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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Restoration and Development Plan has been prepared by LDA Design on behalf of, and with the close co-operation and involvement of, Colchester Borough Council. It has been prepared to form the basis of an application for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and has thus been formulated to comply with the requirements of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Parks for People 2009 – 2013 programme.

In promoting the study, Colchester Borough Council is cognisant that Castle Park plays an important and unique role in the life of Colchester at local, district, regional, national and international levels. The Park is indeed unique and fortunate in many ways; its location adjacent to the Town Centre provides excellent access and communications; the two listed museums within its boundaries offer excellent destination points and opportunities for cross-utilisation; its archaeological heritage is second to none and affords many opportunities for education and interpretation; its strategic location at the centre of an open space system based on the River Colne provides links to wider areas; and, its existence as a physical record of landscape change and design through time is fascinating. It also provides a variety of facilities and environments that satisfy contemporary needs.

The Restoration and Development Plan has been informed by detailed research and analysis of a wide range of considerations including: the strategic context, the history, the visible and buried archaeology, the condition and use of Castle Park and the outcome of local public consultation. All the proposals have been thoroughly examined to ensure that they are appropriately costed, that funding is achievable and that they can be sustained by the management structure that is proposed.

1.2 Castle Park

Castle Park is located to the north-east of the Town Centre and is effectively divided into two sections by the Roman Wall that traverses it east to west. The Upper Park contains the Castle Museum and Hollytrees Mansion Museum immediately adjacent to the Town Centre, whilst the Lower Park extends down to the River Colne. It is also adjacent to Kings Head Meadow, the Cricket Ground and the Riverside area, and therefore links into a wider green network of open space. The

Park was opened in 1892 and covers 11 hectares.

It is listed Grade II in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Importance. The Norman Castle, the Roman Town Wall and Duncan's Gate, and Hollytrees Mansion are Grade II* Listed Buildings/Structures. The main gateway to the Park, the Roman Temple enclosure wall, Grey's Rotunda (garden temple) and Summerhouse, the Roman Pavement, and the Hollytrees Mansion exterior railings are Grade II Listed Buildings/Structures. The majority of the Park is a Scheduled Ancient Monument; specifically, the Roman Town Wall, Duncan's Gate and the Town Ditch are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The Upper Park falls within the Town Centre Conservation Area. The Lower Park, riparian to the River Colne, is a locally important Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

1.3 Colchester Borough Council

The Borough of Colchester is situated in Northeast Essex and covers an area of 34,671 hectares; has a population of 170,800 (2006). Sixty per cent of the population live within a 5 mile radius of Castle Park. The Borough is well placed for tourism with good road and rail links to London and other parts of the United Kingdom. The proximity of Stansted Airport and the Port of Harwich provide easy links for foreign visitors.

1.4 Key Project Personnel

The management of the project is the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Service of the Borough Council. The Council Steering Group (CSG) comprised:

- Bob Penny - Parks and Recreation Manager
- Ian Baalham - Parks and Recreation Officer
- David Carter - Parks Development Officer
- Philip Wise - Curator of Archaeology

The study has been approved by the Group.

1.5 Professional Advisors

This Report was prepared by LDA Design on behalf of Colchester Borough Council. Andrew Harland was Partner in-charge supported principally by William Wheeler, Project Leader and Richard Cook, Senior Landscape Architect. The report drew substantially upon an earlier piece of work undertaken by the practice and which, in turn, had been supported by specialist sub-consultants.

Specialist sub-consultants to LDA Design included Fiona Green, landscape historian; Matt O'Farrell, architect/landscape architect of Gilmore Hankey Kirke, Architects, Planners and Conservation Specialists; and Bob Edwards of Davis Langdon, quantity surveyors and cost consultants.