



Bunkers Park

**Draft Suitable Alternative Natural
Greenspace Management Plan**

for

**Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of
Conservation Mitigation Works**



Bunkers Park, 2022

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1 Introduction

1.1 Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (CBSAC) supports the most extensive area of native beech forest in England, set within a mosaic of grassland, scrub and woodland habitats. The CBSAC is internationally recognised and within the top-tier of nature conservation sites nationally. The CBSAC includes two sites in Dacorum Borough:

- Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI (which includes the Ashridge Estate); and
- Tring Woodlands SSSI.

The site is designated to protect the beech forest, species rich chalk grasslands and the stag beetle, which is found in decaying tree stumps and fallen timber.

Dacorum Borough Council is legally obliged to make sure that no adverse effect on the integrity of the CBSAC will arise from new development within Dacorum. As a result, the Council is preparing a Recreation Pressure Mitigation Strategy that will address the identified impacts. The strategy will comprise

- Provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) to attract people away from the CBSAC and therefore reduce pressure on it;
- Access management and monitoring measures on, and monitoring of the CBSAC to reduce the effect of visitors; and
- Habitat management on the CBSAC.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is one of the measures contributing to the Mitigation Strategy. SANG is the term given to greenspaces that are created or enhanced with the specific purpose of absorbing recreation pressure that would otherwise occur at European wildlife sites, such as Ashridge Common and Woods SSSI. New SANGs can be created, or existing greenspaces enhanced to create a SANG, in order to absorb the level of additional recreation pressure associated with new development.

1.2 Suitable Alternative Greenspace Plans

This Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Plan (SANG plan) deals solely with the enhancement of Bunkers Park – an existing area of open space managed by the Council. It provides a detailed assessment of the site pre-enhancement and costed interventions needed for the site to become SANG based on the requirements set out in the Mitigation Strategy.

1.3 Identification of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

The Council undertook an extensive site search, screening and assessment process to identify areas of open space as suitable alternatives to the CBSAC. This drew upon the Visitor survey, recreational impact assessment and mitigation requirements for the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and the Dacorum Local Plan (March 2022) and Natural England guidance on creating a SANG.

From this, formal open spaces such as sports grounds, playing fields or some children's play areas (i.e. those not constructed from natural materials, such as wood) were excluded from the SANG assessment as they are unlikely to meet the criteria. Where such features are present on a considered site they are not counted towards the overall area and capacity of SANG.

This plan provides more detailed costs on how Bunkers Park could be brought up to a suitable standard to provide an alternative to CBSAC.

1.4 Bunkers Park as an alternative to CBSAC

Bunkers Park is popular with dog walkers many of whom arrive by car. The site is suitable as SANG as it provides a number of walking route options leading through a range of habitats and providing attractive views into open countryside from its edge of town location.

Enhancements including new waymarking and signage, and making footpaths accessible year-round during wet winter conditions, will attract more visitor use. Route selection and educational information will aim to deter off-lead dog walking in the more sensitive locations.

The SANGs assessment checklist is used in section 5 to demonstrate how Bunkers Park is suitable as an alternative to CBSAC and how enhancements will enable its used as such.

1.5 Relationship with Bunkers Park Management Plan (Green Flag) 2020-2025

Bunkers Park has an existing management plan prepared to support its submission into the Green Flag Award Scheme, the accredited benchmark standard for the management of parks and open spaces across the UK. Bunkers Park Management Plan (Green Flag) is based around the standard's criteria set out in eight areas (a welcoming place; healthy, safe and secure; well maintained and clean; environmental management; biodiversity, landscape and heritage; community involvement; marketing and communication; and management) and was prepared with partners including Nash Mills Parish Council, Leverstock Green Village Association and the Friends of Bunkers Park.

The proposed enhancement works for Bunkers Park to become SANG are in addition to existing management activities and actions, and recognise that in order for the site to appeal to more visitors, more infrastructure and informal recreational features are needed to support the increased use of the site and to ensure any sensitive areas of biodiversity are protected. The SANG Management Plan will also will also deliver opportunities to improve visitor experience and biodiversity raised through the Green Flag management plan where funding has not been available for delivery where these are appropriate features for SANG.

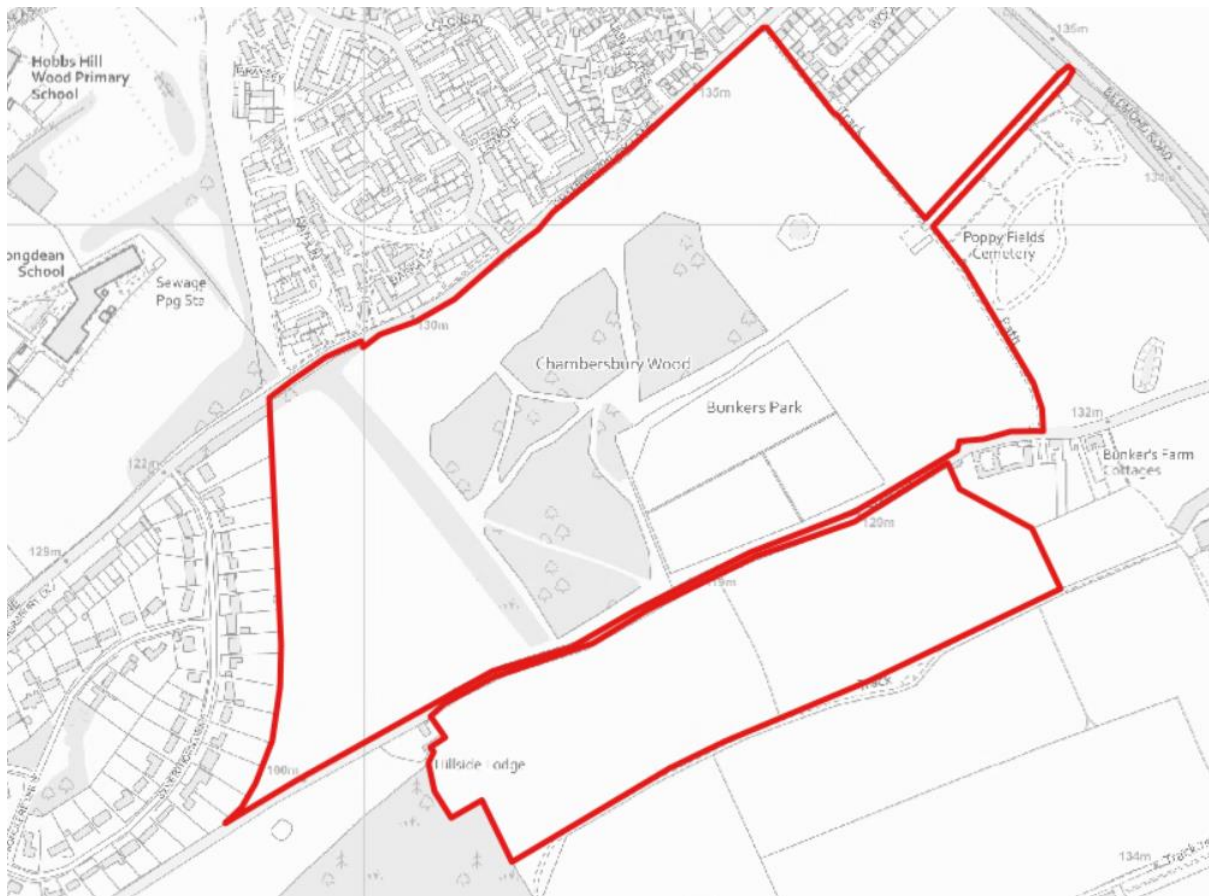
2 Site Management Statement

2.1 Introduction, site description and location

Bunkers Park is a 47.82 Ha country park situated at the south-east corner of Hemel Hempstead between the two Borough Wards of Nash Mills and Leverstock Green. The OS grid reference (car park) is TL086059.

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) acquired the freehold ownership in 1995 as replacement open space for that lost when nearby Jarman Park was developed into a commercial centre. The former farmland had originally been acquired by English Partnerships (formally the Commission for the New Towns).

The site boundary and location is shown below in Map 1.



Map 1: Bunkers Park Boundary and Location

From 1996 onwards Bunkers Park was transformed from farmland into a country park with a mixture of short amenity grass, wildflower meadows, new hedgerows, woodlands and a large area of hazel coppice. Key stages of the Park's establishment included:

- 1996, areas intended to be traditional meadows were sown with a mixture of grass and wildflowers, all apart from Pond Field which was allowed to develop naturally.
- 1997/98 planting of community woodland;
- 1998 planting of a large area of hazel and development of a wet area into a pond.
- 1998/99 construction of car park, hedges planted and gates installed.

The site is mainly used by dog-walkers who enjoy the feeling of being in the countryside.

2.2 Adjoining Uses

The area to the east of Bunkers Park is being developed into the new Poppy Fields cemetery with an adjacent crematorium. The area north of the access road remains as an open field with future uses yet to be determined.

To the north and west of Bunkers Park are residential areas. The southern section across Bunkers Lane leads directly into Long Deans Nature Reserve to the south-west. Both Long Deans and the southern section of Bunkers Park are adjacent to open farmland.

The northern edge of Bunkers Park is within 400m of Leverstock Green village centre.

2.3 Accessibility

Users of Bunkers Park can arrive by vehicle, bicycle, horse or on foot. There is one car park in Bunkers Park with room for approximately 15 cars, accessed from Bedmond Road. The roadway is owned and managed by the Council, although not as part of Bunkers Park itself. The access road is tarmacked up to the entrance to Poppy Fields Cemetery car park, and is then compacted type 1 material up to and including the car park (approximately 150m distance). Informal parking also occurs along the access road, where there is space for around 25 more vehicles. The access road becomes pot holed through use and requires regular maintenance.

A Public Row of Way (PROW), a designated byway open to all traffic, leads across the site from Chambersbury Lane to Bunkers Lane, and crosses the access road.

Walkers may enter the park from numerous access points along the two public roads that border the site. From Chambersbury Lane there are four pedestrian gates into the main part of the site, and two from Bunkers Lane, in addition to the PROW. There is one pedestrian entrance into Pond Field from Bunkers Lane, Long Saunders is accessed from Pond Field or neighbouring Long Deans Nature Reserve, which has gates into the meadow at both ends, with the northern entrance close to a gate leading into Bottom Field.

2.4 Topography

Across Bunkers Park there are a range of gentle and steeper gradients. The northern most sections of the site have the gentler gradients, which gradually lead down towards Bunkers Lane and the Firs woodland strip. After the Firs, the gradient increases in a south-westerly direction along Bottom Field. To the south of Bunkers Lane on Mattens and Pond Field the land rises again to the south and forms a shallow valley dropping from north-east to south-west, leading towards the bottom of the river valley beyond the site. The change of levels is approximately 35 m across the site.

2.5 Legal / designations

Both Bunkers Park and the adjacent Long Deans Nature Reserve are located in the Green Belt. Long Deans Nature Reserve is designated as a County Wildlife Site and its woodland is subject to a tree preservation order. The Council's Byelaws for Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks and Open Spaces apply to Bunkers Park and can be found on the Council's website at https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/leisure-culture/byelaws-for-pleasure-grounds-public-walks-and-open-spaces.pdf?sfvrsn=4636009e_4.

2.6 Recreational routes

A number of paths and one Public Right of Way (PROW) provide easy access within the site. The pedestrian entrances from Chambersbury Lane and Bunkers Lane lead to the

network of internal unsurfaced footpaths. The PROW byway crossing the northern end of the site between Chambersbury Lane and Bunkers Lane is the only statutory route.

There are currently two waymarked paths; one short walk (1 km) with a number of benches along the route, and another one slightly longer (2.2 km).

While the long grass of the meadow areas and denser areas of woodlands may deter some use of these compartments, walkers are free to access all areas and a number of informal routes have formed along desire lines and through the woodland compartments.

Over the winter period, a number of areas become wet, muddy and difficult to access. These are:

- the area immediately surrounding the car park;
- section of footpath along the northern boundary of Mattens adjacent to Chambersbury Wood;
- entrance points into Top Field and Pond Field by the crossing point on Bunkers Lake

In addition, there are exposed roots on the two footpath links that cross through the Firs, these routes also become slippery and muddy over the winter period.

The external boundary of Bunkers Park marks the position of the permissive bridleway. This waymarked trail links to surrounding areas and provides a pleasant environment for horse riders using Bunkers Park.



Map 2: Bunkers Park Access Plan

2.7 Site signage, information and interpretation

Highway signage on Bedmond Road indicates the entrance to the access road to Bunkers Park, which also has street name plates. Three metal (1.2 metre medium mobility) gates on

the Chambersbury Lane boundary allow access to the park for those with mobility issues, whilst being harder to vandalise and more restrictive for moped and motorbike users.

The permissive bridgeway and two circular walks are waymarked with wooden posts and finger boards.

Interpretive information boards can be found at two of the main entrances (car park and western entrance from Bunkers Lane into Bottom Field) which explain the history and management of Bunkers Park and how the park may be used and enjoyed. The panel of a third interpretation sign by the western entrance from Chambersbury Lane (Cattsdell Bottom) has been removed due to vandalism, though the frame remains in situ. Similarly, a sign specific to hazel coppicing located adjacent to the entrance to the coppice from the car park was removed due to vandalism.



Figure 1: Example of Information Board Information

A notice board can be found close to the car park, information on the board is maintained by the Friends of Bunkers Park and the Council.



Figure 2: Bunkers Park notice board containing site information

Local publications created by Nash Mills Parish Council and Leverstock Green Village Association promote activities on the site and the role and actions of the Friends group. Dacorum Digest, a magazine produced by the Borough Council in May and October each year in both physical and digital formats, promotes the Council's parks and open spaces.

The Bunkers Park (Green Flag) Management Plan is published on the Borough Council's website. Information about the site and its use is also available to view through the Borough and Parish Council and Village Association websites.

Visitors to the site can record views or observations via the Council's website enquiry service.

2.8 Site furniture

The shorter circular walk across fairly level terrain aims to provide the opportunity of access for all without detracting from the natural appearance of the site. Benches are located along both marked routes to provide stopping and rest points, these comprise 15 bench seats and three sculpture log seats. There are no picnic benches on site and visitors have been seen picnicking on the amenity grassland around the car park and in the shade towards the pond.

There are currently two litter bins and four dog waste bins within Bunkers Park. There is evidence of dog fouling within the site.

Map 3 displays non-natural site features.



Map 3: Non-natural features of Bunkers Park

2.9 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

Habitat Description

The park consists of a large amenity grassland and several distinct meadow compartments, shown on map. The pond on Top Field was not naturally formed and is only occasionally wet for any length of time. The central part of the site contains emerging woodland and hazel coppice. A mature woodland strip (the Firs) bisects the park with further meadow forming the southern section of the site. On the southern side of Bunkers Lane are two further fields.

Map 4 displays natural site features.



Map 4: Natural Features of Bunkers Park

Top Field

- Large expanse of short amenity grass for walking and informal games. An occasional pond fills in winters of prolonged rainfall (e.g. 2013/14 and 2019/20).
- New native copse including species such as Hornbeam, Hawthorn, Field Maple and Holly planted to screen access structures from the majority of views. New orchard of 17 fruit trees planted close to the existing hazel coppice, including traditional varieties of Victorian apple, Perry pear and plum. Both areas planted by the Friends in 2022.

The Mattens

- Three fields surrounded by stock fencing, each with a water supply. In some years the Box Moor Trust graze cattle and occasionally sheep. Otherwise a hay crop is taken.

Chambersbury Lane meadow

- Meadow area divided by grassy paths. Yellow rattle was established here and now flourishes alongside birds foot trefoil, knapweed and scabious.

Bottom Field

- Meadow maintained for butterfly interest with mown (10m wide) and unmown (3m wide) strips to allow Common Blue butterflies to lay second brood of eggs in late summer. Meadow contains mainly Ox-Eye daisies and small areas of Thyme. In recent years, Pyramidal Orchid has also started to appear.

The Firs

- Strip of mature woodland consisting largely of Scots Pine, Beech, Oak and Whitebeam.

Chambersbury Wood

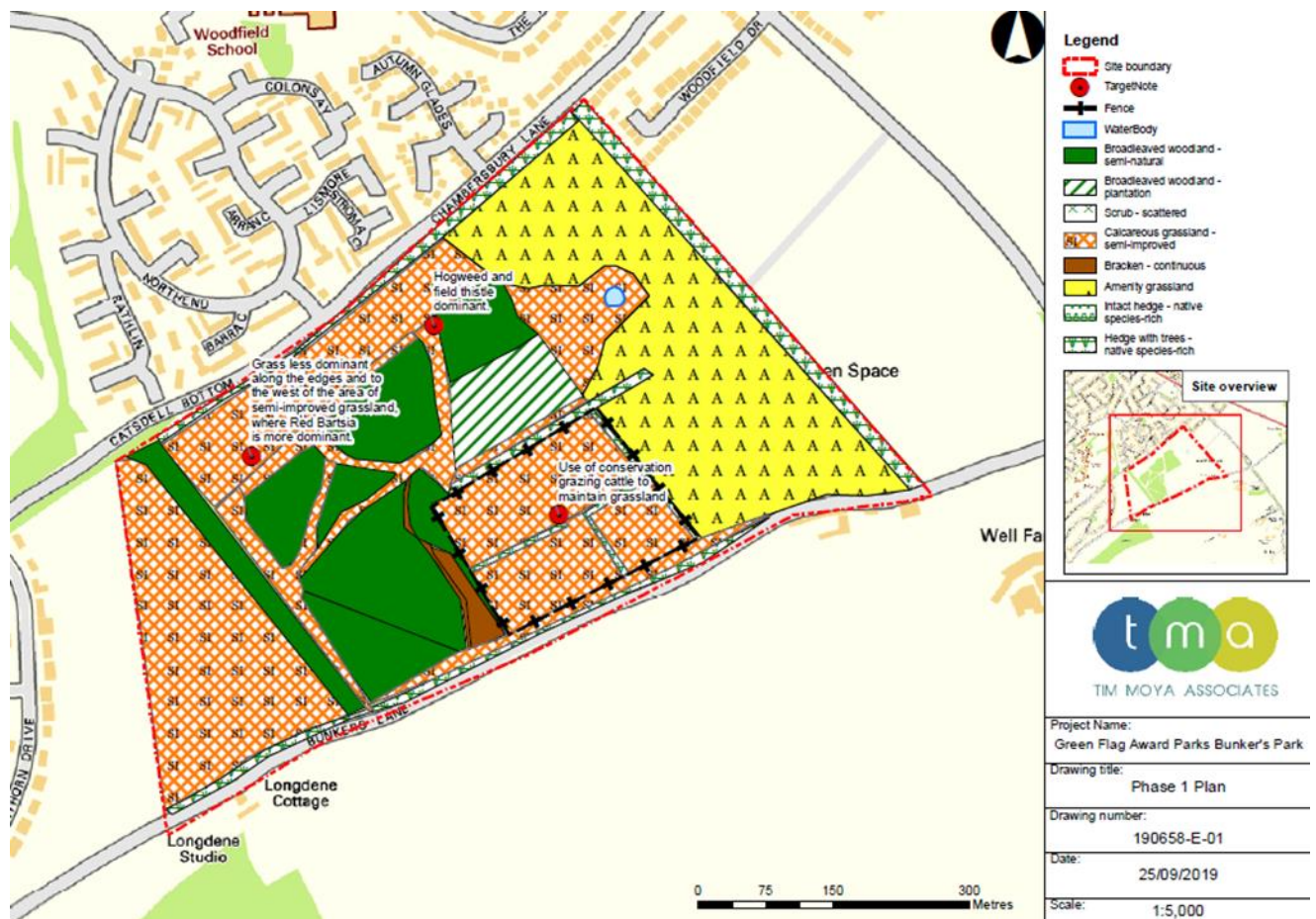
- Six areas of new woodland containing a mixture of oak, beech, ash, hornbeam, field maple, native cherry, rowan and willow. The trees were planted in the late 1990's at three metre spacing. The planting achieved a high survival rates and many crowns are now touching.
- Also planted at that time was one of the largest hazel coppices in the County. Again, survival rates from the original plantings are high. The hazel is coppiced on rotation. Some of the cut material is used by the Box Moor Trust as material for watercourse restoration on their sites.

Pond Field and Long Saunders

- Two fields previously leased to a local farmer as grazing pastures and recently returned to direct management by the Council.

2.10 Biodiversity

An Extended Phase One Habitat Assessment of the main site took place in September 2019, the habitat compartments are shown on map 5.



Map 5: Bunkers Park Habitat Components

Habitats within the site are considered to have moderate-high biodiversity value, comprising areas of semi-improved grassland, woodland and hazel coppice. Significant areas of amenity grassland are present throughout the site. The site survey included an assessment of the habitats found within the site, with particular focus on habitats of ecological value and protected and notable species. The site contains suitable habitat for the following protected and notable species; nesting birds, badgers, reptiles, bats and a number of butterfly species.

The Phase One report's key recommendations were;

- Deepening the pond could increase its ecological value, but regular use of the site by dog walkers will result in disturbance and damage.
- Woodland management should focus on the health and diversity of the woodland itself.
- Semi-improved grassland management should seek to maintain and enhance its ecological value.

It was noted that there was good potential for reptiles including Great Crested Newts, bats, birds, badgers, other mammals, and invertebrates such as Stag Beetles.

The report concluded that further survey should be carried out to assess butterfly, moth, bird and botanical species. The installation of bat and bird boxes was suggested, together with the creation of further log piles.

The Dacorum Borough Nature Conservation Strategy – a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2001) also listed species that may be found in or close to Bunkers Park including, Great Crested Newt, Tree Sparrow, Bullfinch, Song Thrush, Barn Owl, Pipistrelle & Natterers Bat and Dormouse.

Further habitat surveys of Pond Field and Long Saunders will take place in autumn 2022. The recommendations from these surveys will be added to subsequent versions of the Bunkers Park SANG Management Plan.

2.11 Landscape

From the high point of Bottom Field there are extensive and attractive views over Long Deans Nature Reserve towards the valley bottom. Elsewhere the openness of the site provides the feeling of being in a large-scale landscape. Chambersbury Wood acts as a prominent feature visible from various locations within the northern part of the site. The Mattens is largely screened by woodland and hedgerows and is not immediately visible to visitors. Long Saunders and Pond Field are disconnected from the main site by Bunkers Lane and hedgerow planting and have a more secluded feel.

2.12 Heritage

Within Bunkers Park there is a marl pit where chalk was once excavated. It is often the location of unauthorised camping and frequent littering, due to its secluded nature and level ground. A more detailed inspection of trees around and within the Marl Pit is being conducted in 2022/23 and will inform future management.

2.13 Management/maintenance of site

Bunkers Park is directly managed by the Council's Trees and Woodlands team in accordance with best management practices. The Team is responsible for managing woodlands and nature conservation sites in Dacorum including Bunkers Park, and sits within Clean Safe & Green, the Council's grounds maintenance and street cleansing department.

Mature trees and woodlands are maintained primarily through the use of approved external contractors. The Council's Clean Safe & Green team undertakes routine grass and meadow cutting, and clear the site's litter bins and any reported fly-tipping / graffiti.

The Friends of Bunkers Park assist with the management of the site, undertaking project days each year, usually spent coppicing hazel, thinning out new woodland, litter picking and, in summer, controlling ragwort.

The site is inspected regularly by the Council's Trees & Woodlands Officers. The local community are also vigilant and often report issues of concern such as stray horses or overnight camping. The local 'Cow Watch' group, on behalf of Box Moor Trust, undertake regular inspections of livestock in the Mattens fields when they are being grazed.

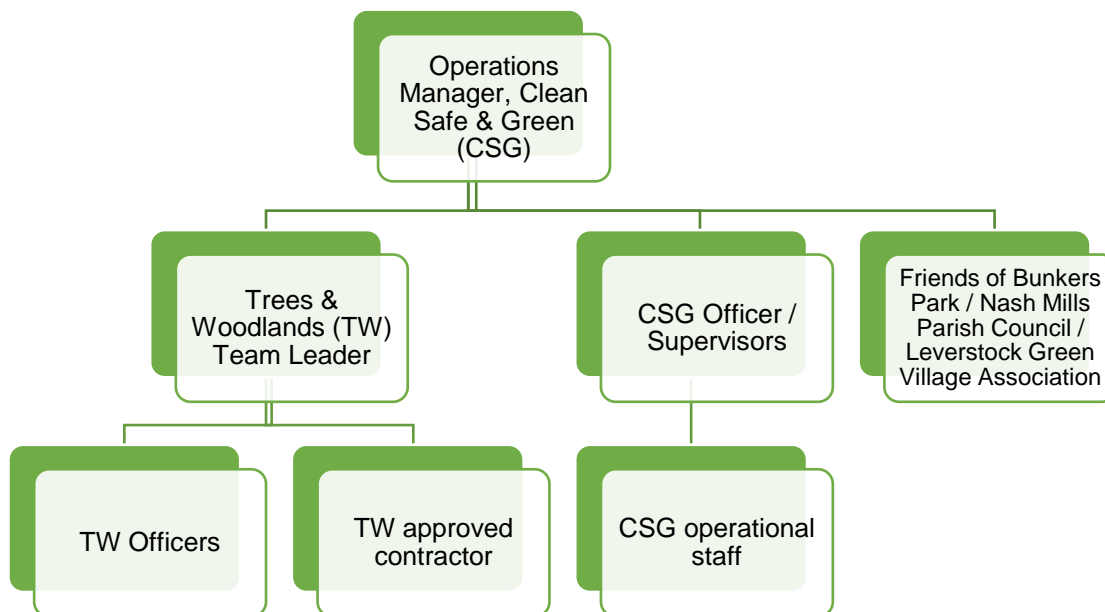


Figure 3: Operational Structure, Clean Safe and Green

Works planned by the Trees and Woodlands team for delivery over autumn/winter 2022/23 include:

- Works to hedge by gate entrance to Pond Field from Bunkers Lane to aid entrance visibility and safety for visitors.
- Installation of bollards at Chambersbury Lane end of PROW, to be followed by removal of vehicular gates.
- Installation of new pedestrian and vehicular gates in a mirror-image configuration either side of Bunkers Lane to allow pedestrians and maintenance vehicles to cross safely into Pond Field and Long Saunders.

2.14 Evaluation

The site is highly rated by dog walkers who enjoy the convenient location on the edge of Hemel Hempstead, its peacefulness and attractive scenery, with the wildflower displays in spring and summer being a particular highlight. It also performs an important biodiversity function and includes one of the largest hazel coppices in Hertfordshire.

Potential SANG sites are likely to have additional capacity where average visitor use is less than 1 person per ha per hour. Visitor surveys of Bunkers Park were carried out in 2022 as part of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC Mitigation Strategy. From this visitor surveying data, the available capacity at Bunkers Park is in the order of 2,111 new dwellings.

An assessment of Bunkers Park against the Council's SANG criteria can be found in table 5.1 of section 5.

2.15 Constraints and Issues

- The access road and car park regularly become rutted through use and require a solution to ensure visitors are not deterred.
- Over the winter period sections of the waymarked routes and around the car park become very muddy and difficult for walkers to access.
- The limited number of car parking spaces combined with the access issues above restricts visitors arriving by car.

2.16 Management Objectives

The objective of this plan is to enhance Bunkers Park as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace to provide an attractive alternative to visitors who may otherwise have visited the CBSAC.

3. Site Proposals for CBSAC Mitigation

The enhancement measures within this plan were identified through desk top and on-site assessments of Bunkers Park against the SANG criteria set out in section 3.5 of the Mitigation Strategy. The detailed assessment is shown in section 5 of this plan and comprises criteria that are either essential or desirable in achieving the primary objective of providing an alternative visitor destination to draw potential users away from the CBSAC.

As a result, the proposed works are in addition to, or bring forward, existing management actions identified through the Bunkers Park Green Flag management plan. The interventions to this site for it to become SANG aim to replicate features which have been found to draw visitors to the CBSAC and improve access, alongside the enhancement of the site's natural qualities.

These interventions are described below and shown on an annotated site map (section 4). In section 5 how Bunkers Park performs against the Council's SANG criteria is assessed before and after the enhancements are delivered. The measures are then listed in a costed summary in section 6. The proposed works are as follows.

3.1 Paths

- Highway signs installed on Bunkers Lane to warn drivers that pedestrians may be crossing.
- Further discussion to take place with Hertfordshire County Council regarding further highway crossing improvements for pedestrian access.
- Renewed interpretation signs at three existing locations, plus four new boards added to welcome visitors and provide information on footpath routes and the history of Bunkers Park.
- Surfaced routes provided to improve access during wet weather conditions and provide some access into the site for those with limited mobility. New Easy Access Route to be provided in Top Field, and also surfaced routes across Top Field to and from the car park, adjacent to the Mattens and two links through The Firs. Compacted material to be used to create a surface that is accessible all-year round.
- Further tree surveying and necessary works for safety along new routes marked with wayfinding
- Replacement steps provided to access The Mattens from Chambersbury Wood (midway along the largest compartment of The Mattens), plus the north-eastern access into The Mattens.
- New steps installed through The Firs by Catts dell Bottom to improve a route through a steep section with exposed tree roots that can be difficult to pass over the winter period.

3.2 Parking

- Works to access road and car park.
- Cycle racks installed in car park to provide safe and secure storage facility.

3.3 Access

- Replacement of 3 existing gates with upgraded medium mobility compliant units at entrances to the site.
- New or replacement finger posts added to all footpath intersections and key points along routes (40 in total).
- New benches (10) and bins (5) added throughout site, including at resting points on routes with longer sections of steep slopes and at viewpoints.
- Informal routes through Chambersbury Wood widened to create accessible meandering routes through the trees.
- Range of routes of different lengths and difficulties identified on the site plan and waymarked.
- Picnic benches (6) added in Top Field in the area accessible from the car park and in the shade towards the pond.
- Drainage works undertaken to area around car park.
- Improved existing access through mature woodland (three routes included under paths section above)
- Width of paths through Bottom Field widened to aid access for dogs off lead.

3.4 Character of Space

- New rewilding areas added along north, eastern and southern boundaries of Top Field to add more diverse habitats to this open and exposed part of the site.
- Specimen trees (20) added to Top Field, Pond Field and Long Saunders as waymarking points and to add further visual interest.
- Fencing around The Mattens renewed enabling the compartments to continue to be grazed and maintaining a range of habitats on-site.
- Thinning undertaken through Chambersbury Wood to help woodland habitat mature successfully.
- Marl pit boundary marked by fencing and brought into the Mattens to aid management and maintenance.
- Meadow management side of Chambersbury Wood to be guided by phase 1 habitat survey, and include smaller tree and scrub management.
- Hedge laying to provide natural barriers, reducing the need for fencing on-site. Mattens, plus one that intrudes into Top Field and hedge along BOAT, all being laid, plus new hedges once established in Long Saunders and Pond Field
- Habitat management at Long Saunders and Pond Field to be guided by phase 1 habitat survey.

3.5 Funding

Funding for the proposed works will come from new residential development within the Borough that is likely to have an adverse effect on the CBSAC, as set out in the Mitigation Strategy. This states that legal obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act will be entered into before a planning application is determined. A proportion of the total amount payable under this agreement will go towards SANG enhancement measures and on-going management of these measures as detailed in this SANG plan. These enhancement measures will ensure the site is suitable as an alternative to the Chilterns Beechwoods and will attract new residents away from the SAC.

3.6 Prioritisation and Phasing of Works

The implementation of the proposed works will be prioritised in the following order (unless an item is unable to proceed due to other site works going on at that time or is restricted to a particular season):

Phase One

- New easy access route and surfaced footpath sections through poorly draining areas
- Hedge laying (part)
- Specimen tree planting in Top Field, Long Saunders and Pond Field
- New litter bins and dog bins
- New and replacement information boards
- New and replacement entrance signage
- New medium mobility compliant gates
- Highway directional signage
- Tree works

Phase Two

- Resurfacing of access road and car park
- Hedge laying (part)
- New picnic tables
- New benches
- Wayfinding and route marking
- Tree information signage
- Rewilding area in Top Field with protective fencing and maintenance gates (part)
- Tree works

Phase Three

- Hedge laying (part)
- New picnic tables
- New benches
- New visitor information leaflet on Bunkers Park
- Tree works

Phase Four

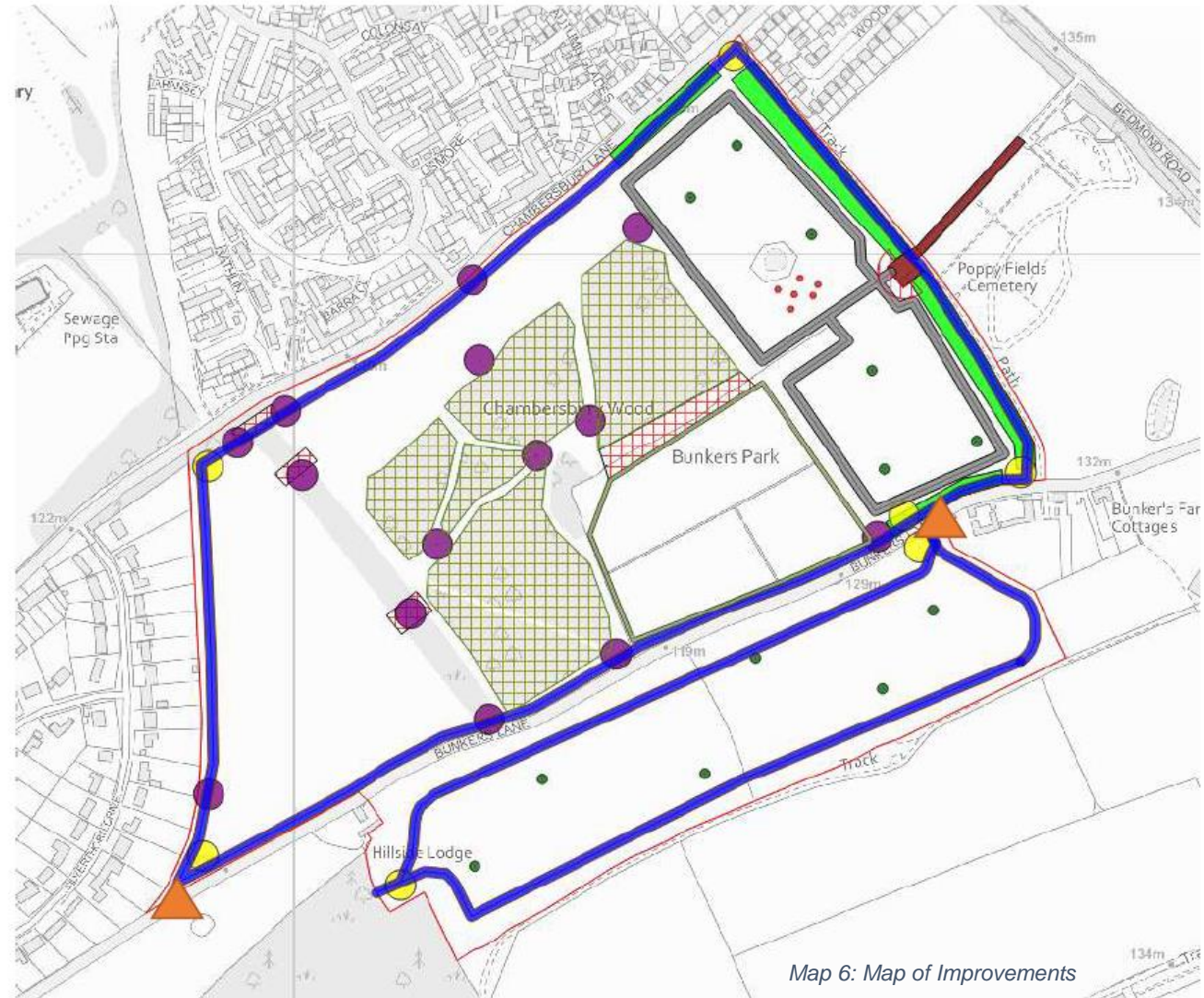
- Hedge laying (part)
- Rewilding area in Top Field with protective fencing and maintenance gates (part)
- Tree works

4. Site Plan of Enhancements

Map of improvements.

Legend

-  Fingerposts
-  Information points
-  (EAR) Easy Access Route
-  Rewilding area
-  Routes
-  Fencing
-  New Steps and pathway improvements
-  Woodland thinning and informal route widening
-  Tree planting
-  Picnic area
-  Drainage area
-  Access road and car park improvements
-  Highway signs



Map 6: Map of Improvements

5. Quality – SANGs Criteria Checklist

The enhancements identified in section 3 aim to encourage more visitors to Bunkers Park. This will be achieved by enabling year-round access by creating all weather routes, and by providing accessible and compliant footpath gates, safe crossing points between compartments, areas where dogs can be off-lead, plus interpretation, route marking and promotion of sites. Delivery of enhancements must be undertaken before new residents move into development so that people do not develop a habit of visiting other sites.

Table 5.1 provides an assessment of Bunkers Park against the SANG criteria checklist, both before and after the implementation of the enhancement measures described in section 3. The criteria are drawn from section 3.5 of the Mitigation Strategy that provides the Council's guidance on the components of SANG.

Table 5.1: Site Assessment against SANG Criteria

Category	Criteria	Expected Desirable	Before	After
Paths	A minimum circular walk of 2.3-2.5 kilometres to be provided.	Expected	Open access across the site, with routes of 1 km and 2.2 km, and the permissive bridleway waymarked by wooden posts and fingerposts.	New surfaced EAR around Top Field (1.5km), new paths around Pond Field/Long Saunders (1.5km), route from car park around site boundaries and including Pond Field and Long Saunders (4km) waymarked through site providing visitors with a range of options to suit their needs.
	Paths easily used and well maintained but mostly unsurfaced.	Expected	On the existing shorter route there is a section along Mattens which is difficult to access during wet winter conditions. On the longer route there are exposed roots on the two footpath links that cross through the Firs, these routes also become slippery and muddy over the winter period.	Routes mostly unsurfaced, with short sections of compacted material added to areas prone to become difficult to access during wet weather conditions. Two surfaced routes created through The Firs to provide year-round access, and steps or boardwalk to a third steeper route.
	Where parking is provided, circular path should start and finish at that location.	Expected	The existing marked routes start and finish from the car park, however the area around the car park becomes wet, muddy and	New routes to start and finish at the car park. Drainage and surfacing work undertaken to the amenity grass around the car park area to improve access

			difficult to access over the winter period.	over the winter period. New surfaced (compacted material) section of footpath added leading from the car park.
	Paths should be safe, easily identifiable and kept clear of obstructions, such as scrub cover for example.	Expected	Existing marked routes cross open fields with small sections through woodland compartments. Along some areas, paths are narrowed through encroaching vegetation.	New routes, wayfinding, finger posts and surfacing added to improve safety and help routes to be identified. Graded edges and scrub regularly maintained to ensure routes are clear of obstructions.
	Information boards and/or signage at access points outlining the layout of the site and routes available to visitors.	Desirable	The two existing routes are shown on a layout of the site map on the information boards at the car park and Bottom Field at Bunkers Lane. The information board by the Cattsdell Bottom entrance removed following vandalism.	New site entrance signs with interpretive panels. Directional signs waymarking identified routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.
Parking	Parking to be provided on sites larger than four hectares, unless the site is solely intended for residents within 500 metres only.	Expected	Car park constructed from compacted material with around 15 spaces, plus informal parking along access road.	Car park surface to be improved, cycle racks to be added.
	Parking areas to be easily and safely accessible by car and to be clearly sign posted.	Expected	Highway signage on Bedmond Road indicates the entrance to the access road to Bunkers Park, which also has street name plates.	No change.
	Visitor to be able to take dogs from the car park to the site safely off the lead	Desirable	Car park is within the site.	No change.
Access	Access points to be provided based on the intended visitors of the SANG.	Expected	Vehicle entrance from Bedmond Road, two separate entrances for byway users. Additional pedestrian access from surrounding road network with entrances on Bunkers	New gates added (2) to direct users to correct routes.

			Lane (2) and Chambersbury Lane (4). One entrance to fields south of Bunkers Lane, plus access via Long Deans Nature Reserve.	
	Safe access route on foot from nearest car park and/or footpath.	Expected	Open access across the site and onto two marked routes from car park. Area around car park difficult to access during wet weather conditions.	Improved site information and signage at car park indicating routes. Drainage of grassed area around car park improved, informal surfaced footpath added leading from car park.
	Access should be unrestricted within the site, with plenty of space for dogs to exercise freely and safely off the lead.	Expected	Fencing only present around compartments which are grazed. Park enclosed by hedgerows. Gate into Bottom Field from Bunkers Lane can be left open by visitors, as a result dogs need to be kept on a lead in this area.	Gates replaced with medium mobility compliant units that provide greater security for dog walkers.
Character of space	Needs to be semi-natural, or perceived as such where close to existing development.	Expected	Timber frames and posts used for interpretation boards and waymarking. Benches all timber, and include seating carved from large fallen trees.	Materials for new benches, signage and waymarking to be in keeping with environment.
	If the site is larger than 12 hectares, a range of habitats should be present.	Expected	Large areas of open space, wildflower meadows, woodland compartments, mature woodland belt and hedgerows.	Range of habitats secured through woodland management, fencing to allow grazing of The Mattens to continue, plus new rewilding areas to Top Field added.
	No unnatural intrusions (e.g. odour from sewage treatment works, noise from busy roads).	Expected	No unpleasant intrusions.	No change.
	There should be little intrusion of built structures such as dwellings, buildings, metal boundary fencing, etc.	Expected	Fencing only present around compartments which are grazed. Park enclosed by hedgerows. Cemetery development screened by hedgerow. Development to east of Bottom Field softened by	Hedge laying to be used where possible to provide natural barrier.

			boundary screening and estate planting.	
	Naturalistic space with areas of open countryside with dense and scattered trees and shrubs.	Desirable	Mix of large areas of open space, dense woodland compartments and meadow. Some scattered trees to open areas.	Further specimen tree planting on areas of open space and hedge laying.
	Gentle undulating topography. Steep slopes are likely to deter visitors.	Desirable	Range of gentle and steeper gradients. Steeper sections found on Bottom Field, Pond Field and Long Saunders.	Benches added to Bottom Field (Bunkers Lane side), Pond Field and Long Saunders to provide resting points. Steeper sections of footpath routes marked on interpretation boards.
	Focal point such as a viewpoint or monument within the site.	Desirable	From the high point of Bottom Field there are extensive and attractive views over Long Deans Nature Reserve towards the valley bottom. Across the large areas of open space there are long views across the Park providing a rural feel.	Viewpoints marked on interpretation boards and new seating provided in these locations.
	Provision of open water, however large areas of open water cannot count towards SANG capacity.	Desirable	Pond on Top Field was not naturally formed and is only occasionally wet for any length of time.	No change, pond area is located at a higher level on the site and the current level of rainfall is unlikely to result in the pond naturally filling on a regular basis.

6. Management, maintenance and monitoring

Alongside the delivery of the enhancements required to upgrade Bunkers Park to SANG standard, additional management and maintenance operations are needed to maintain the site at a desirable level. This will be calculated on the basis of 80 years as set out in the Mitigation Strategy and will be applied as necessary in order to maintain the standard of the site and keep it functioning as SANG. Over time, there will be an increased need to repair and maintain the older enhancements on the site as well as potential for unexpected damage or breakages. As a result it will be necessary to alter annual expenditure of the in perpetuity maintenance fund to respond to the needs of the site at a particular time. Therefore expenditure may be higher in some years than in others.

Table 6.1 below describes the change and uplift in management and maintenance operations for Bunkers Park.

Table 6.1 Management and Maintenance Operations

Compartment/habitat type	Existing management and maintenance operations	Proposed management and maintenance operations for SANG
Top Field	<p>Short amenity grass cut every six weeks spring to autumn. The pond is managed as an occasional wetland feature within a larger area of meadow. Longer grass at the field edges, provides further habitat for mammals, birds and invertebrates.</p> <p>A small meadow area (between the pond, hazel coppice and a hedgerow) is being developed into meadow with annual cut and clearance.</p> <p>Newly planted orchard (2022) maintained by FoBP.</p> <p>New copse of Hornbeam, Hawthorn, Field Maple and Holly by Bunkers Lane maintained by FoBP.</p>	<p>New rewilding areas to be maintained on agreed rota of between 3 and 9 years, to be defined by external advice from habitat consultant.</p> <p>Rewilding areas to be fenced where appropriate.</p> <p>Increase in number of orchard trees to be assessed and progressed by DBC/FoBP.</p>
Chambersbury Lane Meadow	<p>Minimal management throughout the year. Meadow grass cut and collected in September. Several pathways are cut across the meadow to provide access to Chambersbury Lane and its perimeter is</p>	<p>Scrub species to be allowed to develop and managed by sub-dividing the meadow with each section managed at a different progression of scrub growth.</p>

	mown to maintain a main path and the boundary edge permissive bridleway.	
The Mattens	Three fields grazed in conjunction with the Box Moor Trust. In years when the fields are not grazed, they are cut and cleared annually. Cows monitored with help of local community 'cow watch' group. Gates, fences and water supply inspected annually.	Fence/gate replacement programme to be progressed in conjunction with The Box Moor Trust. Expansion of grazing at The Mattens into the Marl Pit to be progressed at the same time as fence replacement, with accompanying tree works in and around the pit area.
Chambersbury Wood	One out of eight hazel coppice coupes worked on each year. Adjacent coupes not worked on in following year to minimise impact of works on wildlife. Thinning works to six compartments of new woodland containing mix of oak, beech, ash, hornbeam, field maple, native cherry, rowan and willow, planted in 1990s, subject to budget.	Coppicing to continue by FoBP. The Box Moor Trust volunteers to assist with coppicing in connection with the creation of materials for their river bank management programme. Thinning operations to be carried out annually by approved contractor, managed by T&W officers.
The Firs	Mature woodland consisting largely of Scots Pine, Beech, Oak and Whitebeam. Site safety work only, woodland left to evolve naturally.	Safety inspection to occur by independent consultant, safety works to be carried out by approved contractor.
Marl Pit	No maintenance	To be cleared of undergrowth and hazardous trees by approved contractors, and boundary fencing installed that will incorporate the pit area into The Mattens grazing fields.
Bottom Field	Meadow grass cut and collected in September.	Grassed pathways to be increased in width (via additional mowing). Dead / diseased trees to be removed.
Pond Field	No maintenance as under licence to farmer.	Trees and whips to be planted to improve the amenity value and mosaic habitat design of Pond Field in support of local wildlife and

		public engagement with nature. Planting locations to be agreed following consultation with FoBP, Nash Mills Parish Council and Leverstock Green Village Association. FoBP to plant whips, contractors to plant standard trees.
Long Saunders	No maintenance as under licence to farmer.	As with Pond Field, new planting to be progressed. Installation of new medium mobility gate on Long Deans boundary by approved contractor.
Hedgerows (along BOAT and The Mattens)	Hedgerows laid by the Friends group, using traditional techniques under instruction from a qualified practitioner.	Hedge laying training session by qualified practitioner to be arranged for current members of FoBP. Friends group to lay sections of hedges over subsequent years, maintaining the structural viability of the hedges for livestock control whilst providing adequate shelter / screening.
Trees	Trees adjacent to paths inspected for safety by the Trees & Woodlands team, along with a general visual inspection of trees throughout the site. Any defective tree that is considered a risk to the safety of visitors is either made safe or removed as soon as possible.	More detailed tree safety survey to be completed incorporating GPS data. Programme of remedial works to be completed by approved contractor.
Ride/edge Management	Graded edge and scallops along rides and woodlands maintained through rotational mowing to create range of grass lengths.	Rides and edges to be increased in size by selected tree removal and additional mowing. The increase in size will promote the more even usage of pathways across the site.
Boundary Management	Old boundary wood banks and hedges are maintained for safety purposes, but allowed to naturally evolve wherever possible. Vegetation along newly constructed earth bund along Bunkers Lane managed to	More detailed tree safety survey to be completed incorporating GPS data. Due to boundary areas contain a high number of mature Ash trees in proximity to roads, the presence and extent of Ash Dieback disease

	provide a windbreak and screening for the site amenity grassland area and also to prevent vehicular access.	will be noted and monitored annually. Programme of remedial works to be completed by approved contractor.
Other	Shrubby growth, saplings and smaller trees maintained by the Friends group.	No change.
General		
Car Park and access road	Car park and access road inspected quarterly and maintenance arranged as and when needed. Access road managed as part of the cemetery and crematorium development.	Works to access road and car park. New height barrier to be installed on upgraded park access.
Litter and Waste Management	Litter and dog waste bins emptied twice per week throughout the year, increasing to three visits per week during the summer. Occasional litter picks by volunteers and Friends of Bunkers Park.	Five additional bins for litter and dog waste, (currently two litter bins and four dog waste bins on site).
Footpath Routes	Grassed pathways cut every 12 weeks, footpaths inspected twice per annum.	Surfaced footpath route to be inspected twice per annum. Surface maintenance to be carried out in accordance with inspection recommendations by approved contractor.
Site furniture and structures	Gates, steps and fencing inspected annually and maintained and replaced as required by DBC, contractors or the FoBP.	More detailed survey of furniture and structures to be completed incorporating GPS data. Replacement or repairs to be carried out by DBC, contractors or the FoBP. Where appropriate, furniture and structures to be replaced with an approved design / type, in accordance with site requirements.
Habitat Monitoring	Phase one habitat survey of main site in 2019 and Long Saunders and Pond Field in 2022. Surveys of butterflies, moths, birds and plant species every three years.	Repeat Phase one survey every five years, incorporating both sections of the site into the same survey cycle.
Visitor survey	Not previously undertaken	Undertaken in 2022 to prepare SANG management plan.

6.1 Monitoring

All net new homes granted permission will be required to secure or make proportionate contributions towards the delivery of SANG. These will be expected to be monitored by the Council through the following processes.

- Monitoring of Section 106/Unilateral Undertakings – SANG contributions will become due to Dacorum Borough Council, at the point of commencement. Although developers will be expected to notify the Council of commencement, this cannot be relied upon and it will be necessary for the Infrastructure Team to closely monitor sites.
- SANG contributions may also be collected through a simplified Unilateral Undertaking or Section 111 process (to be determined), where it would be expected that payments would need to be confirmed prior to the grant of planning permission.
- In cases where SANG measures are intended to be provided on site, monitoring of the delivery of these measures will be required, alongside evidence provided by Clean, Safe and Green.
- Robust reporting on SANG contributions received, allocated and spent will be provided on an annual basis through the Infrastructure Funding Statement.
- Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of measures on site will be implemented.
- There will be a monitoring/administration fee associated with this process.

7. Costs

Table of improvement costs for Bunkers Park to follow.

