

BEECHY BOTTOM PARKLAND RESERVE STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared for Fairfax Acquisitions Ltd

September 2024

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Community Stewardship Solutions (CSS)	3
3.	Methodology and Approach	3
4.	Vision and Strategic Aims.....	3
5.	Site Context and Ambition	4
6.	Main Landscape Elements within the Parkland Reserve	5
7.	Stewardship Roles and Responsibilities	6
8.	Sustainable Funding Model.....	6
9.	Key Governance Requirements	8
10.	Governance Options: For Ownership, Management or Delivery	9
11.	Proposed Governance Structure	11
12.	Implementation	12

1. Introduction

Fairfax Acquisitions Ltd has commissioned Community Stewardship Solutions (CSS) to produce a Stewardship Management Plan for the long-term governance and funding of the Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve. The Stewardship Management Plan summarises the high-level options and provides a recommendation for the future stewardship of the Parkland Reserve. The document is submitted as part of the planning process (planning application number DM/23/2867) which includes a change of use of farmland and woodland to Parkland Reserve.

The Parkland Reserve will come forward as part of the Green Infrastructure associated with the Ansty Garden Community (near Cuckfield, Haywards Heath in West Sussex) to provide additional recreational resource and opportunities for biodiversity gain. It will form a substantial area of naturalised open space and additional recreational fields for both the new Garden Community and the existing surrounding communities.

2. Community Stewardship Solutions (CSS)

CSS is a complete stewardship and placemaking consultancy that has evolved through thirty-five years of practical experience on major new housing developments across England. We set up and support stewardship organisations and their associated stakeholders to ensure responsibility is taken for the protection, well-being, and success of these new communities.

CSS specialises in the practical aspects of stewardship and legacy, particularly working within major new housing developments around their open spaces, parks, community buildings and associated physical and social infrastructure, delivering sustainable community and economic development in the process, to provide an in-perpetuity governance and management solution. We work across England, planning and implementing strategies to bring about development and renewal through social, physical and economic regeneration.

3. Methodology and Approach

An introductory briefing was held with Fairfax Acquisitions Ltd and Savills, and then a more detailed briefing held with Savills and Tadorna Consulting Ltd to discuss the Parkland Reserve.

The briefing was designed to:

- Understand the expectations of Fairfax Acquisitions Ltd
- Understand the context and long-term vision for Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve
- Clarify the timescales and milestones for the plan's production and subsequent use.

As a result of the meeting, various strategic plans and maps were provided to enable CSS to develop costs estimates, a financial model and to consider the management and governance arrangements within the context of the wider area and development proposals for the Ansty Garden Community.

4. Vision and Strategic Aims

The overall vision is of a park where nature and wildlife prevail with the overall aim of managing the site to exceed the current biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements. A key aim is to create an exemplar of biodiverse habitat guided by the principles and lessons learnt from the Knepp rewilding project just south of Horsham. This will be achieved through a series of key design principles and indicators that will be tied into a long-term management plan and to be monitored by a site warden.

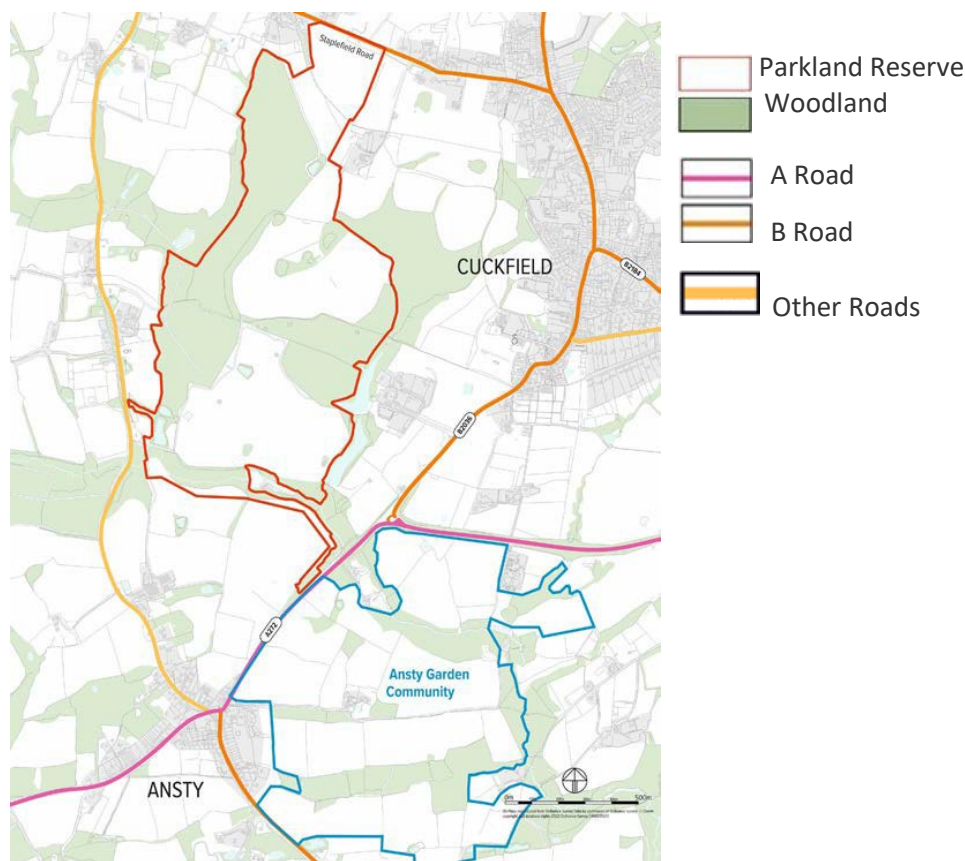
Delivering BNG at the Parkland Reserve is proposed through the introduction of more naturalistic processes such as 'soft touch' extensive management systems, allowing the development of woody scrub areas, rich and structured grassland and natural regeneration within the woodlands. These, over time, will create species-rich and evocative wildlife rich habitats. So far as is possible, management of the Parkland Reserve will deliver environmental and landscape enhancement through management of the degraded habitats and lost species.

It is fully understood that the maintenance and management of any site, particularly with ambitious BNG targets) is critical to its success. The aspiration of the landowners for the proposed Ansty Garden Community is to enable and promote a high-quality stewardship solution, and this would be extended to incorporate the approach for the Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve. This would afford a very significant opportunity to create a naturalised parkland facility for the whole of the local community.

5. Site Context and Ambition

It is noted that the proposed development site of Ansty Garden Community is not currently allocated for development through the adopted development plan, but it is being actively promoted to Mid-Sussex District Council (MSDC) for inclusion in the further consultation stages of the emerging Local Plan.

The plan below indicates the location and relative size of the Parkland Reserve within the local area and the proposed development of Ansty Garden Community.

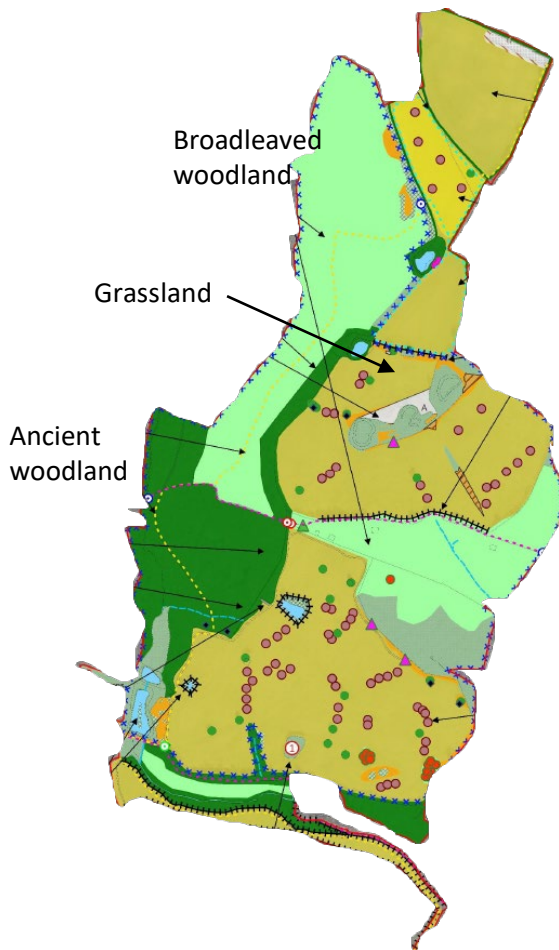


This strategy for the long-term stewardship of the Parkland Reserve has been produced within the context of the wider proposals for the Garden Community development.

6. Main Landscape Elements within the Parkland Reserve

The image below indicates the different land use and habitat types in the Parkland Reserve. A more detailed version of the map below, a scale and full key is provided in Appendix A

The following bullets set out the principles of the landscape elements to be designed and implemented within the Reserve.



- Woodland to be managed for species diversity
- Rides and glades to be created to encourage a range of closed and open habitats, grazed by controlled herds of animals such as cattle and red deer
- Use of Conservation cattle/pigs to manage species rich grasslands and woodland.
- Newly planted trees, such as poplar and ash, to be veteranised for birds and mammals
- Ponds to be restored through clearance of scrub and ongoing management
- Opportunities learnt from projects such as Knepp to be explored to create a rich and diverse wildlife resource
- Reintroduction of farmland bird species to be focused upon, such as grey partridge, corn bunting, and tree sparrow and well as reptile, amphibian, mammal and invertebrate species
- Existing building on the fringe of woodland to be refurbished to provide a base for a full-time warden and educational hub to involve the local schools and community groups
- Long-term management plan to be created, monitored by an ecologically trained site warden.

New areas of public open space will be opened for recreation, and the enjoyment of local communities. However, large areas of land are identified for specific habitats, wildlife and livestock and have special access arrangements to ensure human intervention is minimised and controlled.

7. Stewardship Roles and Responsibilities

There are three main requirements (management and maintenance of open spaces, financial management and community participation) of a stewardship body for Parkland Reserve, which are set out below with related activities:

Management and Maintenance of Open Spaces	Financial Management & Investment	Community Participation
•Open Space management •Ensuring BNG is adequately maintained & monitored •Ensuring appropriate expertise to manage the woodland pasture •Delivery of grounds maintenance activity •Managing internal staff and external contractors/consultants	•Managing income and expenditure •Maximising income and minimising risk of any endowment •Maintaining reserves including sinking funds •Statutory reporting to regulatory bodies	•Involving other stakeholders with interests in the ecology, recreational use and sustainability of the open spaces •Enabling community access and volunteering opportunities •Managing volunteers

These roles and responsibilities all need to be covered within the funding model, and able to be effectively managed in the governance structure

8. Sustainable Funding Model

This framework provides the basic principles of a sustainable funding model to be implemented to enable the establishment and successful longevity of a Stewardship body.

8.1 Long term funding requirements

The long-term cost expenditure elements for the stewardship body fall into the following broad headings:

- Management of the public open space including commissioning of contractors
- Maintenance and replacement of hard landscaping, fencing, furniture and signage
- An ecologist to monitor Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) over 30 years
- A Park Warden with responsibility for monitoring the site
- Livestock management in the woodland pasture
- Operating costs to manage and facilitate volunteers' participation

Table of Estimated Maintenance Costs for Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve
(full table provided in Appendix B)

Land Use Type	Cost (average p/a)
Open spaces (Woodland, wood pasture, hedges etc)	£173,900
Ecological monitoring of habitats	£1,200
Sports pitches	£20,500
Physical infrastructure (hardstanding, paths, fences etc)	£8,010
Litter and waste management	£23,840
Total	£227,450

The open space land maintenance costs above have been estimated using the following sources of data incorporated into a suite of circa 60 separate unit rates:

- Known costs from a number of other comparable sites
- Published tender costs from other local authorities
- Recommended advice and potential costs provided by authoritative organisations such as Woodland Trust, Sport England
- Data from Grounds Maintenance companies

The overall costs including the management and operating costs are estimated to be circa £344,000 per annum which is an element of the endowment calculation indicated in section 8.3 below.

8.2 Income sources

Applying the knowledge and experience of other stewardship bodies it is concluded that for Parkland Reserve, the most likely sources of income would be from initial start-up funding and income from an endowment.

Additional value could potentially be sourced from charitable grants and from in-kind and practical support from user and volunteer groups. However, the funding model will not rely on this to ensure a sustainable income which would essentially be based on startup funding and an endowment.

8.3 Funding Model Assumptions

To develop a funding model, some planning assumptions need to be established to enable illustrative fund projections. It is emphasised that these can only be assumptions but are based on historic trends and direct experience of the startup of other stewardship bodies.

- Long term inflation average = 2.5%
- Long term interest average = 4.35% comprising base rate of 3.1%, plus 1.25% premium for high value savings.
- Ecologist in years 1-5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 as per BNG audit requirements.
- Park Warden £13.7k. p.a. Based upon £30k p.a. Full Time Equivalent for only 2 days per week. Employed by Trust, costs include pension and related costs.

- Administrative staff £13.7k. p.a. Based upon £30k p.a. Full Time Equivalent for only 2 days per week. Employed by Trust, costs include pension and related costs.
- Vet fees and winter fee £5k p.a.
- VAT has been added to costs where appropriate.
- Treasury management software £0.25% of invested sum. E.g. 13.5k p.a. on £5.4m
- Finance/Treasury £7.2k p.a. support to monitor the investment income and maintain financial records. 1 Day per month.
- Misc. overheads £3k p.a.
- Contingency of 5% £1.8k at Year 1
- Startup costs of £50k to cover legal and corporate fees.
- Sports field costs are partially offset by £12k p.a. of income from the 4 pitches.

8.4 Endowment

The timeframe agreed for modelling is a key parameter to the amount of the endowment. In the case of Parkland Reserve, there is a 30-year obligation relating to the BNG period. However, a longer-term perspective can be taken by also considering 100-year timeframes. Ultimately, the time frame will be subject to agreement through the planning process but the estimated annual costs of circa £344,000 (as referenced in section 8.2 above) would result in a requirement for an endowment of circa £7.5 million for 30 years and £15.3 million for 100 years.

These figures could reduce if the following actions were implemented:

1. Alternative revenue streams are sought from:
 - a. Rent from a concession such as a van selling food and drinks £12k (£1k p.m.)
 - b. Parking income ~£16k (100 visitors p.w.*£3 * 52 weeks)
 - c. Café £36k (£3k p.m.)
2. Using cattle to manage the wood pasture would eliminate some costs, but savings would be partially offset by additional vet and winter feed costs. This approach would create more financial volatility due to disease and end of life costs, so sinking funds should be created to absorb that. From a community involvement perspective, they would create volunteering opportunities to look after the cattle.

9. Key Governance Requirements

Any governance structure must be able to deliver on the following key requirements:

- The ability to fulfil ecological, recreational, maintenance and monitoring functions in the long term, including the ability to address non-delivery to agreed quality standards.
- The provision of financial and organisational capacity of both land owners and day to day operational management organisation(s), particularly with regard to management of revenue resources, sinking fund, and endowment.
- Credibility and acceptance by Mid-Sussex District Council and local stakeholders.

10. Governance Options: For Ownership, Management or Delivery

In straightforward terms, four possible options were identified for consideration for the ownership and subsequent management of the Parkland Reserve, namely:

- For the landowner to retain ownership, operating through a new Park Management Company.
- Public authority (Mid Sussex District Council or West Sussex County Council) to adopt and manage the Parkland Reserve.
- A third-party charity with the requisite experience and expertise (such as The Land Trust or a local Wildlife Trust) to take ownership and manage the Country Park.
- The landowner or (if transferred) a local authority to have ownership but sub contract or lease to a third-party charity.

The table below summarise these potential options for the landowner.

Transfer of Responsibilities	Establish Bespoke new local organisation		Outsource responsibilities
Adoption	Management Company	Local Trust	Third Party
• Mid Sussex District Council or West Sussex County Council	• Limited by guarantee • Community Interest Company	• Charitable Incorporated Organisation • Charitable Trust	Such as: • The Land Trust • Wildlife Trust • Other local bodies

The advantages and disadvantages of each model are summarised in the table below:

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Landowners retain ownership and direct management	Leaves full overall control and financial responsibility with Landowner in short and potentially long term, allowing decision and options to be periodically reviewed Option for creating a governance and management link with the Ansty Garden Community and stakeholder participation.	Requires landowner to take a long term interest after the development is complete Will require management oversight and input to support resourcing and relationship with the day-to-day maintenance operator.

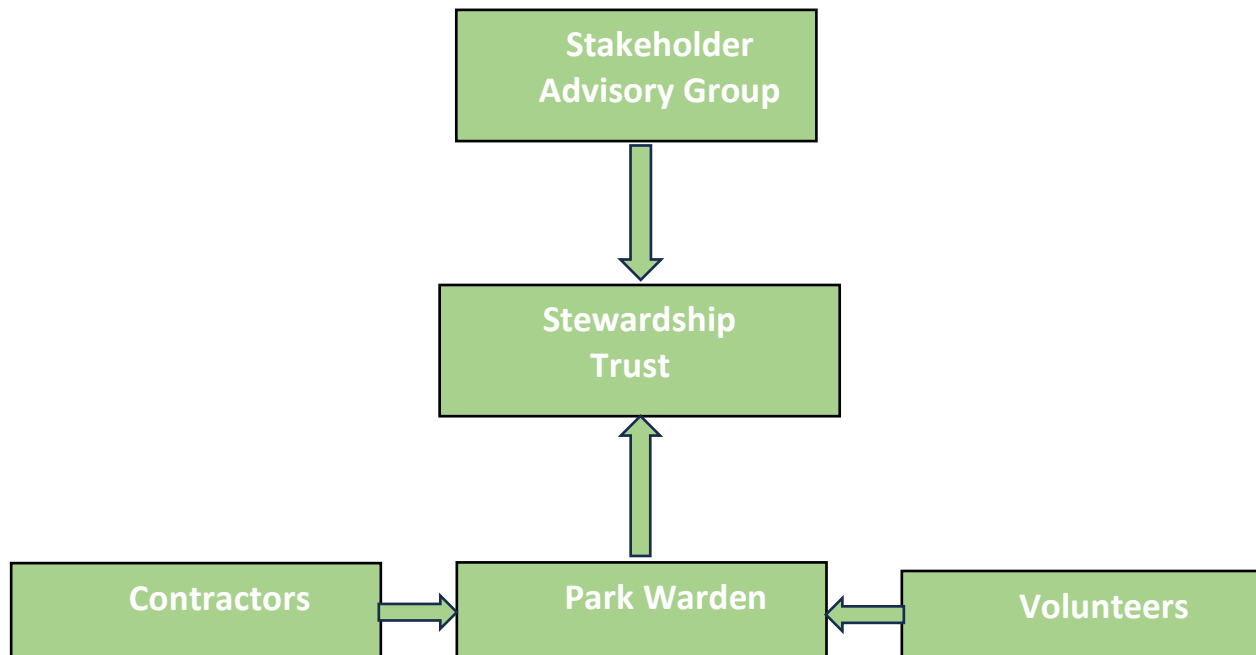
Adopted by Public Authority	Transfers all liabilities to a robust organisation already undertaking similar activities elsewhere	Giving responsibility to the local authority for landscape management will require a close dialogue and working arrangement. Remote decision making as the Parkland Reserve would be just one small part of a wider programme The Parkland Reserve may be subject to pressures for reducing local authority expenditure Can be difficult to achieve community engagement workstream alongside management of a Parkland Reserve Commuted sum would be required
Third party charity such as a local Wildlife Trust or The Land Trust (TLT) (either via transfer of ownership or a lease)	Existing track record and organisational infrastructure for Country Park and Landscape management TLT have very strong balance sheet and strong experience in management of endowment	TLT are a national body and so lack local knowledge or presence TLT would sub-contract day to day management to local partner such as a local WT TLT would require an endowment.
Management Company contracted to deliver management and monitoring	Clear and focussed role	Organisational infrastructure and experience would need to be developed from scratch Potentially more challenging to incorporate stakeholder involvement and support from volunteers

Each of these options may merit further consideration within the parameters of the deliverables detailed in previous sections of this report. However, it will be important to consider the potential benefit and inter-relationship of the Parkland Reserve with the Ansty Garden Community. If stewardship of the Ansty Garden Community were to be delivered through an independent Charitable Trust, then there are some clear benefits in considering a single organisation with responsibility for both. Further, there are some clear benefits of forming a Charitable Trust that lend itself to this situation as follows:

- It is a separate and independent legal entity
- It has a clear and focussed purpose
- Its directors' can have limited liability
- There are beneficial tax rates and exemptions for charitable organisations
- There are funding sources for Parks, Wildlife and Recreation assets available to Charitable organisations but often unavailable to public bodies and private companies

11. Proposed Governance Structure

Given the characteristics of the Parkland Reserve and how it is likely to be funded, it is proposed to form a Trust or Charitable organisation and the organigram below is based on that governance model. This is an illustrative structure and can be refined dependant on the Parkland Reserve key stakeholders' requirements and interests.



The detail of any subsequent structure would be subject to testing and consultation with Local Authority members, stakeholders and community representatives. It is proposed that the landowners as well as Mid Sussex District Council are members of the Trust. This ensures that the landowners continue to have the ability to protect their interests and ultimately can take action if absolutely necessary to ensure continuity of management in the event of failure of the Trust.

At board level, it is recommended to have a small group of directors to maintain the overview of the work of the Trust. The way in which directors are nominated and/or co-opted should be given consideration by the members of the Trust but it is proposed that the members each nominate one individual to become a director and that others can be co-opted at the appropriate time.

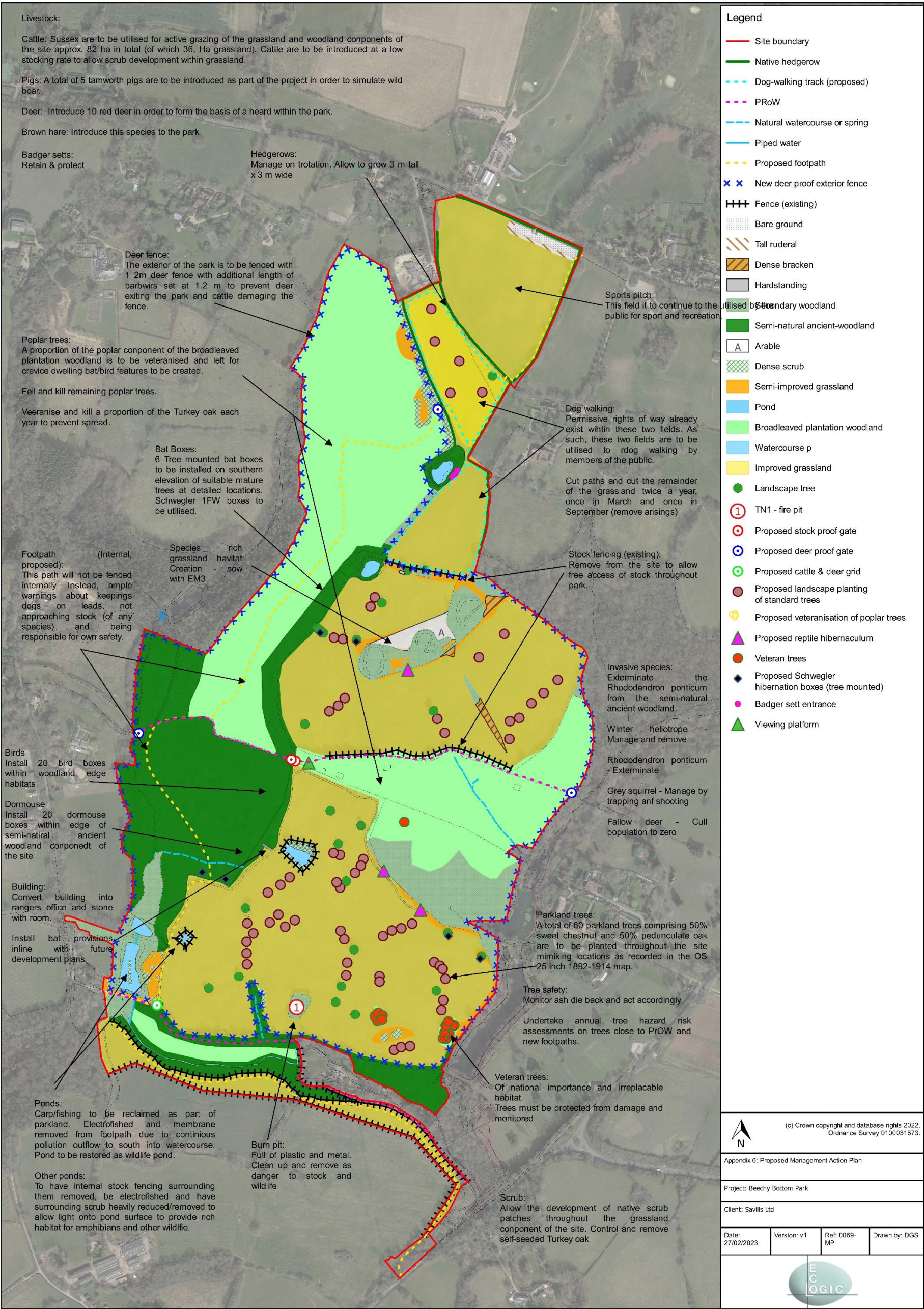
Consideration should be given to a broader level of community accountability. This can be done through a the 'Stakeholder Advisory' group to involve ecology organisations, recreational and amenity users and groups interested in the longer-term sustainability of the Parkland Reserve. The constitution of the trust could require regular consultation with the Stakeholder group, to ensure that there is appropriate communication and broader involvement. It would also be possible to provide a limited number of places for key local groups to nominate a director if the Trust members consider it appropriate. In the event of failure of performance of the Trust, the members would have "step-in" rights as set out in the constitution of the Trust.

12. Implementation

As outlined in the introduction, this plan sets out how a long-term stewardship arrangement can be developed, funded and governed. This section provides an illustrative timeline duration and chronological order which may be expected, notwithstanding that the steps would be dependent on agreements and consents as a result of the planning process.

	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
ACTIVITY																
Development receives planning approval																
Main contractors commissioned																
Residential development & Park Reserve improvements carried out																
Key parties commence formation of stewardship organisation																
Shadow Board formed																
Stewardship organisation fully operational																

- The LEMP produced by Tadorna would be the basis on which the establishment of the Parkland Reserve is developed but it should be noted that habitat enhancements may take several years to introduce and run much longer than the above timeline.
- The build out period of the Ansty Garden Community has not yet been identified and the above is only an indication
- In the initial period, the landowners may retain sole ownership of the Parkland Reserve but new day to day stewardship and management arrangements put into effect with revenue funding provided directly by developers
- As indicated, although a shadow board maybe formed early to operate in parallel the responsibility for any construction and Parkland Reserve enhancements would remain with the developer until specified in the planning agreements.
- The benefit of forming a shadow board is that it affords adequate time for the longer-term governance arrangements to be fully established while early implementation can be informed by key stakeholders and the local community.



Appendix B

Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve - Estimated Costs for Open Space Management

	Comment	Area (Ha)	Linear units (meters)	Quantity	Cost per unit	Cost (average p/a)
Species-rich meadow grassland	(2 cuts p/a arisings removed with spot treatment for weeds)	14.39				£40,750
Wood pasture	Cutting areas of rough grass in wooded which contain trees or whips; petrol operated strimmer	37.35				£70,000
Established woodland	Thinning, ivy severance, invasive species removal, removal or reduction of small dead, dying or dangerous trees	49.51				£40,750
Specimen Trees	After 10 years establishment period			60		£1,000
Hedgerows & Scrub Management	Hedgerow cut by tractor mounted equipment.. For purposes of calculation, assumed that hedgerows are 3 metres wide as indicated in Beechy Bottom Enhancements guide Appendix 5 (converted to linear metres for calculations).	2.13	7100			£5,500
Ecological monitoring (habitats)	Qualified specialist required 2 days per year			2	600	£1,200
Ponds	Assumed to be managed for aquatic flora and amphibious life but not for fishing	0.49				£15,900
Sports pitches	Assumption made of 4 ha to include space for up to 4, 11-a-side pitches	4				£20,500
Stock and Cattle Deer Proof gates	Includes maintenance check and sinking fund (15 year replacement)			6	2500	£1,000
Interpretation boards and signs	Includes maintenance check and sinking fund (10 year replacement)			5	300	£150
Seating/benches	Includes maintenance check and sinking fund (10 year replacement)			10	1000	£1,000
Footpaths (compacted aggregate)			2000			£60
Stock Fencing	Includes maintenance check and sinking fund (15 year replacement)		5000			£5,000
Hard standing	Includes ad hoc small scale repairs and sinking fund (15 year renovation)	0.01		1		£800
Empty litter bin	Once per month			6		£8,640
Empty dog bin	Once per week			2		£13,200
Litter picking	Annual litter clearance and removal to recycling site					£1,000
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Total annual maintenance cost		107.88				£227,450

Report provided by Community Stewardship Solutions
33 Vicarage Lane
East Ham
London
E6 6DQ

