

sheilsflynn



Racecourse Community Park, Hethersett, Norwich

Parkland Management Plan (Outline)

March 2021



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1. BACKGROUND

This Management Plan sets out a vision and management principles for a new public open space and green infrastructure connection which is planned as part of the development of the Thickthorn Junction Gateway Zone. The Racecourse Community Park will support the new proposed Care Village and provide a superb accessible recreational asset for the local communities of Hethersett, Cringleford and beyond.

LOCATION

The Racecourse Community Park sits within the former Thickthorn Hall parkland between the A11 and the B1172 Norwich Road west of the Thickthorn Interchange on the south western outskirts of Norwich 3 miles to the east. The land extends to circa 135 acres as shown edged red in Figure 1 below. Within the site is an area proposed for public access and use shown edged green.

The existing primary access points into the land are from Norwich Road although proposed road changes to upgrade the Thickthorn junction would result in additional access from a link road through the site running from Cantley Lane to Norwich Road. These works are proposed by Highways England.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

HISTORY AND OWNERSHIP

The earliest description of Hethersett is within the Domesday Book in 1086 when there were 400 people in the parish and a church with around 60 acres of land. Hethersett was part of three manors by the 13th Century known as Hethersett Cromwells, Hethersett Hacons and Hethersett Woodhall. Thickthorn appears to have had a separate hamlet at that time.

The community grew during the 16th Century with commons becoming especially important to those who had little other land. Hethersett with its open green, Lynch Green, opened out westwards to the great common where Wymondham, Great Melton and Hethersett parishes met. The most famous event in Hethersett's history took place in 1549 when Robert Kett and his men tore down hedges on Hethersett common. Kett's Oak is said to commemorate the spot where rebels gathered before marching to Mousehold Heath in Norwich. After laying the city of Norwich to siege for many weeks Kett as the ringleader, was executed at Norwich Castle.

Thickthorn has a very interesting history as it was originally a key settlement in Hethersett which housed a medieval moated hall named after Alan de Thicklethorn in 1240. Very little is known about this hall apart from being shown on a 1799 map which indicated where it was situated. This hall was eventually replaced by the current Georgian mansion built in 1812. The Gurney family remained in possession of Thickthorn Hall until 1933. The Mackintosh family rented the Hall in 1946 and bought it in 1952. The Hall was sold in 1977 to the White family who used it as their home and also as a clubroom and shooting facilities for a Norwich archery club. In 1986 Mr and Mrs White sold the Hall, described as a magnificent Georgian House with fine views set in mature parkland. Subsequently, in 1987, the Hall was converted into seven apartments. The hall sits east of Norwich Road within the overall site boundaries but is subject to independent ownership and not included within these proposals.

Wychwood House within the northern section of the site was built in 1958 and has fine views across the parkland. The present-day landscape of the "Wychwood" valley has been through a long process of evolution and change; first the medieval moated farmhouse, then Thickthorn Hall, the change from moat to lake, the establishment of a 19th century parkland and ongoing changes to that parkland, including the new hedge around the moat, the disuse of the east and west entrance driveways and the gradual decline of specimen trees

Wychwood House, the parkland, woods & lake now belongs to a family trust.

HETHERSETT RACECOURSE

The first report of Hethersett racecourse was on 9th March 1875, referring to the previous day's meeting organised by the Norfolk and Norwich Hunt Club. This was on land between the railway line and Thickthorn. A second meeting on 8 April 1875 was organised by the Queens own 7th Hussars.

In 1886 an advert for the races stated "over old Racecourse" which implies that there was more than one. The approximate layout of the racecourse shows the A11 marked to the south of the course. The A11 dual carriageway built in 1987 traverses the course.

A further meeting over the course was held on Friday 23rd March 1888 and meetings continued albeit stopping for a time from 1894. Racing returned to Hethersett in 1903 when the Norwich Hunt took over administrative duties with meetings continuing for ten years until the outbreak of World War I.

The races resumed after the war in 1920 and continued until 1939. In 1927 the Hethersett Race Course Company Ltd was incorporated with the meetings then run as 'Hethersett races'. The next year the first meeting to be organised by the Hethersett race committee was staged on Thursday 8th March 1928 with the final meeting under rules taking place on Thursday 4th May 1939, after which the War intervened.



The course after World War II differed from the pre-war courses as it ran parallel to the railway line. However, once the war was over racing did not make an immediate return. The course eventually being used by the Norwich Staghounds for point to point races between 1953 and 1963, with meetings ceasing in 1970.

The course is no longer visible and is now covered by a number of fields within the site, although a close examination of the area has shown signs of where some of the fences once were. The A11 dual carriageway now dissects the old racecourse.

SITE MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Managing change in the natural environment, preventing the loss of habitats or creating and improving them takes place over many years. A management plan sets out the long-term objectives for a site enabling effective management to:

- identify the required objectives
- provide a framework for decision making and setting policy
- identify budget requirements
- support grant funding applications and
- develop work programmes.

A management plan is produced taking into consideration the environmental, cultural and historical attributes of the site along with the visitors it serves, which collectively identify the importance of the site. During the timescale covered by a management plan changes in legislation, best practice, financial climate and technology can occur, as can trends in the way people wish to use a site. A management plan is a dynamic document which through an annual work plan will enable management to be flexible, adapting to changes in constraints and opportunities, whilst still working towards the vision and objectives.

MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Racecourse Park Management Plan (PMP) sets out a framework which will be amended and improved over time as development areas are allocated and planning led improvements are progressed. It will:

- Undertake investigations to determine the likely key character and visual aspects that need to be considered.
- Record the current ecological and arboricultural assets and consider a programme of works for biodiversity improvements.
- Run events that increase the public use of the park
- Foster community and wellbeing for local residents and generate income to fund the running of the park.
- Review the aims and objectives of the Strategic Gap policy and assess whether the land at the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone can continue to fulfil this function.
- Consider changes to the settlements in the area and implement connectivity improvements between Hethersett and Cringleford.

The PMP will reference studies on key areas including landscape, ecology, heritage, arboriculture, planning and noise. The immediate studies include an overview Landscape Strategy prepared by Sheils Flynn (SF), 2020 and consultation documents prepared by Highways England in

support of its A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Improvement Scheme proposals. The Plan will also inform the work required to compile the final report for the changes proposed to the Thickthorn Interchange by Highways England and the proposed development of parts of the site as submitted for consideration in the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

2. CONTEXT

SITE OVERVIEW

The landform in this part of South Norfolk is a gently rolling plateau, broken by the valleys of minor tributary streams which flow eastwards towards the River Yare to the south of Norwich. One of these tributary streams flows within a secluded valley which is the focus for the historic parkland of Thickthorn Hall – “Wychwood Valley”.

The wider landscape has a relatively exposed large-scale landscape character with open, predominantly arable fields subdivided by prominent shelter belts and geometric blocks of woodland. The landscape within the Wychwood Valley has a more intimate landscape character: the narrow stream flows through an attractive historic parkland bordered by a landscape of woodland, small pastures, winding lanes and dense hedgerows.

The existing service-related developments at Thickthorn junction, including the adjacent park and ride, have created a relatively urban and cluttered landscape character at a local scale. The proposed new Thickthorn junction and its associated landform will add further infrastructure to the landscape character of the Hethersett to Cringleford Strategic Gap, influencing the planning context outlined above.

LEGAL CONSTRAINTS

The Freehold of the site is held by two separate family trusts. The proposed parkland area lies within the ownership of one of the two trusts.

There are no other legal interests (leases, licences or other tenancies) within the site.

UTILITY SERVICES

All mains services serve Wychwood House. The proposed link road across the site will give rise to the requirement for an infiltration basin which will need to be accessed by Highways England for maintenance and repair once built. Additionally, studies will be taken into other historic access rights, which shall be preserved in any future development and enhancement of the Parkland.

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The recorded history of the site begins in the 13th century with the de Thickthorn family and their building of a moat, possibly to establish 'manorial' status, as was the practice with new families in this period. Rather than build a house on more prominent ground, a low spot was evidently chosen to make use of the stream and create a moat in which to place the house. It is possible that ancillary buildings stood close to the main house set within the moat. It would appear that the estate here passed through various hands and that the moated house was no more than a farmhouse in the 18th century. It also appears to have been removed in the late 18th century or thereabouts, possibly when RH Gurney built Thickthorn Hall in 1812. Faden's map of 1797 shows the stream, a road approaching from the west and a small group of buildings, possibly those on the moat and adjacent.

All that remains from this period is the moat itself but extended to form a focus in the landscape park. The hollow way to the south runs along the park boundary which also follows the break in slope from higher ground to stream valley. It is possible that this is a hollow way or a boundary feature, such as a ditch (though whether for the landscape park or conceivably for an earlier park is not certain).

The moat is mostly cleared of trees. The water level is kept high through sluices etc and the moat has been extended to the west to form a small lake or pond. The historic plans show the stream had its characteristic 'kinked' alignment even in 1838.

THE LANDSCAPE PARK

RH Gurney built Thickthorn Hall in 1812 and (probably) removed any building on the moat. Maps show that the original landscape scheme was confined to the area immediately around the Hall (Bryant 1826) but that by the time of the Tithe Map the present park was more or less in place as intended, though at an early stage of development. The park was laid out to enclose the valley, with large trees on the boundary skyline to the south so that the view from the house to the north was of the park only with arable fields almost out of view. The tree planting to east and west provided shelter belts and closed the views from the house with large trees whilst the north part, against the main road, was wooded, with walks and shady drives.

The pleasure grounds to west were in place by 1838, made from a marl pit, with shady walks, ornamental shrubs, ponds and a 'greenhouse' for exotic plants. The pleasure gardens are now adjacent to Wychwood House and 'belong' to this property. At some time in the early 20th century the eastern lily pond was used as an open-air swimming pool. The quarry garden today contains mature trees, shrubs & bulbs, with some evidence of steps and brick paths.

In 1907, the western approach to Thickthorn Hall was re-routed to the north of the alignment shown on the 1838 Tithe Map. It ran parallel to the main road and was planted with the oaks which now are hidden within the woodland belt. The early plans show the pleasure gardens as a separate area of woodland, but by 1907 (when the western service drive was re-routed) the woodland was 'filled in'. A photograph from the 1890s shows a walnut avenue along part of the eastern service drive.

The terraces to the south of Thickthorn Hall are likely to have been constructed later (probably between 1841 and 1890) as historic accounts in 1841 mention only the pleasure gardens, not the terraces. A painting of the Hall in the 1890s shows the terraces, lawn and borders in place. The garden was on three levels, inter-connected by steps. An early 20th century aerial view shows that in the 1930s the formal garden was the central point of a serpentine circuit walk, which led south from the west end of the upper terrace, past a long border to the south of the swimming pool, and down to the moat. It then led round the moat and back up to the eastern side of the terraces. A row of pleached trees, a cast iron gates, the path around the lake, the bridge, ornamental planting on the island, the stepping stones.

Close to the moat stand the stables, complete with original features, set within a neat walled yard. The interior retains original features such as mangers and other details.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1885 shows 'Grand Stand Steeple Chase' on the arable field to the south, just outside the park. This grandstand and racecourse were features of the park in the 1950s and point to points were held until the 1970s. Today there is no trace of these features.

The park is entered on the Norfolk County Council *Register of Historic Parks*; it is not graded.

PRELIMINARY HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISSUES

The below-ground archaeology has a focus on the medieval moat and its vicinity, with the likelihood that buildings stood on the moated enclosure and immediate vicinity. It would probably be required that this feature and its setting remain intact.

Potentially, the hollow way or shallow ditch observed along the south boundary of the parkland could be of early date, in which case, perhaps a park boundary rather than route since it would appear to be too narrow for that function.

It is likely that the presence of recorded prehistoric remains in the vicinity would require some consideration at a later stage, since small streams were a preferred location for prehistoric activity and prehistoric barrows are recorded on the hillsides to the east; flint flakes have been found on the eastern side of the park.

NATURE

- Site boundary - Sites A, B and C
- Woodland
- Contour line (interval 10 m)
- Principal built-up areas and development allocations
- Public right of way
- Nature conservation designations**
- County Wildlife Sites
- Priority Habitats (S41)**
- Deciduous woodland
- Good quality semi-improved grassland
- Lowland meadow
- Traditional orchard
- Woodpasture and parkland
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Lowland fens
- Heritage designations**
- Scheduled monuments
- Listed building Grade II*
- Listed Building Grade II
- Conservation area (Cringleford)
- Nationally registered historic parks and gardens
- County registered historic parks and gardens



The site is not designated for its nature conservation value, and neither are there any designated sites in the vicinity. The location is not within the green infrastructure network for the Greater Norwich Area although representations for its potential inclusion, as part of the wider allocation, are being made to the Greater Norwich Local Plan to this effect.

The main habitat types within the site are variously arable cropland or improved sward within which are a small number of scattered trees, of which some are veteran. The wider habitat, however, is not considered to qualify as the priority habitat of 'parkland' or 'wood-pasture'. The shelter belts that run through the site and along the boundaries are not ancient, and comprise a mix of established woodland associated with Thickthorn Hall, and younger mixed plantations mostly dating from the late-1990s. The established woodland belts qualify as priority woodland habitat, while the young plantations also retain a small number of veteran trees enclosed by the new planting.

Associated with Thickthorn Hall is a small lake, and this lies along a small tributary of the River Yare that runs through the southern part of the site, flowing eastwards. Parts of the valley bottom support marshy, semi-improved grassland.

In terms of protected species, some relevant surveys have been undertaken historically within or near the Site. In conjunction with habitat-based scoping it is thought unlikely that great crested newts are present locally, but the veteran mature trees certainly have potential value for roosting bats. Water voles are not thought to be present along the section of stream within the site. A range of other species of conservation value are likely to be present within the site, certainly including a number of species associated with scrub and grassland and possibly woodland specialists. The existing veteran trees may be also have associated specialists, such as dead wood beetles.

3. VISION

The Trustees are committed to safeguarding the long-term future of the Racecourse Community Park as a high-quality natural area. The Thickthorn Junction Gateway Zone development, including a Care Village on the edge of the Thickthorn estate, would enable delivery of this ambitious green infrastructure project which would provide a superb environmental asset for care home residents and local communities and potentially a wider visitor attraction. The PMP sets out a strategy for managing the park and its surrounds in a way that protects and enhances the valuable historic and natural features of this landscape and provides opportunities for all to be involved in looking after and learning about the site.

The vision will be achieved through objectives, management prescriptions and projects that are set out in this document.

CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

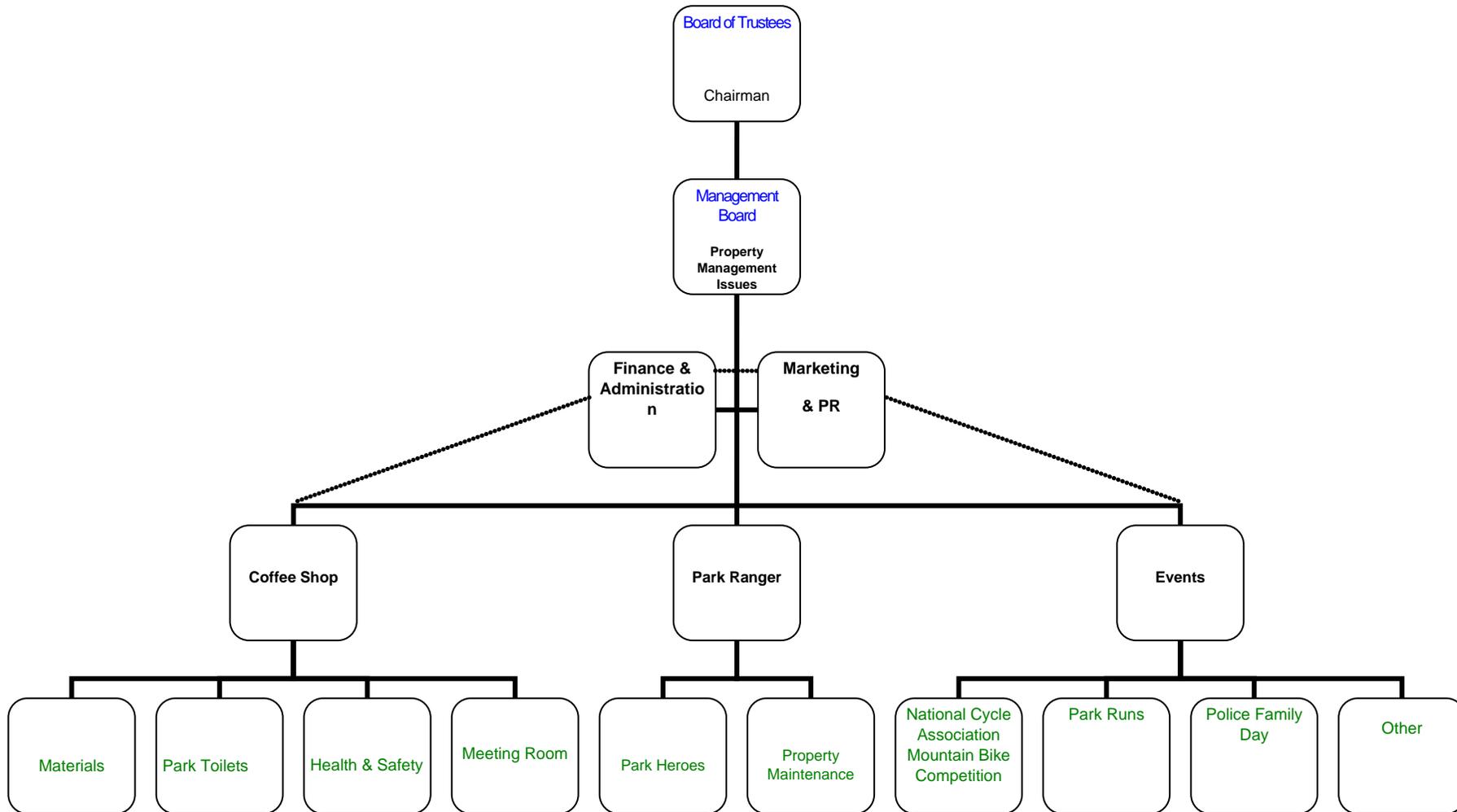
-  Woodland
-  Contour line (interval 5 m)
-  Public right of way
-  Cycleway
-  Strategic Gap boundary
-  Development allocations
-  New structural/screening landscape
-  Rural river habitat
-  New water line
-  Open access land
-  Strategic pathway/cycleway link
-  Other recreational pathway
-  Site access
-  New development
-  Community focus: cafe/toilets/play



The landscape strategy for the Racecourse Community Park would transform the accessibility, quality and value of the remnant historic parkland landscape in the centre of the Wychwood Valley through exciting proposals for the restoration and ongoing management of the parkland and by providing extensive controlled public access to a stunning 55ha natural greenspace on the doorsteps of Hethersett and Cringleford. The key components of the strategy are:

- Restoration of the Cantley Stream within the western part of the parkland to a natural, functional floodplain with a sequence of wetland habitats
- A strategic pedestrian/cycle route connecting the settlements of Hethersett and Cringleford along the Cantley Stream valley, with links to the park and ride and B1172 Norwich Road
- Sensitive re-structuring and conservation of the historic parkland landscape to restore the historic landscape composition, including key vistas and the landscape relationship between Thickthorn Hall and its surrounding remnant parkland
- Generous permissive access to enable the re-use of the wider parkland for informal recreation and
- Restoration of the existing barns and historic moat as visitor facilities at the heart of the Park.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The overall aims of this Park Management Plan (PMP) align with the wider aims of the planning policy context derived from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the development plan. However, the PMP is not solely narrated by planning legislation and has been guided by other sources of legislation¹. The PMP aims to create a safe, viable, and long-term future for this landscape, whilst creating a cohesive community 'feel' and maximising accessibility and enjoyment of the special environment for all. Although the PMP is a flexible document, designed to sit alongside policy and other considerations, it is considered a significant step forward in ensuring the protection of the natural and historic environments on site, in line with planning policy good practice.

The Parkland, is first and foremost an asset of great ecological and biodiverse value, providing much needed green space on the fringes of the expanding Norwich conurbation. The Park also benefits from great historical assets² and recognises the value of these assets and provides a strategy to ensure they are more widely appreciated by the general public through the provision of new walking routes as a fundamental aspect of a heritage asset's significance derives from its setting, and how it is appreciated. The overall ambition of the PMP is to create a healthy, sustainable, environmentally focused Park for all to enjoy. Environmental and Historic preservation and enhancement are central pillars of planning legislation and the aim of the PMP is to ensure that both the natural and historic environments of the parkland are not only conserved but enhanced and their futures secured.

STRATEGIC PLANNING ADVICE

The planning system is aimed towards delivering high quality, sustainable environments, that respect the natural and historic environments, and create a sense of place, identity and ultimately, strong community cohesion. The role of this PMP is to support policy in achieving these aspirations for the future through guiding future policy and decision makers, as well as landowners and local people ensuring the protection and long-term survival of the Wychwood Park and the Old Racecourse. In accordance with the NPPF, the PMP seeks to retain open green space for community use and biodiversity value, whilst also preserving the heritage assets, however in order to do so, viability and future funding requires significant consideration. The preservation and enhancements outlined in Sections 15 and 16 of the NPPF underpin the findings and methodology of this document, but also Sections, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14 have been key, as the PMP not only seeks protection for the land, but to encourage interaction with the natural environment and to supplement a healthy and safe lifestyle for local communities.

¹ Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981 as amended), Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000, and Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

² Two Scheduled Monuments, the Grade II Listed Thickthorn Hall (within the sites overall boundary), Kitchen Garden Walls and Attached Octagonal Building, and the Grade II Listed milestones.

STRATEGIC GAP

Wychwood Park and the Old Racecourse comprises of approximately 55 ha of land, that has been previously developed in parts, and falls within an area designated as a Strategic Gap between Cringleford and Hethersett. The concept of a 'strategic gap' was outlined in the government research paper Strategic Gap and Green Wedge Policies in Structure Plans, January 2001 which discussed the purpose and use of strategic gaps for protecting areas of land which were too small to be defined as Green Belt. The intention of the Cringleford and Hethersett Strategic Gap is to mitigate coalescence between the settlements, however this does not create a no development policy. Instead, it emphasises the need for development to avoid creating urban sprawl and preserve a sense of openness. The PMP has responded to such needs and proposes that by careful management of footfall through the land, on a minimal network of permissive pathways, that the openness of the site could be greater appreciated and limited development would create a better termination of the sprawl of Norwich, easing the abrupt and alien feature of the highway network and park and ride.

GREATER NORWICH LOCAL PLAN

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) is currently undergoing assessment (regulation 19), however the GNLP sets out the overall strategic framework for the area, which includes an integrated assessment of the economic, environmental, transport and social capabilities and shortfalls over the next 18 years. Although the plan is still in an early stage, it is clear that the same ambitions of the PMP are intrinsic to the GNLP, namely the respect for both the natural and historic environment and the desire to create a more sustainable environment, respecting all sections of society, including the less mobile and elderly, and encouraging a more active and healthy life for all. The GNLP places great weight into natural open space and for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and this need is echoed throughout all planning legislation at all levels.

CONCLUSION

The PMP for the Wychwood Park and the Old Racecourse represents the very essence and ambitions of the planning system, incorporating the desire and goals for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and historic environments, whilst also creating a strong sense of place and identity for healthy and active lifestyles to flourish. The PMP creates a great opportunity for exploring the needs and necessities for the future maintenance of the land, and importantly opening the discussions for enhancements and also protections. As society, and the planning system has evolved, so too must Wychwood Park and the Old Racecourse to remain relevant and also ensure its long-term survival is ensured.

5. MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

There are eight management objectives.

- A) To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of the site.
- B) To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of the site.
- C) To manage the site in a way that has a positive impact on the environment.
- D) To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.
- E) To protect the site and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.
- F) To ensure that the site is clean and well maintained.
- G) To ensure the site is a welcoming place for people to visit.
- H) To promote the site to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

A. TO ENSURE THE SITE IS A WELCOMING PLACE FOR PEOPLE TO VISIT.

MANAGEMENT

The site will be managed in a way that attracts visitors to the site.

The Trust are responsible for the management of the site to maintain and preserve the parkland and to ensure that the public has appropriate access to the site.

The parkland will be used for a wide range of activities but there will vary over time. The Trusts will respond to changes in activities and seek to ensure that the site continues to be maintained through continued improvements in provision and management.

There is a need to ensure that key access points are maintained, and key information provided about the site and who it is managed by. This will increase understanding of the site and visitors' enjoyment of it.

The Trustees will oversee the management of the site and provide appropriate financial and management oversight.

B. TO PROTECT THE SITE AND ENSURE THAT IT IS A SAFE AND SECURE PLACE TO VISIT

Wardens will be engaged to carry out regular patrols and practical tasks, oversee volunteers and organise survey work. A community approach will be taken to the safeguarding of the site, with the wardens working with regular visitors to the site and community groups.

FACILITY PROVISION

The Trustees will consider conversion of the redundant farm buildings into a café for general use which will include toilet facilities for users. The ongoing provision of this facility will need to be reviewed in the future taking into account the level of use, other local provision and the cost of providing it in relation to the income received.

Seating is provided at a number of locations across the site to reflect or observe views within the site. This will be subject to the location being appropriate and the resource available for installation.

VEHICULAR PARKING AND MANAGEMENT

Car parking provision for the site will be controlled and managed accordingly. Provision where made will be regulated and subject to appropriate. This will be reviewed in relation to usage, layout, quantum and general maintenance.

TREE SAFETY

On such a large site with woodland and paths running through the site, tree safety is a priority and there is always a need to balance risk reduction with the conservation of notable trees and dead/ dying trees.

Tree inspections are carried out regularly by the wardens or by specialist consultants. Any work required will be completed by the management team or appropriate arboricultural specialists.

SITE HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT

The wardens will risk assess their activities and also those undertaken with volunteer groups, ensuring that safe systems of work and appropriate qualifications held for those activities. Personal protective equipment (PPE) identified as being required by the risk assessments will be worn.

C. TO ENSURE THE SITE IS CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

BOUNDARY PROTECTION MAINTENANCE

Boundary treatments including gates, barriers and fences will be appropriately maintained and inspected on ad-hoc basis by the wardens and damaged/missing structures are maintained/replaced on a reactive basis.

LITTER BINS AND WASTE

There are litter bins around the site which will be used for litter and the disposal of dog waste.

PATHS

The majority of paths on the site will incorporate natural surfaces.

CAR PARKS

Car park surfaces will incorporate compacted stone allows rainwater percolation and will be repaired to remove potholes.

WARDEN OFFICE

The wardens will be located at the barns as soon as appropriate facilities are available.

D. TO MANAGE THE SITE IN A WAY THAT HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The work carried out on the site contributes to the delivery of the Trustees environmental ambitions.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The influence of climate change will be considered and reflected.

PESTICIDE USE

Pesticide use will be minimal and where possible other control methods are used.

SUSTAINABILITY

The site will be managed in as sustainable way as possible through the delivery of relevant projects throughout the Plan objectives.

E. TO IMPROVE HABITATS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR WILDLIFE TO ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE SITE.

The site consists of areas of Parkland which has been maintained through farm practices with areas of open space and with some secondary woodland habitat. Much of the woodland is managed with minimum intervention and natural processes allowed to occur. A programme of coppicing and felling is used to maintain a diversity of age range and structure in the woodland areas. Some areas of glade will be maintained linking together areas to further increase diversity within the woodland.

Coppicing will be used to create pockets of a more diverse age range within the woodland and also adjacent to path and glade edges to create a transitional habitat between the open areas and woodland. Standing dead and decaying wood will be retained; fallen deadwood and pieces will be left as large as possible at their original location.

The importance and value of honeysuckle and ivy in the woodland as a nectar source is recognised and there will not be a policy of removing either of these species. There are specific trees which will be managed outside of standard management regimes as a result of their historic or biodiversity significance, such as their age, impact in the landscape or a habitat for a specialist species. These trees will be identified, and their location mapped, to ensure that management is in accordance with the reason for them being designated 'significant' trees.

LAKE

The lake adjacent to the barns in front of Thickthorn Hall will be managed to improve biodiversity whenever possible, removing vegetation from within and around them, when necessary and in accordance with industry best practice.

INVASIVE AND UNDESIRABLE SPECIES

Invasive and undesirable species will be removed based on an assessment of the threat they pose to a particular habitat. Where a particular problem is identified, the species will be removed by applying selective herbicide, cutting and pulling.

RECORDING AND MONITORING

Information will be collected through a range of different methods about species and habitats to enable the impact of the different management regimes on the site to be reviewed. This information will also inform ongoing decision making and guide the development of projects in the future. The policies may include:

- To maintain and improve, where appropriate, woodland habitats
- To maintain and improve, where appropriate grassland areas
- To maintain and improve, where appropriate, aquatic habitats
- To manage invasive species
- To manage specific species
- To survey and monitor fauna to consider management impacts and inform future decision making

F. TO SAFEGUARD THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE, ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES AND BUILDINGS ON THE SITE

EARTHWORKS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Earthworks and historical features are vulnerable to encroachment by vegetation and compaction plus erosion from visitors using the site. The features will be maintained by management through the cutting and removal of vegetation, shrubs and trees, where appropriate, using methods sympathetic to the sensitivities of the feature. Where required by legislation, the work will be done in conjunction with the appropriate local and national agency.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Any buildings and structure on the site will be maintained through programmed works and also reactive repairs and maintenance to ensure that they remain in a good condition. Where appropriate and subject to resources, work will be carried out to improve them. Building condition surveys will be carried out to inform future decision making and a programme of repairs and maintenance.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Information relating to the history of the site and the historic features within it will be collected to inform decision making and to assist with future interpretation of the site.

Cultural and heritage assets have been highlighted below, which will form part of the wider attraction to the Parkland, providing historical and cultural attractions to supplement the natural ecological and landscape benefits of the site.

The Racecourse

The first report of Hethersett racecourse was on 9th March 1875, referring to the previous day's meeting organised by the Norfolk and Norwich Hunt Club. This was on land between the railway line and Thickthorn. A second meeting on 8 April 1875 was organised by the Queens own 7th Hussars.

In 1886 an advert for the races stated "over old Racecourse" which implies that there was more than one. The approximate layout of the racecourse shows the A11 marked to the south of the course. It is almost certain that the A11 dual carriageway 1987 traverses the course.

A further meeting over the course was held on Friday 23rd March 1888 and meetings continued albeit stopping for a time from 1894. Racing returned to Hethersett in 1903 when the Norwich Hunt took over administrative duties with meetings continuing for ten years until the outbreak of World War I.

The races resumed after the war in 1920 and continued until 1939. In 1927 the Hethersett Race Course Company Ltd was incorporated with the meetings then run as 'Hethersett races'. The next year the first meeting to be organised by the Hethersett race committee was staged on Thursday 8th March 1928 with the final meeting under rules taking place on Thursday 4th May 1939, after which the War intervened.

Wychwood House

Wychwood House, designed by architect James Fletcher Watson was constructed on the land in 1957.

The house within the northern section of the site has fine views across the parkland. The present-day landscape of the “Wychwood” valley has been through a long process of evolution and change; first the medieval moated farmhouse, then Thickthorn Hall, the change from moat to lake, the establishment of a 19th century parkland and ongoing changes to that parkland, including the new hedge around the moat, the disuse of the east and west entrance driveways and the gradual decline of specimen trees.

Wychwood House, the parkland, woods & lake now belongs to two separate family trusts.

Other Heritage Assets

Two Bronze Age round barrows are located in the woods to the south east of the A11 corridor, and are scheduled monuments.

A 19th Century milestone on the Norwich Road just north of the Thickthorn Junction is a Grade II Listed Building. Additionally, Thickthorn Hall and parts of the kitchen garden walls and a building associated with Thickthorn Hall are all designated as Grade II Listed Buildings.

Thickthorn Park is described in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) as an early 19th century landscape park surrounding Thickthorn Hall. The park includes a medieval moat that was turned into an ornamental lake, a late 19th Century kitchen garden, early 19th Century lodges and concrete greenhouses from the 1930s. It is not on the national register of historic parks and gardens but is registered on the county list and so is considered to be of regional importance for its heritage value. The lodge to Thickthorn Park, which is north of the Thickthorn Park-and-Ride is not listed, but is considered (in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record) to be part of Thickthorn Park.

G. TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED IN ALL ASPECTS OF WORK

VOLUNTEERING

The work carried out by volunteers (hub heroes) will not only be important in terms of creating a sense of ownership and responsibility in the local community but is also crucial in achieving the objectives of this plan. Meeting these objectives is not likely to be possible with the available budget and warden resources alone.

A strategic approach to recruiting, retaining and developing volunteers will be taken during the life of the plan to develop this aspect of ~~any our~~ work further.

The wardens will also work with other community and volunteer groups managing land ~~adjacent to the heath~~ to develop joint working groups for larger projects. This will also create opportunities to share learning and to provide some variation for the volunteers by working with other groups.

H. To promote the site to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride

INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION

The provision of information and interpretation on the site will be crucial for people to understand what is allowed and not allowed on the site as well as teaching them about the natural and historical importance of the site.

EDUCATION

Young people will have a big role to play in the future of the site, in terms of using and protecting it. Their understanding of the historical importance of the site and the habitats and species it contains will be crucial. Educational activities on site and in local schools will be promoted.

EVENTS

The site provides an excellent venue for events for local people. Work will promote a range of onsite events, delivered to increase people's understanding and enjoyment of the site, alongside working with a variety of local and national partners. Current use includes:

National Cycling Association - national annual mountain bike competition
Norfolk Constabulary - Family days

Other potential uses to explore:

- Scouts/Girl Guides - Camping day
- Local Sports Clubs - BBQ/Event days for relaxing
- Park Run - A new dedicated 5k route
- Local Play/Children groups - Day outs/potential annual duck race in the proposed water courses

MEDIA

It is important that the profile of the site is established as a unique and valuable open space. This will be done working in conjunction with the local press (both broadcast and print) to generate positive promotion of the site and the work of the Trustees. Websites and social media are also important in terms of raising the profile of the site and the work carried out.



6. SUMMARY AND TIMESCALES

In summary, the Parkland Management Plan aims to not only preserve but enhance the existing Parkland. It also sets out a strategy for the long-term maintenance and management of the parkland and identifies areas where controlled public access would be permitted ensuring its enjoyment by visitors and the wider community. The PMP will capitalise upon the existing historic, cultural, and natural benefits of the site by enhancing accessibility for the public allowing for new appreciation of these assets. The overall ambitions for the site comply with the aspirations of both national and local policy directives with the overall ambition being to supplement and expand upon the existing provision of open space and community assets for local people. However, the PMP also addresses the need to not only preserve the existing Parkland, but to aid in its enhancement through both ecological and other improvements.

To fulfil this objective and ensure the Parkland's long-term survival, it is important to secure a reliable income stream. As such a mix of minimal, necessary development has been proposed that would generate monthly revenue in the long term in the form of employment generating uses and an elderly care village. As can be seen through this PMP, development is minimal and would unlock the wider site for the public's benefit. Additionally, development has been proposed within areas of the Parkland that are not only well screened, but will be the areas most adversely affected by the Highways England proposals.

As such, through securing the allocation of this land through the Greater Norwich Local Plan, it is viewed that the Parkland can once again become a great community asset that will benefit multiple generations in multiple ways. It is considered the greatest public benefit will be through a proposed network of new permissive paths which will encourage greener and healthier lifestyles for both the residents of the new care village and the wider communities utilising the Parkland. These new routes through the Parkland will allow for appreciation of previously unseen landscape views, as well as a safe environment for walkers, cyclists, and horse riders. The second public benefit of the proposal to the Parkland would be in the form of the new commercial/employment generating uses, providing new and additional employment opportunities for local people. Given the proposed highway works and the extension to the park and ride, the site benefits from being located in a highly sustainable location. Furthermore, given the planned residential development to both the East and the West of the wider Parkland, new employment uses in this location would be situated close to newly planned residential developments, meaning that residents would have to travel shorter distances for work, helping reduce carbon emissions. The third significant benefit of the proposal is in the form of the older people's accommodation that would be proposed adjacent to the Parkland and the new employment generating uses and park and ride. As we can see from the Greater Norwich Local Plans evidence base, there is an extortionate need for older people's accommodation. The provision of this elderly care village would help address this need whilst also providing an environmentally friendly development that would not only

encourage an active and healthy lifestyle, but one that would move away from traditional multi-storey cramped and contrived care homes of the past.

INDICATIVE TIMELINE

Summer 2016:	Site outline put forward to the GNLP as part of their first call for sites
March 2021:	Regulation 19 consultation on the GNLP
July 2021:	Submission to the Secretary of State
September 2022:	GNLP adoption (anticipated)
Late 2022:	Further pre-application discussions with district council and local parishes
Early 2023:	Planning application submission (anticipated)