

5.0

Landscape Appraisal

5.1 Introduction

The following text and diagrams draw on the survey data and analyses of the Strategic Context, the Historical Development, and the Archaeological Appraisal chapters. Taken together, they appraise the most important landscape and design elements in terms of their influence on contemporary and future use of the Park. It is important that any proposals are framed within the context established by these surveys and analyses.

Key issue 1 - LAPP 1

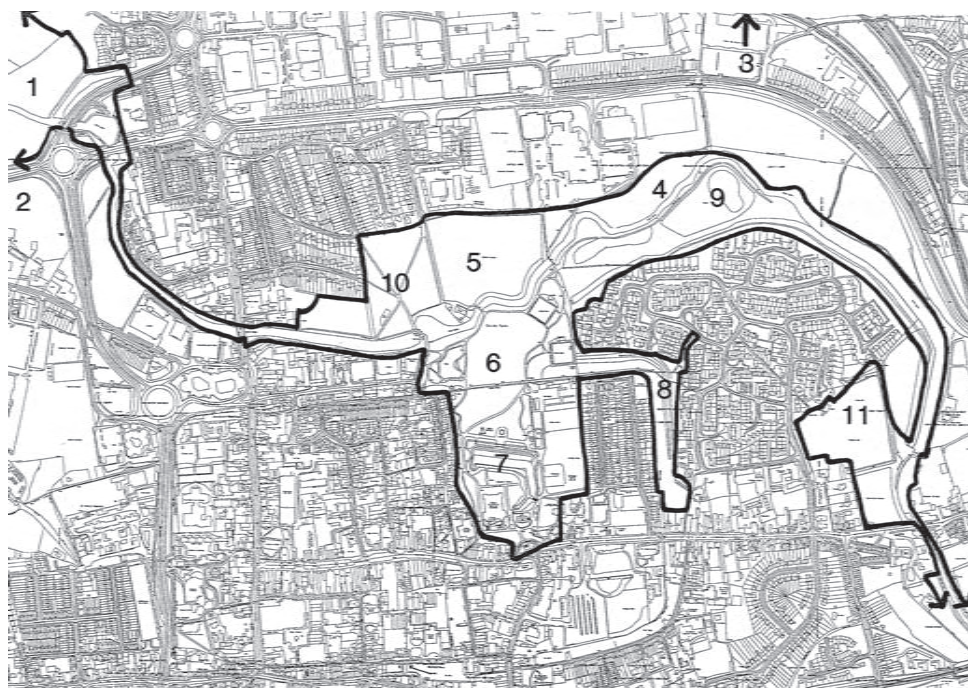
To ensure a balance of Archaeological, Historical Landscape Design, horticultural, leisure and development interests is achieved

This chapter includes an appraisal of Castle Park within the context of the Town Centre, evaluates the contemporary situation within the Park by identifying and appraising all the elements, artefacts and uses that make up the Park. These include the existing earthworks, water, access and circulation, leisure facilities, horticultural features, soft landscape, wildlife and associated vegetation and buildings.

The appraisal of the fabric of the Park is followed by an analysis of the existing spatial character zones within the Park. A summary of the appraisal and opportunities for restoration and development are then identified and scheduled. This is followed by a summary of the Key Issues to be addressed by the Restoration and Development Plan. The chapter concludes with the Development Strategy which headlines the key design elements that inform and are taken forward into the Restoration and Development Plan.

5.2 Town Centre Strategic Context

Figure number LA1 indicates the extent of the open space system that connects directly into Castle Park and on to the Town Centre. It is an excellent resource that adds to the unique qualities and setting of Castle Park and Colchester Town Centre. It is an aesthetic, ecological and community resource that should be protected, enhanced and interpreted.



1. Cymbeline Meadows
2. Hilly Fields
3. High Woods Country Park
4. Bull Meadow
5. Cricket Ground
6. Lower Castle Park
7. Upper Castle Park
8. Land Lane Open Space
9. Riverside Open Space
10. Kings Head Meadow
11. East Bay Recreation Ground

Figure LA1

Town centre strategic open space context

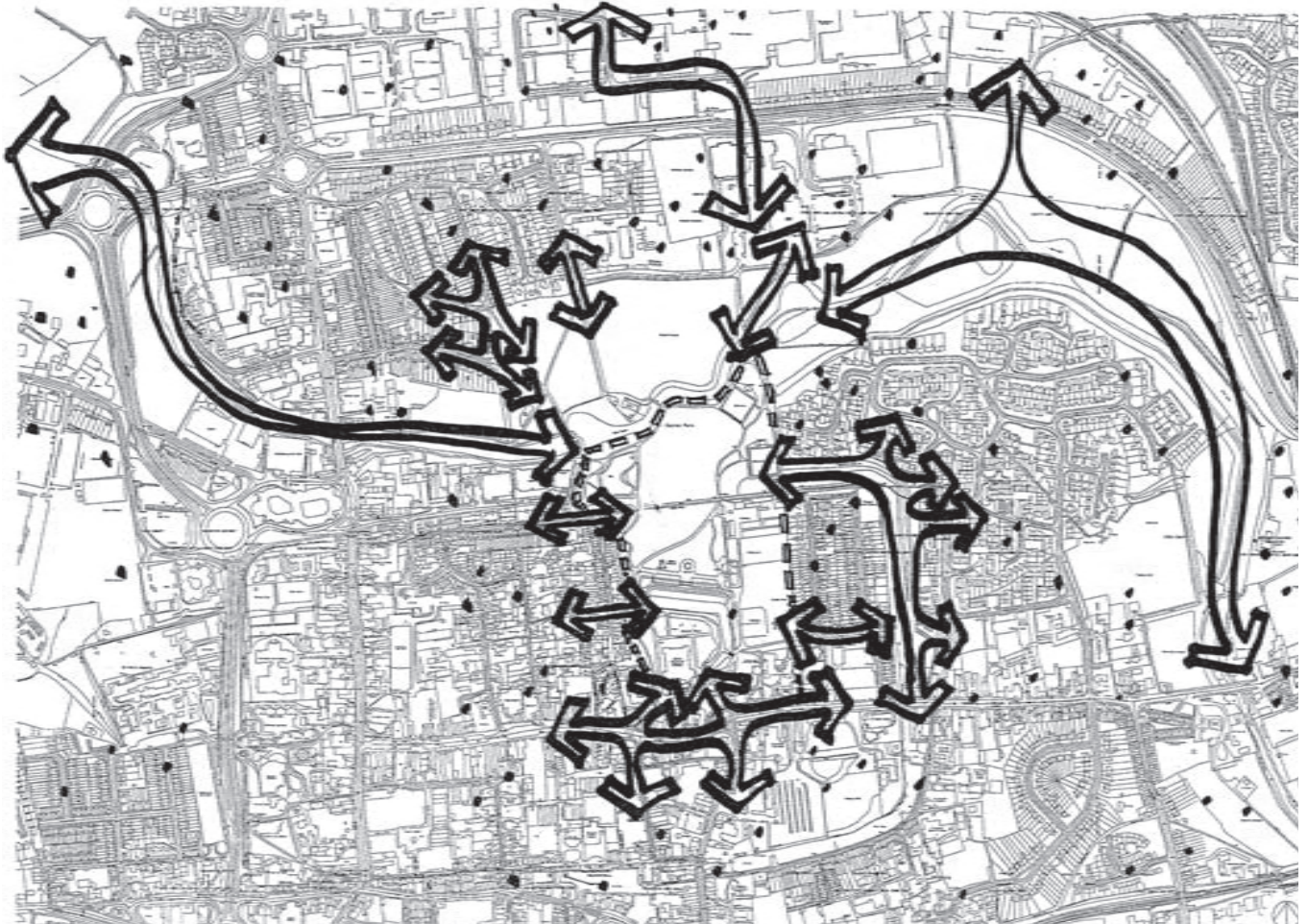


Figure LA2
Strategic links

5.3 Strategic Links

Figure number LA2 indicates how well Castle Park is connected to the surrounding residential areas and open spaces. The most successful parks are those that have a lot of people and activity and are located on through routes to town centre locations. The development of a 'Cultural Quarter' in the Town Centre, south of Castle Park should also generate additional visitors to the Park. The Park is well-placed at the heart of a large number of cross and through-routes that all add to the vitality and security of the Park. These should be preserved, enhanced and developed, to ensure ease of access.

5.4 Strategic Views

Figure number LA 3 indicates Strategic Views to and from Castle Park that are important to the quality, setting and experience of the Park, the Town Centre and surrounding areas. They should be protected and enhanced where possible. The development strategy makes proposals for these views.

Key issue 2 - LAPP 2
To ensure that development accords with the Strategic Context of the Park



1. From Hollytrees
2. From Northern Rampart
3. From Northern Entrances
4. From Western Entrances
5. From Eastern Entrances

Figure LA3
Strategic views

5.5 Existing Earthworks

Figure number LA4 identifies the earthworks that remain from the Roman and Norman periods. These must be conserved, protected, enhanced and interpreted in order to improve heritage value, widen audiences and enhance knowledge. The Roman Town Ditch is currently managed as a wild flower meadow between the Upper Bowling Green and the Town Wall and footpath. There is good potential for enhancing this feature and presenting and interpreting it as part of a coordinated plan.

Also, the earthwork behind the Town Wall adjacent to the Old Nursery site is an ecologically significant area and would benefit from conservation, enhancement, presentation and interpretation.

5.6 Water

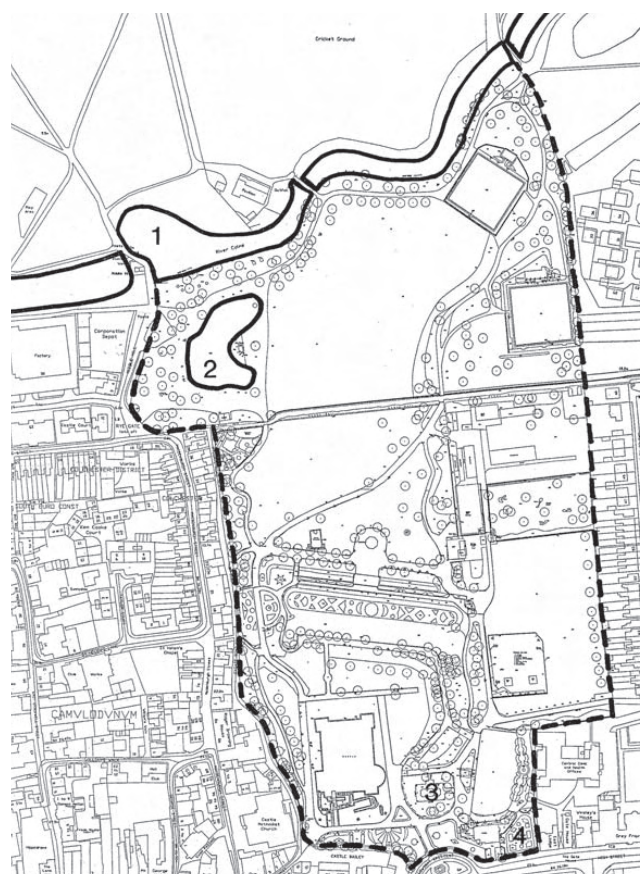
Figure number LA5 identifies water bodies and features within the Park. The River Colne is a major landscape asset which is currently underutilised and could be enhanced and interpreted. There are opportunities to enhance access at limited locations. Marginal aquatics can also be planted and management and maintenance regimes improved for biodiversity. This would also increase aesthetic qualities. The basin of Middle Mill is an attractive asset and potentially typical of the Essex landscape character illustrated by Constable in his paintings of, for example, Dedham. The Middle Mill has been improved by the Environment Agency.

The back of house activities of the Cricket Pavilion need to be rationalised and made much more attractive to users of the Park. A new vehicle bridge link would be appropriate to improve access to the Park for Events, which will enhance revenue earning opportunities and audience expansion.



1. Inner Norman Bailey Rampart
2. Inner Norman Bailey Ditch
3. Norman Bailey Ditch
4. Roman Town Ditch
5. Roman Bank

Figure LA4
Existing earthworks



1. River Colne
2. Boating Pond
3. Imola Gardens
4. Wetzlar Garden

Figure LA5
Water

The Boating Pond is currently a hard-edged and concrete-lined pool. The ticketing shelter and security railings are unattractive and unappealing. In conjunction with the unattractive toilet block, this area has an uncoordinated and very loose feel to it. It needs rationalising, upgrading and enhancing as part of an agreed programme for this location.

The pool in the Imola Garden is part of an attractive and appropriate setting that links Hollytrees Mansion with the Castle Museum.

There is a small water feature which is part of the Wetzlar Garden.

Key issue 3 - LAPP 3

To exploit opportunities for visual and ecological enhancement of the River Colne and the Boating Pond

5.7 Access and Circulation

Figure number LA6 identifies the pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation routes into and through the Park. As noted above, the strategic access and circulation to and through the Park is excellent and contributes to the success of the Park.

One of the most important elements in the success of any park is a variety of footpath loops and circuits around the park. These circuits should be as varied as possible, exploiting views, topography, character zones, transitions, etc., such that the experience of the park is ever-changing and appealing to a wider range of users.

The possibility exists for a new entrance at Duncan's Gate and a new path from Duncan's Gate and Castle Gate creating a major new access and circulation route through the eastern side of the Park.

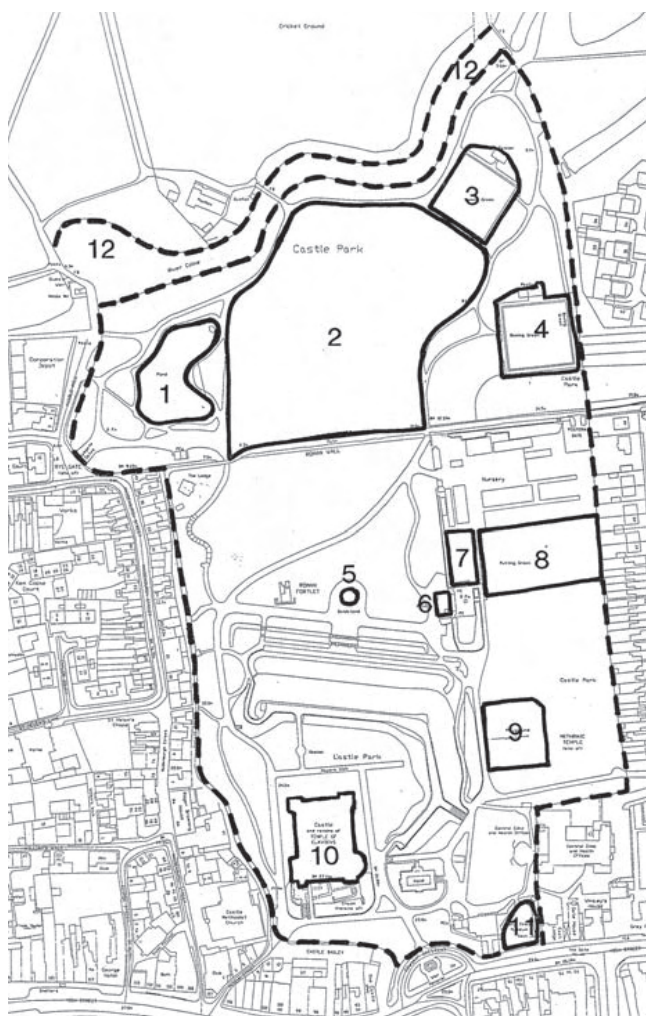
The public footpath that separates the Upper from the Lower Park has a slightly intimidating and low quality feel. This is due to poor detailing and quality of the railings, and to the narrowness of the space defined by the Town Wall on one side and the railings and hedge on the other. There is potential for alleviating this problem as part of this Plan.



Figure LA6
Access and circulation

Cycling is not permitted in Castle Park. In order to maintain this clear stance, a new shared cycle/pedestrian path should be constructed along the southern edge of the Cricket Ground connecting the national Sustrans cycle route with the local cycle network.

The central entrance on the Middle Mill boundary is largely redundant and could be removed. It should be closed by railings and the boundary planted. All entrances should be enhanced and upgraded to ensure that they are as accessible as possible and welcoming.



1. Boating Pond
2. Special Events Arena
3. Lower Bowling Green
4. Upper Bowling Green
5. Bandstand
6. Park Cafe and Toilets
7. Crazy Golf
8. Putting Green
9. Play Area
10. Castle Museum
11. Hollytrees Museum
12. River Colne

Figure LA7
Leisure facilities

Key issue 4 - LAPP 4

To provide for better footpath links to, through and around the Park improving connectivity to and through the Park for the local community and visitors alike

5.8 Leisure Facilities

Figure number LA7 identifies the leisure facilities within the Park. The Boating Pond is discussed above, and is a highly valued feature in the Park.

The Special Events Arena is an important facility that should be upgraded to facilitate events with improved access, circulation and servicing.

The Lower Bowling Green sits happily within the landscape and contributes to the overall character and general enjoyment of the Park. It is home to two clubs but has a relatively small membership.

Conversely, the Upper Bowling Green does not sit comfortably within the landscape and detracts from the character and general enjoyment of the Park. It is also the home of two clubs, again with a relatively small membership.

Members currently prefer to use the Upper Bowling Green as it is felt that the playing surface is better and the development is slightly larger.

Both greens are ostensibly open to the public.

It is considered that the Upper Bowling Green should be removed as it detracts from the character and quality of this part of the Park, and that the playing surface and club facilities of the Lower Bowling Green are enhanced.

The Bandstand is a model of its type. It has been restored in recent times, although the restoration is not quite complete. It is a venue for musical events and concerts and is a popular feature within the Park

The Park Cafe and Toilets are discussed below under 'Buildings'.

The crazy golf course does not sit well with the character

of the Upper Park. It was an appropriate temporary use for this area but would not be considered so in the development plan. It is not particularly well used. This area has the potential to become the focus as an Education Resource and Volunteer Base as it would be adjacent to proposed mutually compatible facilities including the Ranger Base and Cafe.

Although the putting green currently sits comfortably between the Old Nursery and Hollytrees Meadow, it takes up valuable space which could be utilised better in conjunction with other mutually compatible services and facilities. The putting green should be relocated to a more appropriate location.

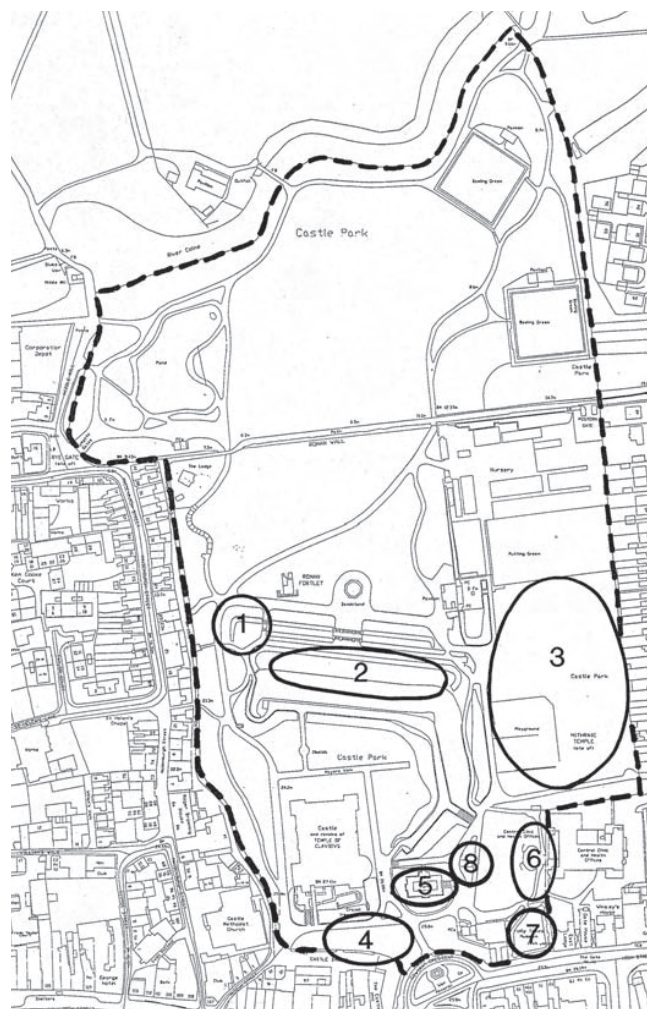
The children's play area sits uncomfortably in Hollytrees Meadow. It detracts from the strategic view from Hollytrees Mansion across the meadow and the river valley to the crest beyond. This is almost exactly the view that would have existed when the Mansion was built. It should, therefore, be relocated to reduce its impact on historic views.

Key issue 5 - LAPP 5

To develop inclusive children's play facilities for varying ages and abilities in appropriate locations

The Castle and Hollytrees Mansion Museums are extraordinary assets within the Park. Castle Museum provides the main focus for the Upper Park and is visible from various locations throughout the Park and the Town. It is an essential element in the character of the Park and indeed Colchester. It is a site of local, regional, national and international significance. Hollytrees Mansion is also a popular attraction and principally houses Victorian exhibitions. It is a significant and important architectural element for which the eastern section of the Upper Park provides the setting. Indeed, the landscape layout of this section of the Park is very close to that of Gray and is, therefore, very significant as a legacy of the landscape design of that time.

The Museum Service runs very successful educational and interpretive events and displays, and opportunities exist to create and reinforce further links between these and educational and learning activities and resources within the Park.



1. Bell Gardens
2. Avignon Gardens
3. Holly trees Meadow
4. Rose Gardens
5. Imola Garden
6. Sensory Garden
7. Wetzlar Garden
8. Badge Bed

Figure LA8
Horticultural features

Key issue 6 - LAPP 6

To develop interpretation of the Park in conjunction with the Museums increasing understanding, knowledge and interest in the heritage value of the Park

Key issue 7 - LAPP 7

To preserve and enhance existing appropriate leisure and toilet facilities to meet the needs of existing park users and to widen appeal to additional audiences

5.9 Horticultural Features

Figure number LA8 identifies the horticultural features within the Park. They are exclusive to the Upper Park and form a series of 'events' that contribute to the overall experience of the Park.

The Bell Gardens sit at the western end of the Avignon Gardens and below Gray's Summerhouse. They relate reasonably well to their location, however, they lack a sense of space and enclosure. Their setting should, therefore, be enhanced.

The Avignon Gardens make a significant contribution to the character and quality of the Upper Park. Against the impressive backdrop of the Norman Bailey rampart and the walled enclosure on the northern side they provide an enclosed, walled garden feel. However, the walls do not quite fully enclose the Gardens at the eastern and western extremities. This can be remedied through extension of the planting. Care should be taken that views from the east are maintained. They also provide the foreground to impressive long-distance views from the footpath along the top of the rampart towards the River.

Hollytrees Meadow is a remnant of the original Gray layout. It provides a middle distance horizon as part of the view from Hollytrees Mansion across the Colne river valley. As such, it should be protected and enhanced as far as practically possible as a large, unencumbered lawn area.

The Imola Garden sits comfortably within a depression and forms a formal link between Hollytrees Mansion and Castle Museum. It is a delightful space and should be retained and enhanced.

The Sensory Garden is inappropriately located within the lawned, landscape setting of Hollytrees Mansion. It detracts from the setting of the Mansion. It is possible to almost exactly recreate the relationship of landscape to mansion that existed after the implementation of Gray's layout. This would be a remarkable achievement given that the strategic view across the river valley still remains largely intact. Rationalisation of the Garden should be considered. It is proposed that it should be softened, as far as possible, to create a soft tree and shrub planted edge to the lawn. The lawn can then be reinstated and the historic view enhanced. In addition the Sensory Garden is not particularly suited for less able users and upgrading should consider more appropriate layouts and plantings for ease of use by a wider audience.

The Wetzlar Garden is an appropriate formal garden adjacent to Hollytrees Mansion providing a lovely proportioned setting of architecture and garden.

The Badge Bed is an isolated island bed that has been constructed adjacent to a straight footpath within the original bounds of Hollytrees lawn. The footpath should be removed and the lawn reinstated to restore Gray's original layout of footpaths and lawn. The reinstated lawn should be graded in such a way that the reinstated Badge Bed is not prominent within views of Gray's landscape from the steps of Hollytrees Mansion.

Key issue 8 - LAPP 8

To protect, enhance and develop horticultural value within the Park, ensuring that management and maintenance regimes are appropriate and implemented

5.10 Soft Landscape

Figure number LA9 identifies soft landscape types within the Park. It also locates an Area of Ecological Sensitivity identified in the Report – Castle Park and Associated Open Spaces - Wildlife Enhancement Plan (CBC 2009). The plan reemphasizes that the Upper Park is the area of gardens and horticultural interest, whilst the Lower Park is much more a 'landscape' setting.

A tree survey has been undertaken which identifies species,



Figure LA9
Soft Landscape

condition, age and approximate location. Many of the trees date from the Victorian and Edwardian periods and contribute significantly to the character of the Park. The health and vigour of the trees continues to be monitored and managed, and a phased programme of replacement is ongoing.

Planting to the western boundary, particularly at Sheepshead Meadow, requires refurbishment in line with historic precedent.

The Bell Gardens form a focal point of remembrance of those

involved in conflict both past and present. It is adjacent to the Roman Bank, on which a Boer War gun used to sit displayed as a trophy, and later a WWII tank, now both removed. The current layout and landscape setting does not adequately provide either area with a distinct character. The opportunity exists to represent the Bell Gardens and Roman Bank area with a distinct formal character through planting and interpretation.

The Woodland Walk at the base of the eastern Castle ramparts is currently of poor design and character. Opportunities to enhance this walk through planting to create a distinct experience should be addressed.

5.11 Wildlife and Associated Vegetation

The 1998 Wildlife Report states that the well-drained, south-facing bank area to the south of the Roman wall in the Old Nursery site is a remnant of the formerly more extensive Hollytrees Meadow. It is an ideal habitat for many plants and invertebrates which owe their survival to the stability of the habitat over the centuries. It is of considerable botanic interest particularly for the scarce Lesser Calamint and the largest north-east Essex colony of Wild Clary. Its significance has been recognised through designation as a wildflower reserve. It is also of major importance for its invertebrates being the only British site for a small Hymenoptera - a solitary wasp (*Cerceris quadricincta*) which is an endangered species listed in the Red Data Book 1. But there is a long list of invertebrates recorded, several of which are nationally rare.

Additionally, the Report states that 'Castle Park has significant wildlife interest at the local and national level' and recommends that they be taken into account in the Restoration and Development Plan. There are four local Biological Action Plan species found as residents in or users of the park, these are Otter and Water Vole in the River Colne area and Lesser Calamint and Stag Beetle in the Upper Park. All four are also county BAP species and Otter, Water Vole and Stag Beetle are British Biological Action Plan species. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) also provides protection of the Otter, Water Vole and Stag Beetle. Any proposals within the Park should promote habitats for these species and contribute to the Biological Action Plan species.

There are important lichens on the Roman Wall and Rampart that should be preserved. These are identified in the PM Bennet's 'Resurvey of the lichens, lichenicolous fungi and other fungi of the Roman Wall, Colchester; March 1998. An ecological survey should be carried out as part of any proposals for these areas.

The Castle Park and associated Open Spaces Wildlife Enhancement Plan 2009 (Colchester Borough Council) builds upon the findings and recommendations of the 1998 Wildlife Report and the 2003 Management Plan which incorporated a number of wildlife related improvements and specific Park wide wildlife enhancements as part of a five year plan. The Wildlife Enhancement Plan 2009 has also been written to meet with the requirements of the Green Flag judges comments.

The main body of the Wildlife Enhancement Plan 2009 consists of a site survey which divides the Park and its associated open spaces into 13 areas, these are assessed under three categories: a site description, an analysis of wildlife value and a recent management review. This has allowed areas of the Park to be identified as suitable for further enhancements and other areas which are unsuitable for extensive alterations due to the more formal nature of the landscape and limitations imposed by the urban context of the Park.

The recommendations for enhancement of the wildlife value of Castle Park through the ongoing management frameworks should be coordinated with the proposals for the restoration and development of Castle Park. The enhancement of the wildlife value at Castle Park will make it a more valuable and viable asset as a teaching and learning resource.

The opportunity exists for wildlife and ecological learning activities to be developed in coordination with Colchester Museum Natural History Service located adjacent to the southern boundary of the Park.

Key issue 9 - LAPP 9
To protect, enhance and interpret ecology and wildlife value

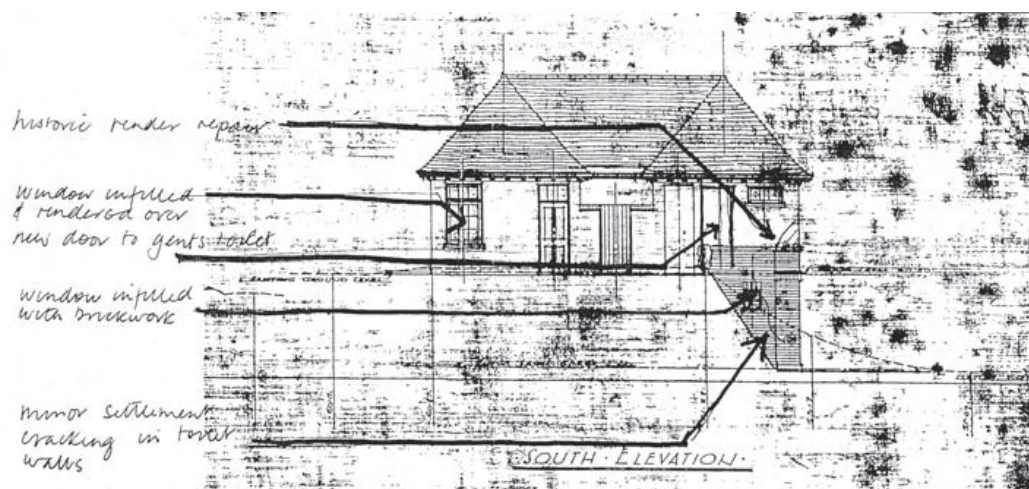
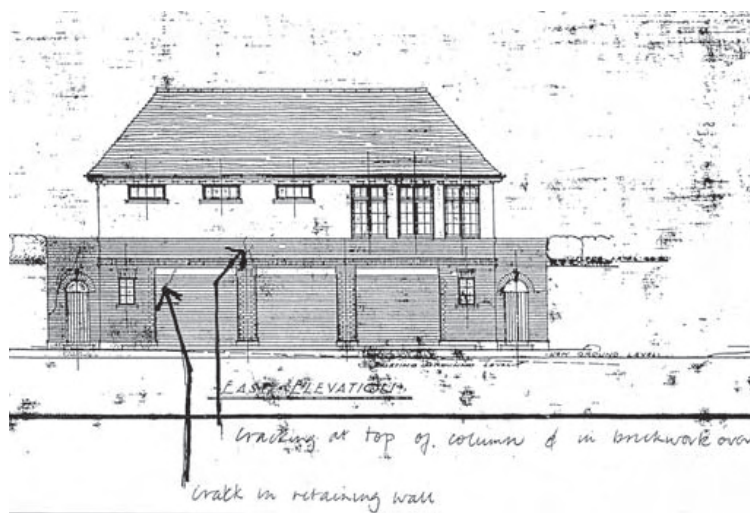
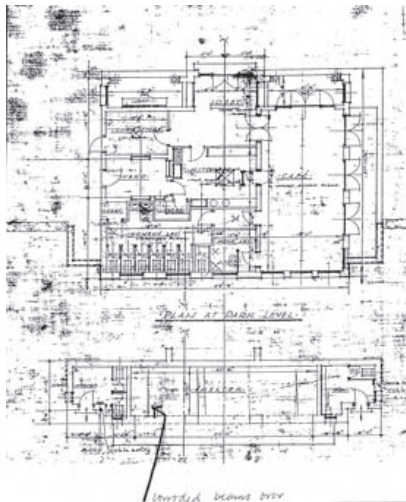


Figure LA11
Park Cafe and Toilets

The Sensory Garden Pavilion is a charming building located to the north east of Hollytrees Lawn. It is currently isolated and under used. The opportunity exists to connect the Sensory Garden to Hollytrees Meadow by opening it up as a 'gateway'.

The original cafe building is located at the eastern end of the Bandstand Walk and acted as a focal point drawing visitors towards it. The original building also had a clock under its eaves (see Section 3, Figure HLD34). When the original cafe was dismantled and converted to a seating area, the focal point was lost. The opportunity to provide a new structure with a clock should be explored to reinstate this focal point.

The toilets adjacent to Hollytrees Mansion have recently undergone refurbishment. However, this facility remains below the standard which the Borough Council consider necessary for visitors at a key entrance to Castle Park. They are frequently used and are not adequate for current demand. Many coach parties visiting Colchester alight adjacent to Hollytrees Mansion, and these public toilets often provide visitors with their first experience of Colchester. The toilets should be redesigned and refurbished in order for the visitors to feel valued and welcomed in Colchester and in particular, Castle Park.

Park Cafe and Toilets

The cafe has been surveyed and is considered to be 'generally sound for its age.'

The Café building was constructed c1930 in the Neo-Georgian/Classical style which was commonly used for minor municipal buildings. While not without charm it has no particular architectural merit. Its design and internal arrangement makes little concession to its position on the site in that the service and toilet accommodation cut off potential views east over Hollytrees meadow and south and west toward the massive historic embankments and landscaped ditches.

It is generally single storey but because it straddles ancient Norman bank and ditch it is effectively two storied on the east side. There is not internal communication between the upper and lower levels.

The principal accommodation is on the ground floor, consisting of a cafe, ice cream kiosk, kitchen and associated storage and public male and female toilets. The toilets are in the south east quadrant of the building and accessed externally at ground level. The remains of the accommodation is distributed along the west and north sides.

The lower ground floor on the east side consists of a shelter/undercroft, under the main structure with disused toilets on each side which project beyond the main structure into historic earth works. The understructure has the potential to be refurbished as a cafe kiosk serving Hollytrees Meadow. The toilets are no longer functional but have potential to be upgraded.

The building is situated more or less in the centre of the Park on a raised embankment at the North east corner of the Norman Castle and its outworkings. It commands wide ranging views over the park and to the landscape beyond the river valley to the north of the town.

It is not directly visible from the main entrance to Castle Park or the terrace of Hollytrees Mansion. However it is highly visible throughout the rest of Castle Park, including Hollytrees Meadow, the Nursery site and the north facing slopes of Castle Park of the Roman Wall and beyond from the Boating Pond and the Special Events Area.

It is also adjacent to the eastern entrance to the Avignon Garden and the north facing slopes of the Norman outworking.

Given the position within the Park, the building is well suited to its function. The nature and level of the land immediately adjacent to it would permit extension to enhance the facility and provide for other uses.

However the size and nature of such extension needs careful control and integration into the landscape so that the end result does not overpower and is always subservient to the earthworks and the broad sweep of the landscape.

Current Usage

The cafe and ice cream kiosk is managed by a catering firm who are contracted to the Council. They provide a basic cafe



1. Hollytrees Meadow
2. Hollytrees Lawn
3. Castle Inner Bailey
4. Norman Ramparts and Avignon Garden
5. Upper Park
6. Lower Park
7. Boating Pond
8. Central Activity Area

Figure LA12

Spatial Character Zones

service consisting mainly of hot and cold drinks, sandwiches, ice cream and cakes between Easter and end of October. The level of service offered is somewhat basic, and is largely governed by the standard of facility available in the building.

To summarise the condition of the building:

- The building is in fair condition and excepting the reservations on settlement cracks and corrosion on embedded steels it is considered to be structurally sound
- All internal finishes are in poor condition which will require substantial repair and making good
- External finishes also exhibit neglect and lack of maintenance. Notably roof tiling and external joinery
- All internal piped and wired services are in poor condition and require upgrading and replacement
- The building is too small to cater adequately for the current range of functions. The kitchen/storage space is undersized and poorly laid out. The public toilets are also small and inadequate

Key issue 10 - LAPP 10

To provide a new events building connected to the refurbished cafe to host functions, improve audience numbers and increase revenue

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the building, it is believed to be sufficiently sound to be retained and extended to provide a café linked to an Events building with some shared facilities including enhanced toilet facilities, baby change facilities and storage. It is also centrally placed within the Park and can become an important focus for activities and Events within the Park.

Key Issue 11 - LAPP 11

To exploit opportunities afforded by the Old Nursery to create a new secure maintenance depot area utilising existing buildings, where possible, to accommodate the Rangers, Gardeners and Security Staff in order to enhance their roles and services offered to Park visitors

The Old Nursery area has some historical associations and includes an old Dutch storage barn and 19th century timber shed. The refurbishment, extension and improvement of these buildings to properly accommodate maintenance functions, the Rangers, gardening and security staff will have considerable value in improving management and maintenance in the Park, as well as enhancing the coordination of volunteers and other activities which can improve the knowledge and skills base.

Key Issue - LAPP 12

To exploit opportunities offered by the Old Nursery area to create a new Education Resource and Volunteer Base to actively involve local people and increase the range of volunteers, knowledge and skills, and to facilitate use of the Park as an educational resource linked with schools and other study programmes

The Old Nursery area would be an ideal location in which to create a new Education Resource and Volunteer Base. It would be located with mutually compatible facilities of the Park Ranger and Gardener staff. It would form a crucial part of the strategy to allow visitors, study groups and volunteers alike to use the Park as a learning resource, to involve more people in actively managing the Park, and increase knowledge and skills. This would help engender a sense of pride, ownership and stewardship in those involved to ensure the long term security of the Park.

5.13 Spatial/Character Zones

Figure LA12 analyses the existing spatial arrangement and Character Zones within the Park. This assists in understanding how the Park's spaces and Character Zones work, both individually and as part of the overall Park. The Park is quite complex but breaks down into two major zones the Upper Park and the Lower Park which have their own intrinsic and distinctive characteristics.

The Upper Park is the more formally laid out and spatially complex area. It straddles the escarpment leading down to the valley of the River Colne over which it provides excellent views. It houses the major buildings and facilities including the Castle Museum, Hollytrees Museum, the Park Cafe, the Park Lodge, the children's play area, and the various gardens and horticultural features. It is intensively developed, used and

managed for predominantly passive recreational activities. The exception to this is the children's play area. The Upper Park is a successful weaving together of the visible archaeological remains, artefacts and earthworks into a cohesive landscape whole. This, to a large extent, is the legacy of Charles Gray's layout of the mid C18th - a very significant historical landscape design feature in its own right. It also contains the Old Nursery Area.

The Lower Park is less formally laid out and intensively developed. It comprises the relatively flat plain of the River Colne, rising up to the Roman Town Wall with its associated public footpath. The wall and footpath separates the Lower from the Upper Park. The major features and assets include the large central grass area used as an arena for major events and as a flexible passive and active use area; the river edge which is under-utilised and could be developed as a much more friendly and attractive feature; the Boating Pond which again could be developed as a much more attractive feature; the Lower Bowling Green which sits happily within the landscape and contributes to the overall character and general enjoyment of the Park; the Upper Bowling Green which sits uncomfortably within the landscape and contributes little to the character and general enjoyment of the Park; and, the remnants of the Roman Town Ditch which is an area managed as wild flower meadow left over by the development of the Upper Bowling Green.

5.14 Schedule of Appraisal and Opportunities

The Schedule of Appraisal and Opportunities in Table 4 should be read in conjunction with the Appraisal and Opportunities drawing (Figure LA13). It is a distillation and summary of the appraisal of the Park and identifies opportunities for the rationalisation, enhancement, interpretation and development of the Park.

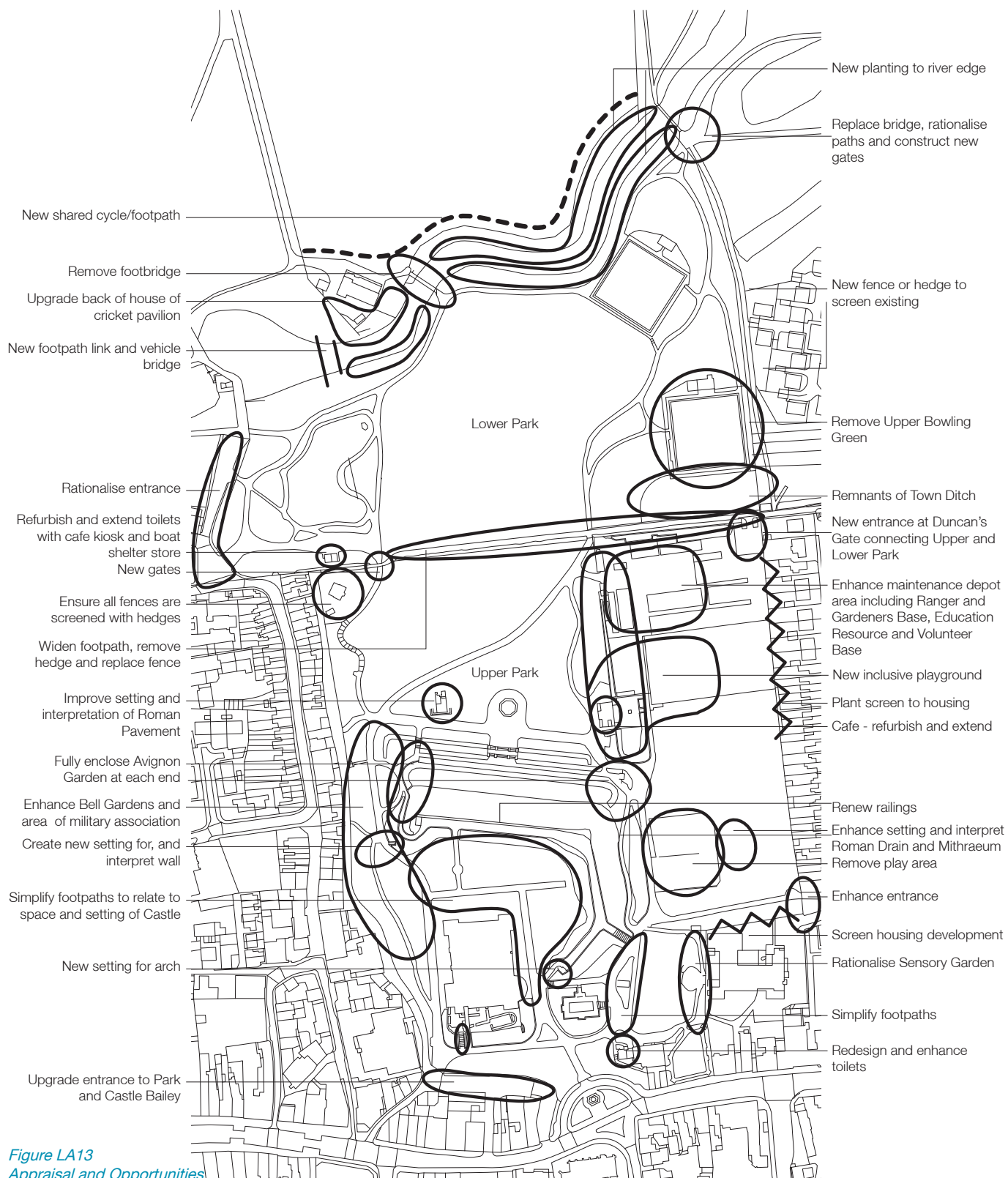


Figure LA13
Appraisal and Opportunities

5.15 Summary of Key Issues from the Landscape Appraisal

The following is a summary of the Key Issues identified in this Landscape Appraisal of Castle Park. These issues form the basis of and are addressed in the Restoration and Development plan for the park.

LAPP 1

To ensure a balance of Archaeological, Historical Landscape Design, horticultural, leisure and development interests is achieved

LAPP 2

To ensure that development accords with the Strategic Context of the Park

LAPP 3

To exploit opportunities for visual and ecological enhancement of the River Colne and the Boating Pond

LAPP 4

To provide for better footpath links to, through and around the Park improving connectivity to and through the Park for the local community and visitors alike

LAPP 5

To develop inclusive children's play facilities for varying ages and abilities in appropriate locations

LAPP 6

To develop interpretation of the Park in conjunction with the Museums increasing understanding, knowledge and interest in the heritage value of the Park

LAPP 7

To preserve and enhance existing appropriate leisure and toilet facilities to meet the needs of existing Park users and to widen appeal to additional audiences

LAPP 8

To protect, enhance and develop horticultural value within the Park ensuring management and maintenance regimes are appropriate and implemented

LAPP 9

To protect, enhance and interpret ecology and wildlife value

LAPP 10

To provide a new events building connected to the refurbished cafe to host functions, improve audience numbers and increase revenue

LAPP 11

To exploit opportunities afforded by the Old Nursery to create a new secure maintenance depot area utilising existing buildings, where possible, to accommodate the Rangers, Gardeners and Security Staff in order to enhance their roles and services offered to Park visitors

Key Issue - LAPP 12

To exploit opportunities offered by the Old Nursery area to create a new Education Resource and Volunteer Base to actively involve local people and increase the range of volunteers, knowledge and skills, and to facilitate use of the Park as an educational resource linked with schools and other study programmes

5.16 Development Strategy

Figure number LA14 draws together the strands of the Archaeological Appraisal, the Historical Development and the Landscape Appraisal and Key Issues into the Strategy for the Restoration and Development of the Park. It can be viewed as the bare bones of a design which can be taken forward and inform the Restoration and Development Plan.

The key features of the Strategy are:

- A new vehicle bridge link from the north of the river directly into the Park
- Refurbished and extended toilets with new cafe kiosk and boat store and shelter as part of enhancement of Boating Pond setting
- New shared cycle path and footpath on north bank from Cricket Pavilion to the north east entrance bridge facilitating connection between the national Sustrans cycle route and existing local cycle routes
- A new footpath loop to the south of the Lower Park
- Interpretation of the Roman Town Ditch through the relocation of the Upper Bowling Green and opening up the Park
- New entrance at Duncan's Gate and new path on eastern edge of Hollytrees Meadow as part of improved access and circulation through the eastern side of the Park
- Enclosure of Avignon Garden
- Refurbished and extended café and new Events building associated with new Playground and putting greens
- Extension and refurbishment of Hollytrees Lawn and rationalisation of Sensory Garden
- Extended and refurbished buildings at Old Nursery area for Rangers, Gardeners and Security team as part of new secure Park maintenance depot area
- New Education Resource and Volunteer Base
- New and improved welcome information signage, interpretation signage and directional signage
- Improvements to horticultural quality and character of the Park
- Improvements to Hollytrees Meadow including removal of play area
- Improved toilet facilities by Hollytrees Mansion

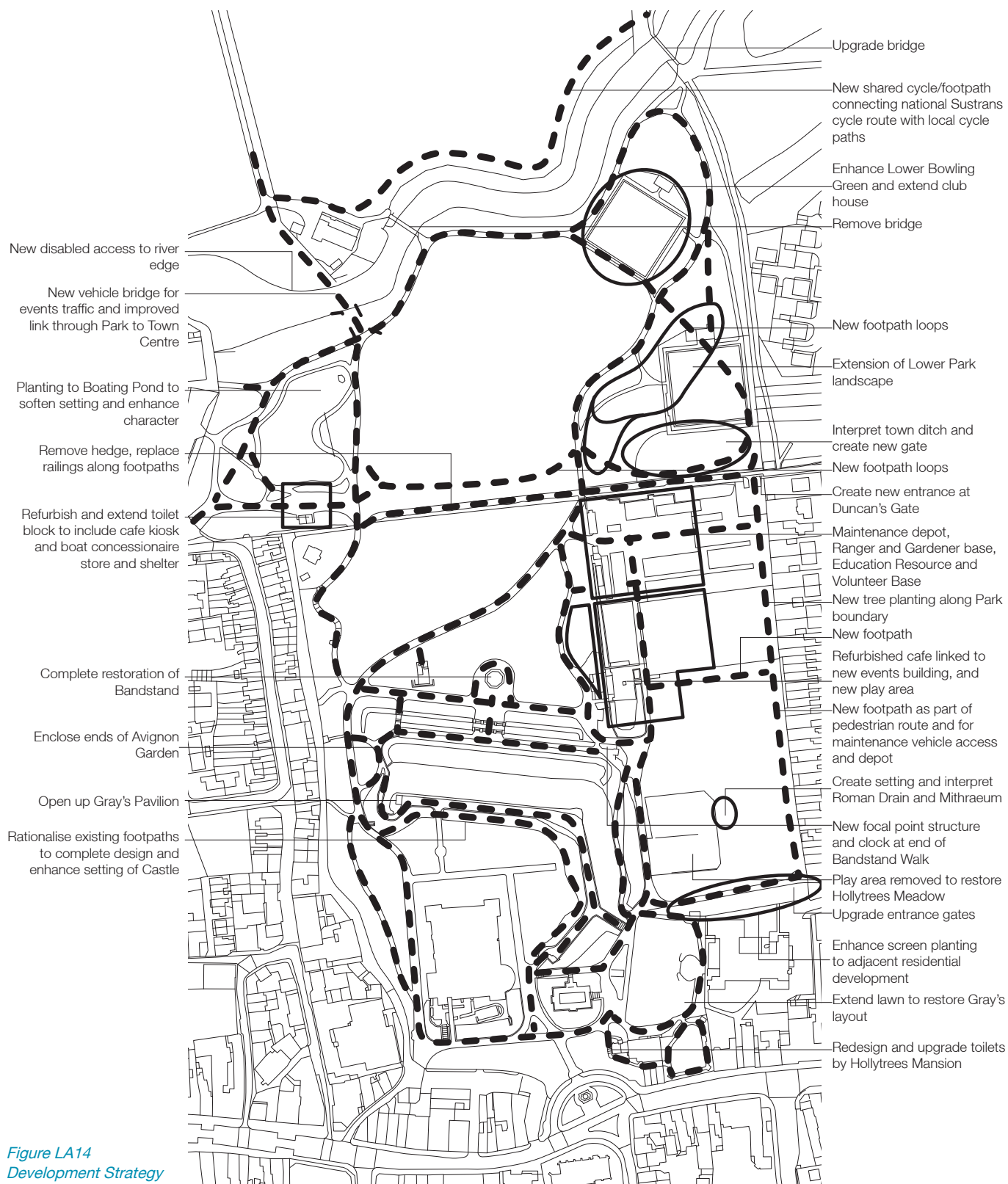


Figure LA14
Development Strategy

Table 4
Schedule of Appraisal and Opportunities

Figure Reference	Issue	Appraisal	Opportunity
LA1	Town Centre Strategic	Open space system that connects directly into Castle Park and on to the Town Centre and Cultural Quarter. An excellent resource that adds to the unique qualities and setting of Castle Park and Colchester Town Centre	Aesthetic, ecological and community resource that should be protected enhanced and interpreted. Uninterrupted foot and cycle paths and associated bridge links are ensured along both sides of the River Colne from the Town Centre and through Castle Park
LA2	Strategic Links	Castle Park is well-placed at the heart of a large number of cross- and through-routes that all add to the vitality and security of the Park	Preserve, enhance and develop to ensure ease of access
LA3	Strategic Views	Strategic Views to and from Castle Park that are important to the quality, setting and experience of the Park, the Town Centre and surrounding areas	Protect and enhance where possible
LA4	Existing Earthworks	Very important earthworks remain from the Roman and Norman periods	Must be conserved, protected, enhanced and better interpreted to improve heritage value, widen audiences and enhance knowledge
	Roman Town Ditch	Currently managed as a wild flower meadow between the Upper Bowling Green and the Town wall and footpath.	Enhancing this feature and presenting and interpreting it as part of a coordinated plan
	Earthwork behind the Town Wall Adjacent to the old nursery site	Ecologically significant area	Conserve, enhance, present and interpret
LA5	Water		
	The River Colne	A major landscape asset within the Park currently under-utilised	Ecological enhancement and interpretation and improve aesthetic qualities. Provision of limited disabled access; marginal aquatics; management and maintenance
	Basin of Middle Mill	Attractive asset and potentially typical of the Essex landscape character	Maintain and interpret
	Back of house activities of the Cricket Pavilion	Needs to be rationalised and made much more attractive to users of the Park	Provide vehicle and footpath access across River for Events to increase revenue and widen audience
	Boating Pond	Currently a hard-edged and concrete-lined pool; ticketing shelter and security railings unattractive and unappealing; in conjunction with the unattractive toilet block, this area has an uncoordinated and very loose feel	Rationalise, upgrade and enhance

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	Imola Garden	Attractive and appropriate setting that links Hollytrees Mansion with the Castle Museum	Preserve, maintain
LA6	Access and Circulation	Strategic access and circulation to and through the Park is good and through central and western parts and contributes to the success of the Park	Preserve, enhance and maintain. Provide additional circulation route through eastern side of Park
	Old Nursery Development Area	Needs to link in with existing access and circulation	Consideration of new entrance based around Duncan's Gate, a new footpath at eastern edge of Hollytrees Meadow that links with existing paths in Upper and Lower Park
	Public footpath separating Upper and Lower Park	Slightly intimidating and low quality feel	Consideration should be given to removal of hedge, setting railings back and resurfacing
	Central entrance on the Middle Mill boundary	Redundant	Remove. Close railing and plant boundary
	All other existing entrances		Retain, enhance and upgrade
LA7	Leisure Facilities		
	The Boating Pond	Is an appropriate leisure facility particularly adjacent to the River Colne; however, ticket hut, boat storage, security is low quality	As part of a comprehensive redevelopment of this area provision of new cafe kiosk, storage and boat shelter or part of extended toilet block
	The River	A very significant but under-utilised leisure resource	Enhance and interpret
	The Special Events Arena	An important facility in the life of Colchester	Improve access, circulation and servicing
	Lower Bowling Green	Sits happily within the landscape and contributes to the overall character and general enjoyment of the Park	Preserve and enhance
	Upper Bowling Green	Sits uncomfortably within the landscape and detracts from the character and general enjoyment of the Park	Remove and restore area
	The Bandstand	A model of its type, largely restored and appropriate to its setting	Complete restoration and continue to maintain
	The Park Café	Well sited for its function but kitchen facilities inappropriate for present day use, storage facilities are inadequate, café area is cramped with low grade decoration lighting and furnishing, no heating which militates against all year round operation and toilet facilities are inadequate	Refurbish and link to new Events building with shared facilities, to host functions, increase revenue and increase visitor numbers

Figure Reference	Issue	Appraisal	Opportunity
	Crazy golf course	Does not sit well with the character of the Upper Park	Remove
	Putting Green	Not considered an appropriate facility in current form and location	Relocate to more appropriate location
	Children's play area	Sits uncomfortably in Hollytrees Meadow; detracts from the strategic view from Hollytrees Mansion across the meadow and the river valley to the crest beyond	Relocate to adjacent to café and restore this part of Hollytrees Meadow
	The Castle Museum	Extraordinary asset within the Park; local, regional, national and international significance	Develop and enhance combined programmes of education and interpretation within the Park
	Hollytrees Museum	Extraordinary asset within the Park	Retain, develop and enhance Mansion and its associated landscape setting designed by Gray; develop and enhance combined programmes of education and interpretation within the Park
LA8	Horticultural Features		
	The Bell Gardens	Relate reasonably well to their location, however, they lack a sense of space and enclosure	Enhance setting
	Avignon Gardens	Make a significant contribution to the character and quality of the Upper Park; against the impressive backdrop of the Norman Bailey rampart and the walled enclosure on the northern side they provide an almost enclosed, walled garden feel	Consider completing enclosure by planting at the eastern and western extremities
	Hollytrees Meadow	Remnant of the original Gray layout; provides a middle-distance horizon as part of the view from Hollytrees Mansion across the Colne river valley	Protect and enhance as a large, unencumbered lawn area
	The Imola Garden	Sits comfortably within a depression and forms a formal link between Hollytrees Mansion and Castle Museum	Retain, maintain and enhance
	The Sensory Garden	Inappropriately located within the lawned, landscape setting of Hollytrees Mansion. It detracts from the originally conceived Gray setting of the Mansion	Rationalise and soften with planting. Reinstate lawn and enhance accessibility of Garden
	The Wetzlar Garden	Appropriate formal garden adjacent to Hollytrees Mansion	Retain and maintain

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	The Badge Bed	Isolated island bed that has been constructed adjacent to a new, straight footpath within the original bounds of Hollytrees lawn	Remove footpath and reinstate lawn to restore original Gray's layout. Reinstall Badge Bed at edge of lawn
L9	Soft Landscape		
	Upper Park	Predominantly an area of gardens and horticultural interest	Retain and protect existing character
	Lower Park	Predominantly open grassland landscape leading down to the River Colne punctuated with trees, the bowling greens and the boating pond area	Retain and protect existing character
	Victorian planting	The legacy of Victorian planting remains within the Park, in particular some shrubberies, planting to the western boundary, Catchpool Avenue and the Mayor's Walk.	Research and restoration to protect/restore character. The Mayor's Walk is unfortunately located within an archaeologically sensitive area. Replanting needs to be further assessed
	Trees	Trees are a significant factor in the overall character of the Park. Many date from the Victorian/Edwardian period	Monitor, manage, maintain and replace in line with historic precedent
	Ecology and Wildlife	Ecologically significant area with nationally rare species. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) provides for protection of the Stag Beetle	Protect, present, enhance and interpret
	River Colne	Ecologically significant with Otter and Water Vole found in the River. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) also provides protection of the Otter, Water Vole	Protect, enhance, manage and interpret
LA10	Buildings		
	Lower Bowling Green Pavilion	Has some charm and merit afforded particularly by its thatched roof	Retain and extend
	Upper Bowling Green Pavilion	No merit; detracts from ambience of the park; creates a dead space of the Town Ditch	Remove; relocate bowling club
	The toilets in the Lower Park	Ugly, poorly located, misused	Redesign and incorporate in new cafe kiosk and boat storage area
	The Park Lodge	Makes a positive contribution to the overall character of the park	Retain and protect
	The maintenance building, sheds and glasshouses	Important maintenance centre for park.	Upgrade, improve for Rangers, Gardeners and Security Staff. Incorporate new Education Resource and Volunteer Base
	The Bandstand	A model of its type, well-maintained and appropriate to its setting	Complete restoration. Protect, manage and maintain

Figure Reference	Issue	Appraisal	Opportunity
	Park Café and toilets	See 5.12	
	Gray's Summerhouse	An exquisite folly	Protect, manage and maintain; open up to allow visitors to enjoy the marvellous views it affords and use as exhibition space
	The Castle Museum	Extraordinary asset within the Park; provides the main focus for the Upper Park and is visible from various locations throughout the Park and the Town; essential element in the character of the Park and indeed Colchester; site of local, regional, national and international significance	Retain, develop and enhance
	Hollytrees Museum	Extraordinary asset within the Park; Heritage Lottery Fund enhancement proposals will see the exhibits redisplayed, access improved, and the main entrance reoriented to face the Park; an important architectural element for which the eastern section of the Upper Park provides the setting; the landscape layout of this section of the Park is very close to that of Gray and is, therefore, very significant as a legacy of the landscape design of that time	Retain, develop and enhance Mansion and its associated landscape setting designed by Gray
	Putting Green Hut	No merit	Remove as part of comprehensive redevelopment of this area
	Sensory Garden Pavilion	Fits in well and provides an interesting lookout point	Retain and maintain
	Gray's Rotunda	Poor landscape setting for this significant remnant of an original Gray building	Retain, protect and enhance setting; improve interpretation
	The toilets adjacent to Hollytrees Mansion	Problems with design and management; currently over-provision of toilets within the Park; there is a direct route between the Castle and Hollytrees, but existing ground levels do not allow for disabled access	Redesign and refurbish toilets to meet visitor demand and current sanitary standards
	The Gardeners Hut	Pleasant structure and incident within the Park	Retain and maintain as incident within Park and for storage