

Cogenhoe Short Lane Pocket Park

Development Plan

2021 – 2026



Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council

Originated 1st January 1999
Revised 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2021

Foreword

Being the operators of the first pocket park in England, opened officially in 1984, a huge responsibility falls on the Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council to ensure that the facility is used, managed, and developed to the highest standards possible. Apart from our own parishioners, the Short Lane Pocket Park receives visitors from across the country and even abroad. We are aware that because of our almost celebrity status, in this respect, the eyes of the local conservation movement are upon us.

Our aims are to provide the local community with an increasingly valuable educational recreational resource, in a safe but natural environment. It is hoped that the adoption of this plan will enable the park to develop in a coherent manner over the plan period and by so doing, set standards that other groups with small country parks can follow.

Steven Hollowell, 1998

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Short Lane Pocket Park Development Plan 2021 – 2026

1 Introduction and Broad Aims of the Development Plan

Cogenhoe's Short Lane Pocket Park was the first such park in the U.K. and was opened to the public in 1984. The project was funded by the Countryside Commission, Northamptonshire County Council and South Northamptonshire District Council. Since then, the facilities in the park have been steadily improved and a further section of the spinney added to the park in 1990. The Park is held on a lease by the Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council from Compton Estates and Castle Ashby Trust. The Park is used by members of the public, children's organisations, and school groups.

Conservation of the natural features and habitats of the park is weighed against the recreational value. Other important considerations include health and safety, tree husbandry and the financial constraints inherent in any such scheme.

In view of the increasing complexity of organising the maintenance and development of the park, it was decided in 1996 to begin work on a long-term Development Plan, which was adopted in 1999. Important to the on-going relevance of the plan is the quinquennial review outlined in section 8.

2 Policies

2.1 Environmental Policy

To maintain the natural distribution of flora and fauna already within the park but with regard to the differing habitats, and to introduce such new species as are considered to be indigenous to this general region.

2.2 Recreation and Educational Policy

To provide a safe environment which will enable visitors to benefit from the recreational and educational amenities of the park and to help maximise the opportunities for appreciation by all people, if inappropriate behaviour / use is observed it is expected that appropriate action will be taken. To facilitate the interpretation of the natural and man-made environment of the park by means of appropriate media.

2.3 Management Policy

To provide a service to the parishioners of Cogenhoe and Whiston through the management of the park by a Committee of the Parish Council who will, within the terms of the lease, have due regard to public safety; financial expediency; environmental issues; co-operation with other parish organisations; neighbouring landowners and consultative bodies.

2.4 Volunteers Policy

All volunteers (other than parish Councillors, will have regard to and abide by the policy <https://www.cogenhoeandwhiston-pc.gov.uk/uploads/volunteers-policy-feb-2021.pdf>

2.5 Maintenance Policy

- i) To maintain the fittings and fixtures, paths, fences, bridges, water courses, in a safe and serviceable condition at appropriate cost to the Committee.
- ii) To maintain environmental features necessary for the support of the natural flora and fauna.

2.5 Long Term Development Policy

To protect and improve all aspects of the pocket park both within the present boundaries and to consider opportunities to extend it through further leasehold agreements and by the use of permissive paths, should they arise.

3 Environmental Plan

3.1 Insects, birds, mammals, plants, and trees

3.1.1 Insects

To maintain environmental conditions conducive to insect species e.g., the use of decayed logs, managed ivy growth and ground cover.

3.1.2 Birds

To provide a habitat which will support an adequate food chain and nesting cover, supplementing, where appropriate, with nest boxes.

3.1.3 Mammals

To provide a habitat which will support an adequate food chain and cover, part of which is to be relatively undisturbed by visitors to the park.

3.1.4 Plants and Trees

Indigenous varieties of plants and trees will be encouraged in suitable locations and numbers. In particular, meadow and hedgerow flowers in the lane will be introduced and the present programme of tree-planting and hazel coppicing in the Spinney will continue. Tree felling will only take place when necessary for the planting plan [see Appendix 3] and to keep pathways clear and safe; it will be carried out after consultation with the landowners, who have ownership of all timber. Other tree surgery may be carried out when necessary to preserve a tree that has been damaged or is diseased.

3.2 Water habitats

The stream and its feeder springs will be conserved as the natural water course. The man-made pond will be maintained as a habitat feature as long as is practical. The ford in Short Lane is monitored regularly.

3.3 Surveys

The programme of environmental surveys will continue to be carried out at appropriate intervals by the Estates' nature survey team and others, to record birds, butterflies, moths, other insects, fungi, plants, trees, pondlife and mammals. Comparisons will be made with previous surveys and implications drawn for the management plan. Survey reports will be kept with Parish Council files on the Pocket Park and made available to those wishing to study them. Casual records should be submitted to the Beds, Cambs & Northants Wildlife Trust's Monitoring scheme, to contribute to national data.

3.4 Endangered Species

A list of endangered species will be maintained together with a register of any of them recorded in the park. In the event of endangered species being found in the park, the management plan will be reviewed in order to establish the viability of maintaining a suitable habitat.

3.5 Consideration will be given to opportunities for conservation that arise, such as working towards Local Nature Reserve status if it is considered desirable.

4 Recreation and Education

4.1 Walks

4.1.1 Access to the park is by two types of footpaths: public rights of way and permissive paths. See Appendix 4. Footpath KF17 leads from Station Road into Short Lane and is a through route that is part of the local public rights of way network. An existing

alternative path through the Spinney is to be maintained for use when the ford in Short Lane is impassable. An entrance at the eastern end, accessed via the permissive route from Whiston Road, that was permitted in 1999, connects the eastern end of the park with KF12 (public bridleway), KF27 (public footpath) and with the Nene Valley Way. Two internal paths round the edge of the spinney make a figure of eight route possible.

- 4.1.2 All paths within the Spinney will be maintained in a safe and usable condition, where possible. The maintenance of Short Lane, as Public Right of Way KF17 is the responsibility West Northants Council Highways contractors.

4.2 Accessibility

- 4.2.1 Due regard will be given to current legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Acts, that may require reviews of our management programme and publicity. Because the Spinney footpaths have inclines, cross streams, and pass-through woodland, it is not practical to make them all suitable for pushchairs, other wheeled buggies, or wheelchairs.

- 4.2.2 Research will be undertaken, and assistance sought whenever feasible, in order to increase the accessibility of the amenity to people with disabilities.

- 4.2.3 The aim is for the pocket park to be suitable for all age groups to visit and enjoy. In particular, organised groups will be welcome to use the educational and recreational resources of the park. Young children should be supervised.

4.3 Schools and Colleges

The Park is suitable and available for recreational and educational use by children of pre-school and school age if supervised. It is intended that visits to the park would enhance the teaching aspects of the National Curriculum for science and geography. The Park is also a useful resource for students from further and higher education, such as at Moulton College and the University of Northampton.

4.4 Education Pack

The Management Committee will explore the practicalities of creating an education pack for use by local schools, which may be in the form of a document that could be downloaded from the website. Assistance from educationalists will be sought.

4.5 Interpretation

In addition to the education pack mentioned above, the interpretation of the natural and man-made environment of the park will be facilitated by means of signs, a trail guide, booklets, website, and guided walks as appropriate.

- 4.6 Due to its location, the Pocket Park is always open to visitors.

5 Management

5.1 Role of the Parish Council

The Parish Council is the lessee of the park. The Council accepts responsibility in all matters relating to the park and in particular, provides finance from the parish precept.

5.2 Role of the Management Committee

The Management Committee is responsible to the Council for the day to day running of the park, and in particular:

- 5.2.1 Acting with due regard for the health and safety of visitors to the park and anyone carrying out management work in it.
- 5.2.2 Advising the Council on insurance cover for the park.

- 5.2.3 Organising and overseeing maintenance projects in the park (see 6).
- 5.2.4 Receiving visitors from other areas and institutions.
- 5.2.5 Providing interpretational signs and public information about the park (See 4.5).
- 5.2.6 Monitoring the flora and fauna of the park by organising surveys.
- 5.2.7 Providing and maintaining a long-term strategy for the maintenance and development of the park and keeping records of Plan implementation.
- 5.2.8 Applying to grant-funding bodies for special projects.
- 5.2.9 Assimilating and disseminating information circulated by other bodies.
- 5.2.10 Being the point of contact for the county Pocket Parks or Northamptonshire Countryside Services and for voluntary groups undertaking environmental work.
- 5.3 Any money raised through activities shall be ring-fenced for expenditure in addition to the budget allocated to the Management Committee by the Parish Council.

6 Maintenance

The Management Committee is responsible for all matters concerning the maintenance of the park. In particular it is concerned with the following issues:

6.1 Public Safety

See adopted Safety Policy, Appendix 1, and Risk Assessment, Appendix 2.

6.2 Use of Volunteer Groups

Volunteer groups from within and beyond the parish will be used wherever appropriate to execute basic maintenance work. The Management Committee will ensure that all voluntary labour is covered by appropriate insurance. Such volunteer groups may include [The Conservation Volunteers](#), [Nenescape](#), youth organisations, the Community Service work force, Anglian Water, local firms, members of the Parish Council and of the Management Committee, members of the general public, etc.

6.3 Use of Professional Contractors

Professional contractors will be used for some maintenance projects where this is more appropriate in view of the scale or complexity of the task, or machinery required. In such cases, Parish Council Standing Orders on contracts will be observed.

6.4 Timber Removal and Replanting

All felling, replacement and replanting to be in accordance with the agreed Tree Management Plan which appears in Appendix 3 in consultation with the landowner.

6.5 Grazing

The Short Lane section of the park may be sub-let for summer grazing. This can generate a small income but more importantly, is an effective way of managing the flora and herbage. Both loose and tethered grazing may be permitted as appropriate.

6.6 Mowing

If no grazing is arranged, the vegetation on the verge of Short Lane will be mown as necessary (at least annually in late summer).

7 Future Growth

7.1 Growth of Park

It is envisaged that the park will continue to grow both within the present boundaries (by the introduction of new features and facilities) and by extending where possible into adjacent parcels if there is capacity to manage more land.

7.2 Access Agreements

The Management Committee may investigate the possibility of obtaining access agreements with owners of adjacent land to effectively increase the boundaries of the park.

7.3 Links with existing public rights of way and permissive paths.

The Parish Council has facilitated the additional footpath link to the Playing Field from KF17 and requested that the alternative route to KF17 through the Spinney be designated a Right of Way. In future, the paths within the park and permissive paths could become integrated further within the public rights of way network.

7.4 Sustainable Growth

To sustain successful ongoing management and future growth, additional voluntary support will be sought by increasing local awareness of the park, involving local people in its conservation and maintenance, and encouraging the formation of a Friends group to support the Committee with practical work, online promotion and fundraising for projects.

8 Review of this Plan

There will be a 5-yearly review of this Development Plan, the next being in 2025. During the current Plan, notes will be kept on its implementation and comments on future planning, to inform the review.

Appendix 1

SAFETY POLICY

Approved and adopted by the Parish Council on 5th August 1997. Updated by the inclusion of a Risk Assessment accepted by the Management Group in January 2009 – updated version held in separate file available from the Parish Clerk

1 General

As far as is reasonably practicable, all buildings and other structures and fittings are to be provided and maintained so as to avoid exposure to health and safety risks by all persons using the Pocket Park. The Pocket Park will be closed to members of the public during periods of maintenance and work where a risk is identified.

2 Tracks and footpaths

All purpose-constructed tracks and pathways in the Pocket Park are to be appropriate for their locations and to be of suitable design, built and maintained so as to avoid hazardous use.

3 Bridges and other Structures, Slopes, Banks, and Handrails

Where, at the edge of a bridge or other structure, slope, bank or handrail, there is a vertical drop of more than one metre or there is a depth of water of more than one metre, a parapet or barrier is to be provided to prevent persons, including small children, from falling from the edge.

All purpose-built bridges or other structures are to be inspected at least annually by a person competent to assess their safety, in accordance with the current risk assessment. A report is to be kept of each such inspection.

Any bridge, other structure, slope, bank, or pathway deemed unsafe is to be closed off until satisfactory repairs have been carried out. Permanent repairs must be completed as soon as is reasonably practical.

Where the siting of seats is close to potential hazards, appropriate measures must be taken to protect visitors.

4 Boundaries

Where boundaries are the responsibility of Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council, boundary fences and hedges will be maintained to prevent access to inappropriate places. Where boundary fences and hedges are not the responsibility of the Parish Council but have fallen into disrepair, those responsible for the boundary will be requested to affect the necessary repairs.

5 Signs

Signs, especially warning signs, which become illegible or are missing must be made good or be replaced as soon as practicable and any defective supports replaced.

6 Trees

The trees are to be inspected regularly at reasonable intervals and after high winds. The Landowner to be notified of any found to be dangerous to enable them to be made safe or removed as soon as practicable. Where there is a danger of falling trees during high winds, consideration should be given to closing all or part of the park.

7 Substances hazardous to Health

No chemicals are to be used in the park except those recommended by the Department of the Environment, the Nature Conservancy Council, or the British Agro-Chemicals Association for use on non-agricultural or amenity land or by the Environment Agency for use alongside water.

8 Pest Control

Pest control methods using gassing, shooting, or trapping are not to be used unless required by the Landlord under terms of the lease.

9 Emergencies

Where possible, emergency public access to a nearby telephone will be publicised at the entry to the park. The information currently given is The Royal Oak public house.

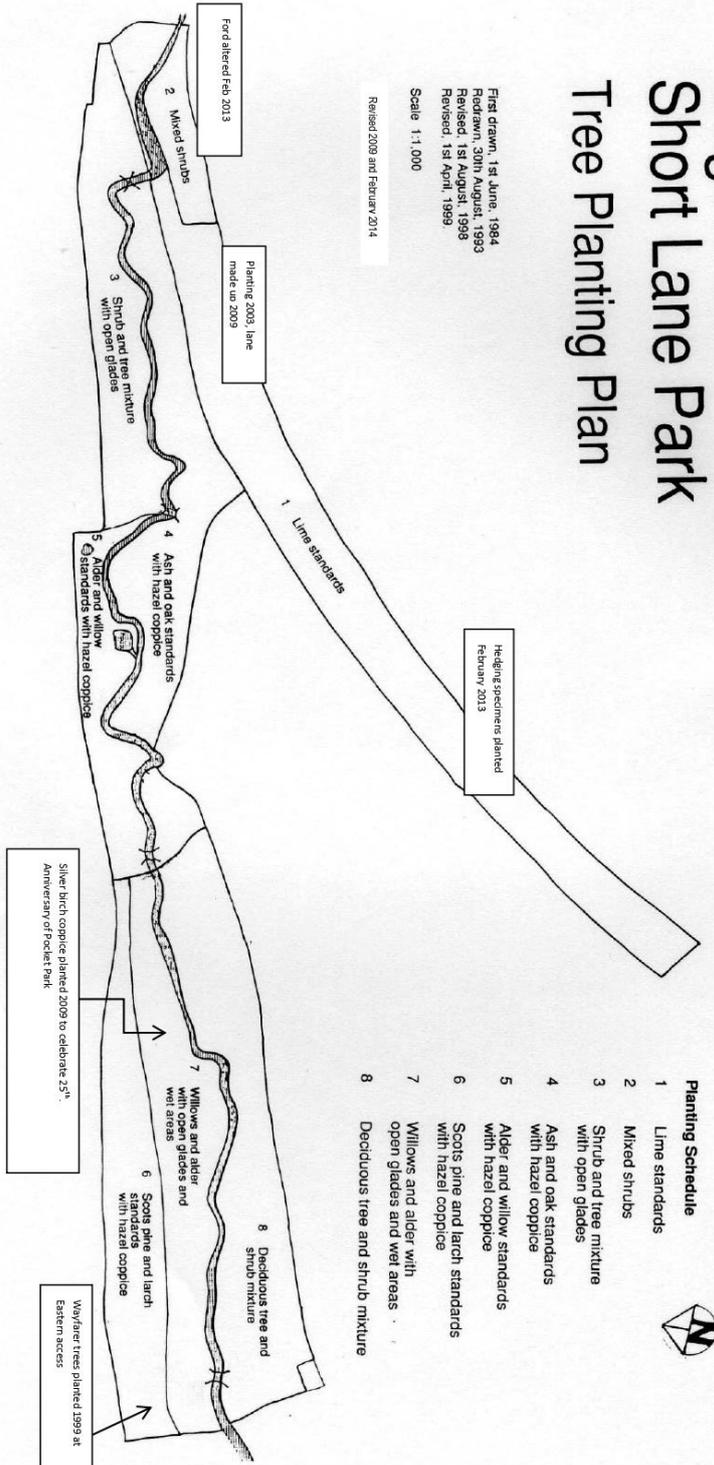
Appendix 2 Tree Planting Plan

Cogenhoe Short Lane Park Tree Planting Plan

First drawn, 1st June, 1984
 Redrawn, 30th August, 1993
 Revised, 1st August, 1998
 Revised, 1st April, 1999

Scale 1:1,000

Revised 2009 and February 2014



Planting Schedule

1	Lime standards
2	Mixed shrubs
3	Shrub and tree mixture with open glades
4	Ash and oak standards with hazel coppice
5	Alder and willow standards with hazel coppice
6	Scotts pine and larch standards with hazel coppice
7	Willows and alder with open glades and wet areas
8	Deciduous tree and shrub mixture

Silver birch coppice planted 2009 to celebrate 25th Anniversary of Pocket Park

Wayfarer trees planted 1999 at Eastern access

Appendix 3

MAP: Access and features

The Pocket Park is the area outlined, comprising the track (Short Lane) and adjacent spinney (shaded).

Note: Gates G1-6 are public access points; G7 is not.

