

2.0

Strategic Context

This section seeks to outline the planning context, local initiatives, developments and strategies that involve or are closely relevant to Castle Park.

Through its policies and strategies, Colchester Borough Council is committed to the promotion and development of a wide range of activities to meet the leisure needs of the local, regional, national and international communities, of which Castle Park provides an important contribution. The Council aims to raise the profile and enhance its provision of leisure services and places a positive emphasis on the arts, culture, sport and recreation, and the environment.

2.1 Colchester Statistics

Colchester is Britain's oldest recorded town. The Colchester area has seen continuous human occupation for at least 3000 years. By the first century AD Camulodunum had become the most important tribal settlement in South East England. As such, it was the main target of the invading Roman army in AD43 and it was here that Emperor Claudius received the submission of eleven British kings. Section 3 and 4 provide a detailed account of the Park's history, including the sense of Roman history and the numerous archaeological artefacts evident.

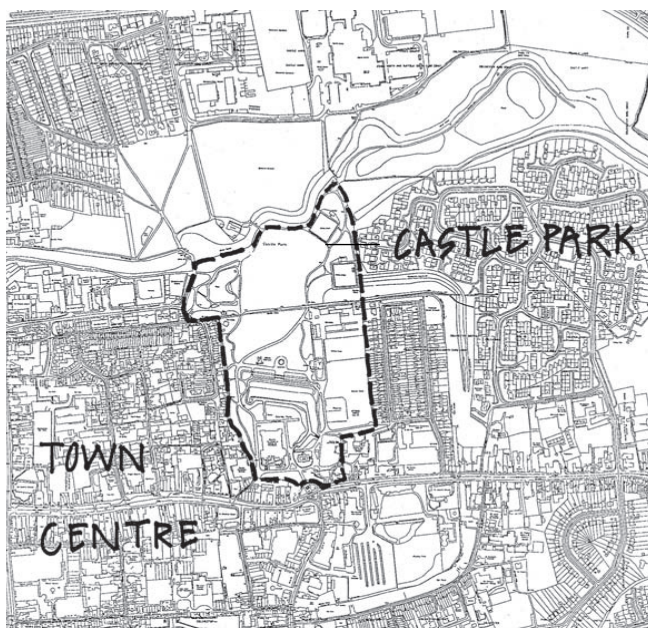


Figure SC1
Location of Castle Park

The population of Colchester Borough at the last census (2001) was 155,800, the third highest in Essex. The largest age group is the 30-34 years group with 12,300 (7.84%), followed by the 35-39 years group with 11,843 (7.55%) people. The mid 2006 statistics show that the population has increased rapidly by over 15,000 to 170,800. This population is expected to grow by 13,000 in the next six years with a larger proportion of the older ages groups (over 60 years). The increase in population reinforces the need to provide a network of green spaces within the Borough, of which Castle Park provides an important strategic link.

To cope with the increasing population numbers there are many new housing developments in the Borough. This includes a residential development on the former Health Clinic site and a proposed development on the site of a former depot, adjacent to the Castle Park boundaries. This will also increase the local importance of the Park, as well as its strategic importance and potentially increase visitor numbers of a varying age range.

Historically, unemployment in the Borough has been lower than the national average as it has a diverse and viable local economy. This is demonstrated by the proposed new Town Centre developments, which are discussed later in this Section. Again, such developments will make use of the historic park, and benefit from its proximity to the Town Centre.

2.2 Planning Policy

The current local plan, the Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan (March 2004), provides a framework for the development of the Colchester Borough. It is saved until 2011, or until it is replaced in whole, or part, by the Local Development Framework (LDF) documents as they are produced. In December 2008 the Council adopted the Core Strategy document which provides the over arching strategy and policy direction for the growth of the Borough up to 2021, including provision for green links, of which Castle Park is an integral part.

An extract from Spatial Vision (CBC Adopted Core Strategy 2008) states that:

'By 2021, Colchester will be a prestigious regional centre.'

The historic Town Centre will be the cultural and economic heart of the borough, surrounded by thriving suburbs, villages and countryside. New cultural, retail, office and mixed use developments will be delivered through regeneration of the Town Centre and its fringe. Urban Gateways to the Town Centre will be regenerated to present attractive entry points to Colchester and stimulate sustainable development.'

'The natural environment, countryside and coastline will be conserved and enhanced and strategic green spaces will be secured to meet the recreational and health needs of Colchester. Sustainable development will also help protect the biodiversity, cultural and amenity value of the countryside and coast and will minimise use of scarce natural resources.'

Core Strategy Objectives consistent with the restoration plans for Castle Park are to:

- Sustainable Development.
- Provide the necessary community facilities and infrastructure to support new and existing communities.
- Provide excellent and accessible health, education, culture and leisure facilities to meet the needs of Colchester's growing community.
- Urban Renaissance.
- Promote high quality design and sustain Colchester's historic character, found in its buildings, townscape and archaeology.
- Public Realm.
- Improve streetscapes, open spaces and green links to provide attractive and accessible spaces for residents to live, work and play.
- Environment and Rural Communities.
- Protect and enhance Colchester's natural and historic environment, countryside and coastline.

2.3 Green Links

The Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan (March 2004) contains important Green Link policies, of which Castle Park is a part of. Policy UEA14 recognises the idea that green

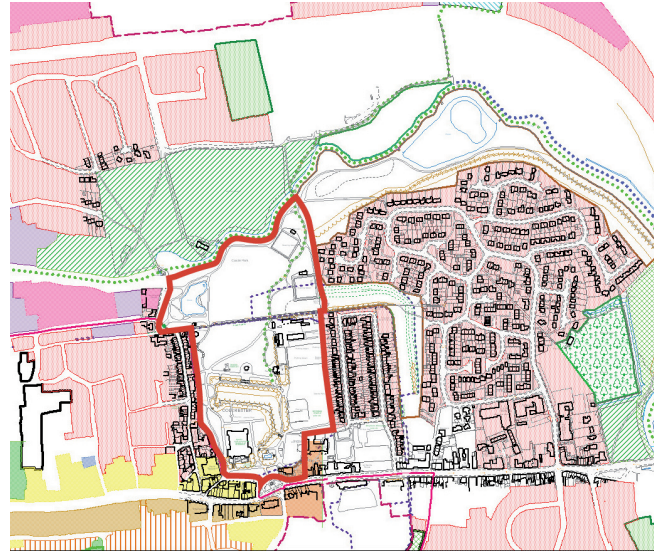


Figure SC2
Green Links

links should be connected to improving existing open spaces for nature conservation and recreation access.

Figure SC2 shows how Castle Park forms a part of the green link network within Colchester. The main green corridors run along the River Colne, and within the Town Centre the only connection to this river corridor is through the open space provided by Castle Park. This link shows the importance of Castle Park in providing green space within the Town and also allowing greater accessibility to the wider area.

2.4 Transportation

Castle Park's position in the heart of the Town Centre means that accessibility is not a main issue, however, there are improvements that can be made to allow a wider audience to utilise this resource.

Transport for Colchester (TfC), 2004 is the joint Essex County Council/Colchester Borough Council implementation plan of the policies contained in each authority's strategy documents. The aim of TfC is to develop an effective and sustainable integrated multi-modal transport network with identified measures in place by 2011 to accommodate the transport needs of Colchester up to 2020.

The following is a summary of their recommendations for transport improvements within Colchester, which will have a positive effect on the accessibility of Castle Park. Figure SC3 illustrates these proposals, which include:

- Park and Ride – to establish three new park and rides and two park and walk schemes for Colchester.
- Public Transport – a new modern bus station. Bus priority corridors and high speed coach connections to other major towns nearby.
- Rail – increase car parking at stations, with improved cycle parking and bus connections.
- Walking and Cycling – safer crossings, extend and fill in the gaps of the cycle network.

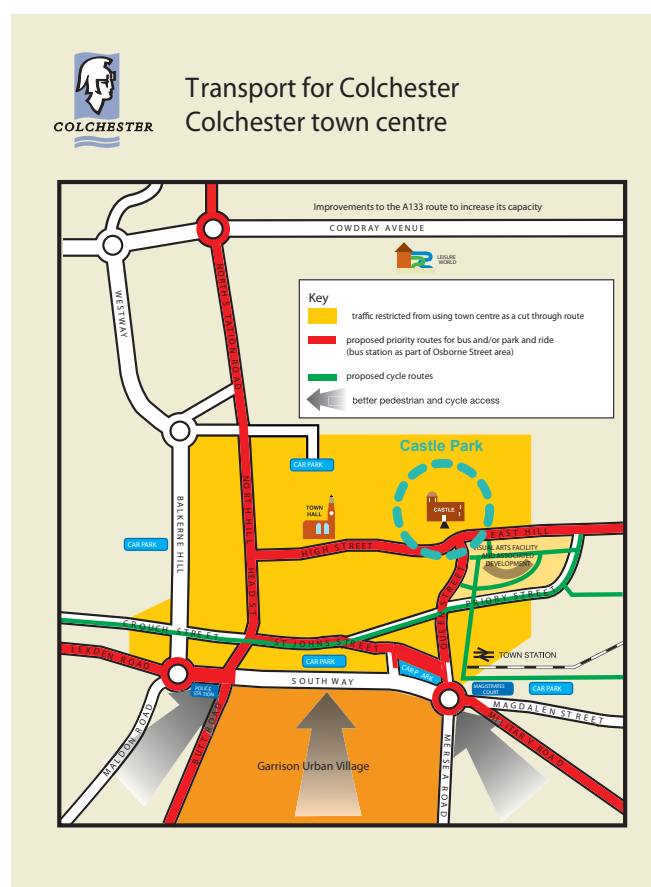


Figure SC3
Transport for Colchester

TfC recognises the need to encourage use of sustainable modes of transport: walking, cycling, motorcycling, taxi, car-share, bus and train, to reduce congestion and the rate of traffic growth. Therefore, access will be improved for these forms of transport and maintained for disabled drivers, those making deliveries and essential car journeys in and around the area. Using the Town Centre as a through-route will be discouraged, improving the areas environment. These are the Historic Core Zone policies carried forward from Colchester's New Transport Strategy, 2001.

These proposals will only be of benefit to Castle Park by allowing pedestrians to easily access the Park without being held back by heavy traffic. Cyclists would also be able to access the link with the Sustrans national cycle network to the north of the Park with greater ease. This will allow improved accessible connections to the Town Centre encouraging the use of the Park at times where previously it may not have been a quick or easy place to get to. Figure SC3 shows proposed cycle routes to the south east of the Castle, which again can only open up the Park to more people. Also by improving rail and bus links Colchester will become more accessible to a wider area.

2.5 Arts & Leisure Services

The range and quality of the arts and leisure services give Colchester much of its character and its distinctive identity. The Borough's heritage, its cultural activities, sport and recreation facilities, parks and open spaces make Colchester a particularly pleasant and attractive place in which to live, work and visit. Through its policies, the Council encourages healthy lifestyles and engenders vibrant local communities and civic pride. Castle Park is able to contribute to several of these policies and plays an important role in contributing to Colchester's wealth and charm.

Colchester 2020

Colchester 2020, a local strategic partnership in cooperation with CBC, launched Colchester's Community Strategy at the first assembly meeting in 21 January 2004. Their vision is for Colchester to develop as a prestigious regional centre.

The Community Strategy produced by Colchester 2020 and CBC includes a Cultural Strategy as a key part of the

document. A website www.colchesterforpeople.co.uk was set up to explain all parts of the Cultural Strategy and community involvement.

“Colchester - a place for people” was adopted in May 2003. The aim of this strategy is to make Colchester an attractive and enjoyable place in which to live, work and visit, and to be recognised as a leading cultural centre in the east of England and an important visitor destination. Castle Park, located at the heart of the city can be viewed as an integral part to help fulfil these aims.

Cultural Services

The Museums Service falls within the Borough Council's Environmental Protection Service, the Arts and Tourism Service falls within the Strategic Policy and Regeneration Service, and the Parks and Recreation Service falls within the Life Opportunities Service. Together, these services are responsible for Colchester Museums, the management and conservation of heritage sites and monuments, arts facilities, arts development, leisure, marketing, tourism development and visitor information services. Their co-ordinated involvement in the promotion and development of services offered at Castle Park is vital as part of the restoration and development process as that the Park makes the fullest possible contribution to life in Colchester.

Museums

There are two museums within the Park; the Castle Museum and Hollytrees Mansion Museum. Also located close to the Park is the Natural History Museum.

Colchester Borough Council's Cabinet and Ipswich Borough Councils Executive have merged their museum services together in a working partnership. The Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service has been in effect from April 2007 and oversees a wealth of knowledge and history shared across the counties.

The Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service Development Plan 2008 is a comprehensive document which sets out their visions and values. Several of these aims will have a particular importance for Castle Park and are described below:

- We believe in playing an active part in managing and caring for the wider human and natural heritage of the area.
- We believe that supporting and working with the wider cultural community is not only our duty but also adds to the well-being of the organisation.
- We believe that collections, and the buildings in which they are displayed, are central to our purpose and it is our duty to care and preserve them for the benefit of current and future generations.
- We believe that we have a vital role in unlocking and communicating the stories of the collections, buildings and histories that we hold, in trust, on behalf of the community.
- We believe that it is essential to meaningfully engage with young people in ways that: positively impact on their learning; inspire them; help them develop and release talent and creativity; and, promote feelings of self worth, pride and belonging.
- We believe that it is important to strive to be innovative and to positively embrace change.

Castle Museum

Housed within the Castle is Castle Museum. This building is integral to the character of Castle Park, and has its original in Roman times. The Castle that is evident today is predominantly Norman with some Saxon features. Located in the south western corner of the Park, the Castle Museum is located on elevated ground in what would have been an important strategic position set back from the River Colne. Within the museum, exhibits describe the Town's history from the late Iron Age and there are also temporary exhibits. The museum is also an important Education centre linked to the national curriculum. Colchester Castle is an exceptional building of national importance and contributes much to attracting people into Castle Park. Consequently a major HLF bid, at around £3 million, is currently in the process of preparation. The focus of the redevelopment will be on the displays, though some important visitor facilities and infrastructure will be included. In the new displays, as in all the other museums, the number of themes covered will be reduced and will concentrate on the following three areas: the exceptional late Iron Age and Roman story, the later history of Colchester up to 1700 and the story of the Castle itself.

Hollytrees Museum

The Hollytrees Mansion Museum underwent a major redevelopment in 2001 and now tells the story of domestic life and childhood in Colchester over the past 300 years, and this will continue to be its focus. Located on the southern edge of the Park, as with the Castle Museum, it provides an attraction to draw people into the Park. Hollytrees Mansion itself was the home of Gray, and forms an important layer of history within the Park.

The Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum is located in the unique setting of the former All Saints Church. It focuses on the rich natural heritage of north-east Essex from the salt marshes and beaches to the more familiar urban environments of the park.

The three local museums create an opportunity to interpret and link the many facets of Castle Park, both living and the past. CBC Parks are actively involved in discussions with Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service to obtain their input, support, recognition and agreement to the partnership and resource sharing opportunities of Castle Park. This is also equally important as the museum service is also responsible for the management of many of the Borough's archaeological monuments which includes the town walls within the Park.

Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Service is responsible for allotments, parks, open spaces and community landscape areas, country parks and countryside management, playgrounds, sports and playing fields, closed churchyards and water recreation. Specific objectives include commitments to: increase the number and quality of playgrounds; to making Colchester the cleanest and greenest Borough; and, the general protection of wildlife and of diverse habitats. Castle Park has the ability to contribute to several of the aims, not only through the provision of play areas, but also by providing a range of leisure activities. The varied horticultural interest within the Park, and its location adjacent to the River Colne also ensures it can contribute to habitat diversity.

Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

Published in 2008, Colchester's Local Development Framework will guide the delivery of spatial planning within Colchester Borough. It builds on guidance and policies set out nationally and regionally, taking into account local needs and variations. Green space strategies should contribute to the development plan documents and should become important supplementary planning documents within this process. This strategy aims to be a living and relevant document, influencing the delivery of parks and green spaces within the borough for the benefit of residents and visitors. This document will:

- Create a comprehensive framework for the protection, enhancement, accessibility and use of parks and green spaces.
- Create a framework for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in parks and green spaces.
- Contribute to the development of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and PPG17 requirements.
- Ensure green spaces enhance the quality of life of local communities, identify how green spaces can promote civic pride and social inclusion.
- Ensure that green space networks meet current and future needs.
- Generate internal and external support for parks and green spaces.
- Develop a shared vision by members, officers, key partners and stakeholders.
- Create a framework for participation by the community and volunteer groups in park and green space management.
- Build on previous playing pitch and play area strategies to provide a coordinated approach to the development and provision of outdoor recreation provision.

Sport and Leisure Management

Sports and leisure includes management of Colchester Leisure World, the Charter Hall event programme, local sports centres, sport and recreation development. There is potential

for links and use of the Park in sporting and leisure initiatives. A good model is the 'Peckham Pulse' project where health professionals within well-being clinics set fixed walks through parks.

Community Sport in Colchester is part of the Sport and Leisure Service area, which sits within the department of Leisure Services. The need to develop community sports was identified in 1999 when the post of community sport manager was created with the aim of co-ordinating and overseeing the three current joint use sports centres, developing a community sport vision including creating specialist sports facilities in Colchester with clear pathways and exit routes and developing a community sport programme for the borough of Colchester. This could include utilising the open space resources that Castle Park provides in the Town Centre.

Tourism

Tourism is playing an increasingly important role in the local economy. Tourism was worth £197m in 2007 to the economy of Colchester Borough. This has risen by 212% since 1993. Tourism supports 4700 jobs in the Borough and in 2007 Colchester attracted over 4.4m visitor trips, a 56% rise from 1993.

There are more than 40 visitor attractions in and around Colchester, which includes Castle Park. Colchester has more quality assessed attractions than any other destination in the country. The Visit Colchester website won Regional Tourism Website of the Year award in 2005 in the 'Enjoy England Awards for Excellence', which are recognised as the premier awards for the tourism industry nationally. Projects such as the firstsite Visual Arts Centre will bring a flagship building to Colchester, but it will also put a national and international PR spotlight on the Town. On a smaller scale, events such as themed town walks discussing the history of the Town are very successful.

Tourism policy formation and implementation is the responsibility of Leisure Services. In the next decade place making in Colchester will continue to develop and improve as a visitor destination. The Colchester Destination Development Plan 2006-2009 raises several key issues which it states need to be addressed if the Town is to realise its tourism potential. Although generally all relevant to Castle Park,

more specifically, the following points can be taken into consideration in the proposals for the Park.

- Interpretation of the areas key natural, contemporary and historic assets to improve the quality of the visitor experience and foster local pride.
- Transportation infrastructure improvements to improve access into the Town Centre and encourage new ways of travelling around the area.
- Street environment improvements to enhance the visitor experience, foster local pride and create a sense of place.

2.6 The Town Centre

The Town Centre is recently the focus of several regeneration projects. Projects include plans for a new Cultural Quarter, retail development, magistrate's court, residential area, multi-storey car park and Town square. A Public Realm Strategy is also currently being undertaken. These are all in close proximity to Castle Park and their development can only increase the importance of this key public open space, with opportunities increasing to link such important areas and features.

Heritage Links: St Botolph's Priory, Town Wall

The St. Botolph's area of Colchester Town Centre contains a significant number of historic buildings, structures and areas, many of which are listed or designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The existence of these features are already a defining characteristic of this part of the Town and provide a fantastic opportunity through the regeneration of the area to open them up for more residents and visitors to explore and enjoy. This ties in with the proposed Castle Park plans for greater awareness and interpretation of its historic elements, and together they could provide a suite of attractions.

Visual Arts Facility

One of the most recent projects which is now on the ground is the Visual Arts Facility. It is intended to be a centre of excellence and innovation for culture, education and learning. The project is a partnership between firstsite, Arts Council England, the East of England Development Agency (EEDA),

Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council and the University of Essex. This striking building is due to be completed later this year. As shown on the transport strategy plan new cycle routes and connections associated with this development within the Town Centre will benefit accessibility to Castle Park.

St. Botolph's Public Realm

Colchester Borough Council has been awarded funding totalling £1million over the next three years from the Department for Communities and Local Government via the sub regional Haven Gateway Partnership towards public realm improvements in the St. Botolph's area. This work will be split into three phases with plans for the current year including upgrading the access road to the Visual Arts Facility from East Hill to High Street, including narrowing the road and giving it a 'shared' pedestrian-car feel offering a welcoming entrance to this part of the Town. This area is closely linked to Castle Park and it will be important to exploit the links that the regeneration of the Town Centre will provide.

Vineyard Gate Retail

Plans are currently being developed for a 550,000sq ft shopping centre in the St. Botolph's area of the Town Centre. Vineyard Gate will be a contemporary shopping development that will be fully integrated with the Town Centre aimed at attracting new high profile retailers to enhance Colchester's national position as a quality centre. The proposals will provide a proper setting for the historic Town Wall and retain and incorporate a number of other historical structures and buildings that add to the character of the Town Centre. Views to St Botolph's Church and the Abbeygate will also be created from within the development, emphasising the schemes unique identity and strong local character. Castle Park will naturally benefit from the greater awareness of the historic town features that this development will give.

2.7 Report on the Options for the Future Utilisation of the Castle Park Nursery Site

In January 1997 Ian Baalham, Landscape Contracts Officer, Colchester Borough Council, prepared 'Castle Park - A Report on the Options for Future Utilisation of the Castle Park Nursery Site'. Its aim was to *'produce a framework document*

for future development of the Castle Park nursery site.'

However, the option to relocate the maintenance depot to an adjacent site outside the Park has been lost and current requirements for the role of maintenance staff mean that this report is now largely superseded.

2.8 Visitor Survey – 1995

An extensive programme of visitor surveys was undertaken in 1995/96. While this is now almost 15years old it shows an insight into how the Park was used. The 'Castle Park Visitor Survey 1995/96 - Summary of Results' was prepared in January 1998 by Ian Baalham. The surveys were carried out from October 1995 to August 1996.

Visitor interviews were carried out on five days throughout the survey period at different times and locations and in differing weather conditions. A total of 350 interviews were carried out.

All 65,000 households within the Borough received a questionnaire of which 3,500 (5%) were returned.

A pedestrian traffic survey was also carried out on four days during the survey period. All main entrances into the Park were monitored and visitors categorised according to gender and age group and whether alone, as a couple, part of a family or peer group. A total of 33,000 people were recorded entering the Park during the four days of the survey.

The main findings of the surveys were:

- the proportion of females to males who visit the Park indicate that, unlike national trends, women visit the Park in greater numbers than men - 54/46% female to male in Castle Park; 40/60% nationally.
- the Park is popular for family visits.
- only one third visit the Park alone, however.
- 34% of females visit the Park alone which is much higher than the national average, this suggests that the Park is perceived to be a safe place to visit. During the pedestrian survey, 24% of females were entering the Park alone.
- children and teenagers represented 38% of visitors to the Park which is comparable with national figures.
- teenagers and young adults combine to make up over

50% of visitors to the Park.

- only 6% of visitors to the Park were elderly and, therefore, appear to be under-represented users of the Park.
- only 10% of visitors live within 5 minutes of the Park which is significantly less than the national average of 20%.
- 31% of visitors were from Colchester Town; 24% from outside Colchester Town but within the Borough; 22% from Essex but outside Colchester Borough; 19% from outside Essex but in England; and 4% from another country. This confirms that in Colchester, the Park and its facilities are an attraction to a significant number of tourists and it must satisfy local, regional and international visitor requirements.
- 24% of visitors walk to the Park; 12% use public transport; 62% arrive by car or motorcycle.
- a large number of people visit the Park more than ten times each year, many of these visit weekly.
- visitors who stay in the Park for longer than one hour is much higher than the national average.
- many people use the Park as a short-cut to get to the Town Centre to shop; many combine a shopping trip with a visit to the Park.
- the most popular reasons for visiting the Park are: to enjoy the trees and flowers (62%); to relax (54%); to take a walk (52%); to accompany children (42%); to attend an event (35%); to take a short cut (34%); to play (23%); and to have a picnic.
- in line with national trends, the number of parents who visit the Park with their children is high.
- the most popular attractions are the Park Cafe (54%); the children's play area (48%); the Castle Museum (45%); the Boating Pond (27%); the Sensory Garden (27%); and Hollytrees Mansion (22%).
- the most disliked feature was the toilets.

The household survey asked what people would like to see within the nursery site; suggestions fell into two broad categories, those wanting improvements to existing facilities and those wanting new attractions. There was considerable support for improved cafe and toilet facilities. The major suggestions were:

- improved catering facilities (23%)
- more gardens (14%)
- improved toilets (13%)
- conservatory/tropical house (13%)
- pets corner/zoo/aviary (12%)
- a maze (12%)
- children's play area (9%).

The surveys provide excellent data in support of the Restoration and Development Plan and a benchmark for future surveys. The Council is also committed to continuing programme of Public Consultations on the Restoration and Development Plan.

Following public consultation on the Restoration and Development Plan for Castle Park (draft) in 1999, the Council identified priorities for future consideration. In summary, the consultation provided an insight into the public's perception of the Park as a leisure resource, as a site of historic interest and of horticultural excellence.

It was confirmed that the Park is already a valued resource, with wide ranging appeal for people of all ages and socio-economic groups, providing a unique combination of features and facilities in a historically significant location close to the Town Centre.

The results of the consultation revealed that the proposals in the Draft Restoration and Development of 1999 were supported by the majority of people, who viewed them as beneficial to both the Park and Colchester as whole. However, a significant number of people were also concerned that changes would spoil the Park. These people were willing to accept there is a need to provide modern, up-to-date services and facilities, but did not want to see an over developed Park with new attractions. As such, the proposals with the least support included those that re-designed attractions or removed features of the Park. Where appropriate, such issues have sought to be addressed in the revised Restoration and Development Plan.

Proposals that aimed to enhance customer service were those that received the greatest support, for example improved toilet

facilities and café building, better signage, seating and litter bins, and additional information about the Park, its features, and archaeological artefacts. Again, the Restoration and Development Plan has retained such elements due to their level of support.

2.9 Castle Park Customer Survey 2008

Colchester Borough Council are now committed to carrying out customer surveys in Castle Park every two years. The last customer survey was conducted in 2008, and complies with the 'Green Stats' customer survey format produced by Green Space and is required by the Heritage Lottery fund. (The information gained is fed into national performance indicators for the purpose of comparison of data across the country). The most popular reasons for visiting the Park were:

- To enjoy the beauty of the surroundings
- To enjoy the flowers and trees
- To see the birds and wildlife
- For peace and quiet
- For a walk
- To get some fresh air

It is important to note that:

- 10% of respondents never visited the Park in the winter months.
- Of those that visited during the winter 43% stayed for less than 30 minutes, whereas not surprisingly most respondents stayed longer during the summer months.
- 85% of respondents travelled to the Park from home and of those, 41% travelled by car and 41% on foot.
- 98% of respondents were white British.
- 1% were Asian/Asian British.
- 0.5% were 'other' including Iranian, Swiss, Irish and Spanish.
- (0.5% would rather not say)

The vast majority of responses to the survey were very positive

when people were asked about aspects of the Park, including:

- The design and appearance of the Park.
- The current range of facilities including facilities for children.
- Care and maintenance of the trees, shrubs and flowers beds.
- Care or management of nature and wildlife in the Park.
- Standard of cleanliness and maintenance of the Park.
- Overall impression of the Park.

However, when asked to think of anything that would encourage people to use the Park more often:

- 13% said they would like to see more events and greater variety of events in the Park throughout the year; and
- 12% said they wanted longer opening hours in the café, for the café to be open throughout the year and a larger variety of food.

Other comments included:

- Cheaper parking and better signposting for visitors
- More security – especially in early morning and evening – in winter and summer.
- Boats throughout the year.
- Indoor/undercover play area.
- More control on cyclists in Lower Park – they come through Park too fast.
- More shelter in the winter.
- Comfortable benches near Roman Wall and mini golf.
- Keep control of drinking groups.
- Need to publicise the Park's resources, opportunities and events more.
- Mobile coffee stand near playground.
- The toilets improved including provision of baby changing facilities.
- More activities for children. Improve children's playground.

- Amount of litter and the need for more litter bins.
- Shield new development.
- Discourage large groups of youths staying in pagoda next to playground.
- Open toilets at same time as park. Improve toilets and provide baby change facilities
- Charge less for events – or have the facilities inside cheaper.
- Too many trucks cut through the Park during day – could use little buggies with trailers – limit day Park traffic.

The key issues arising from the survey to be taken forward as part of the Restoration and Development proposals include:

- The current playground facility requires updating.
- Toilet provision requires improvements and updating.
- Baby change facilities are required.
- Café and catering facilities should be improved and open during winter months as well as in summer.
- To extend the number of people visiting, to increase the length of visits and widen the audience.

2.10 Summary

Castle Park's location adjacent to the Town Centre is ideal. It is a popular destination in its own right and this is augmented by visitors to the Castle and Hollytrees Museums and people walking through the Park to and from the surrounding residential areas and Leisure World. The regeneration plans for the Town Centre including Vineyard Retail area, and also the Visual Arts Centre (which is due to be complete later this year) have the potential to increase the attraction to the area and increase visitor numbers to Castle Park. Also, the proposed improvements to increase awareness of the built heritage within the Town Centre cohere with the proposals for Castle Park.

Castle Park also connects with a broader open space system comprising the Riverside Area; Land Lane Open Space; the Cricket Ground; Kings Head Meadow; East Bay Recreation Ground; Cymbeline Meadows; and, the river walks associated with the River Colne. Combined, these open spaces offer a potentially wonderful and diverse series of environments, habitats and experiences close to the Town Centre. As such, Castle Park can be figured as the 'pearl' on the necklace of this open space system that should be restored and developed for current and future generations' education, recreation and fulfilment.

The newly adopted Core Strategy and the saved policies of the Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan (March 2004) illustrate the Council's commitment to provide an improved and enhanced environment for work, education, recreation, leisure and tourism. Together, they fully support the restoration, development and on-going management and maintenance of Castle Park as a valued and much loved asset for the whole of the community of the Borough.