watercourse various tree roots and manmade dams have been created and have impacted greatly on the silt deposit and erosion of the banks.

There is a small bridge which has been repaired by the FOSCP and a ditch which has been cleared of all vegetation and re-graded.

Leading to the small bridge was a very wet and boggy footpath which was causing slip/trip hazards for the park users.

In consultation with our Engineers, the Parks team has been able to clear the ditch from top to bottom, removed all of the blockages and tidy up the pond to make a much more attractive area. Water flow has been greatly improved and flood risk diminished from the area.

The boggy footpath has had a weeper pipe drainage system installed and woodchip has been laid to aid drainage for pedestrians.

This ditch runs from The Shearers into SCP. The linking areas are not named but have also been cleared as part of this project. The outcome is that for now this water course is free from issues.

## Scott's Grotto

Parks & Open Spaces working with the Economic Development team look after the Scott's Grotto grounds maintenance and have worked closely with the Ware Civic Society to maintain the area as a joint venture. The site is of historical significance and lies within about an acre of land.

There is a small amount of footpath maintenance to be carried out annually and



some shrub pruning. However it was felt by the grounds CCO that the front of the site was in need of some improvement where there were dead trees and it was badly overgrown. The contractor has now cleared the front area and a small amount of shrubs have been planted that are more indicative of the period of planting.

## Future Development

Other than working with the Civic society there is no further foreseeable development required.