

Living Landscapes - a vision for the future of Essex

Ramsden Heath and Woods

A varied landscape of ancient and new woodlands, arable farmland, grazing land and distinctive local nature reserves, linked by a network of footpaths and lanes and accessible to residents of local towns and villages

This Living Landscape will protect wildlife for the future and benefit local people



This vision document has been prepared by representatives of:

Mill Meadows Society
Basildon District Council
Essex Wildlife Trust

Norsey Wood Society
Chelmsford Borough Council
Friends of Queens Park



1.1 About this document

This document defines the Vision for Living Landscape Area 34 Ramsden Heath and Woods. This is the final version, published after consultation with the local community. Contributions have been invited from local councils, conservation volunteers, landowners, businesses, societies, wildlife experts and schools' representatives,

There is a list of abbreviations used and a glossary in the final appendix.

For more information on Living Landscapes in Essex refer to:

http://www.essexwt.org.uk/protecting_wildlife/living_landscapes

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2	21Nov09	Draft document for wider consultation	Consultees and contributors
3	7Apr 10	Final draft	
4	22 Apr10	Final	

1.3 References

1. Queens Park Country Park and Hannakins Farm management plan (*available on Basildon District Council Web Site*)
2. Mill Meadows Management Plan (*available on Basildon District Council Web Site*)
3. Geology Of Norsey Wood –Gerald Lucy, Norsey Wood Society Newsletter Number 125

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EWT Brentwood and Billericay Group	Consultation
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Billericay Town Council	Consultation
Great Burstead and South Green Parish Council	Consultation
Ramsden Crays Parish Council	Consultation
Stock Parish Council	Consultation
Billericay Society	Consultation
Billericay Residents Association	Consultation
Basildon Greenway Group	Consultation
Essex Field Club	Consultation
Billericay Youth Town Council	For Information
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1. The Area 34 Landscape

Ramsden Heath and Woods is a diverse mix of habitats. Many of these are typical to Essex but there are also special areas of woodland and meadows within local nature reserves. Although the area is primarily arable farming or equestrian grazing land, it contains a high proportion of woodland (relative to most of Essex) and has a network of footpaths, tree-lined or hedge-lined bridleways and lanes which enable people to enjoy unspoilt countryside in proximity to major commuter towns.

However, the wildlife sites are, in parts, fragmented and there is much unfulfilled potential for the enjoyment of people and for wildlife diversity. The primary objective of this Living Landscape Vision is to improve the wildlife and improve enjoyment of the area in balance with landowner's economic interests.

1.6 Scope of the area

Living Landscape Area 34 is a chain of meadows and woodlands stretching from the Hanningfield area to Little Burstead, and including the Queens Park Local Wildlife Sites and adjoining farm and amenity land.

The Area has been divided into a number of sections, to make comprehension and ongoing management of progress easier.

1.7 Geology

From the south-west to the north-east of the area a ridge runs across the land at a height of up to 85 metres above sea level. To the north-west of Area 34 the land drops to around 40 metres near the River Wid. To the south it also drops towards the River Crouch which is at 15 metres above sea level. The land lies on London Clay overlaid with Claygate Beds. The upper parts on the ridge are in turn overlain with Bagshot Sand. The highest land in and around Norsey Wood also has a layer of gravel.

Erosion of the landscape during the Ice Age has carved the valleys exposing the London Clay and Claygate Beds and creating small springs. Thus the higher land is well-drained and this is where the sweet chestnut coppiced woodland is usually found with other woodland and farmland being more predominant on the slopes and in the valleys. In Norsey Wood, the soil supports small colonies of heather. On old maps, Ramsden Heath is a strip of common land running east to west north of Heath Road and this may be where the 'heath' was situated.

1.8 Evolution of the Landscape

The area has been mainly arable in recent centuries. In the 18th Century most of it was part of the Petre estates. On 19th century maps we see the familiar shapes of the ancient woodlands that survive today, but the arable land is divided into smaller fields. There are many windmill sites, indicating the predominance of grain production. The land along the ridge was less suited to crops and used mainly for sheep farming. The clay and stony ground had always made the land hard to farm and it was known as 'four horse land' for this reason.

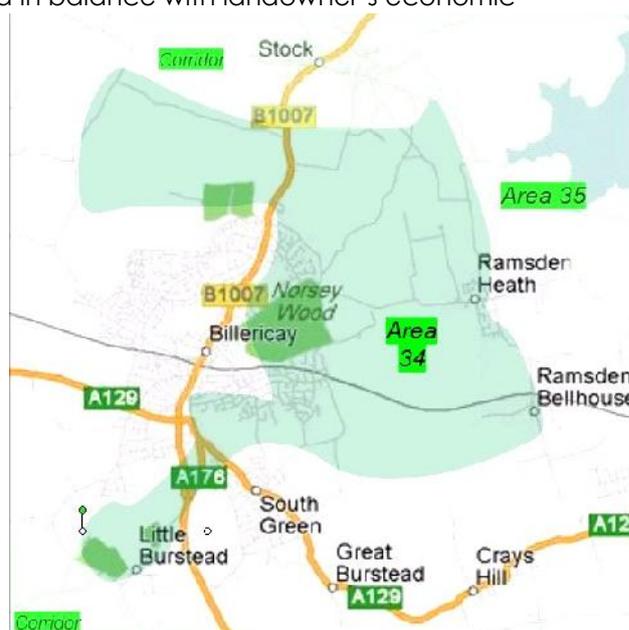


Figure 1 – Area 34

After 1870, imported grain reduced prices and the Tythe farming fell into decline. Much of the less productive higher ground was classified as 'black' and became scrub. Since WW2, the growth in residential housing, the mechanisation of arable farming, the decrease in livestock farming and Dutch Elm Disease have changed the character of the landscape.

The 1839 Tithe Map of the area west of **Ramsden Heath and Ramsden Bellhouse** shows approximately 300 parcels of fields. These are predominantly arable but also include a substantial amount of grazing pasture and a few households' gardens and orchards. There is a notable area of common land around the area known today as Ramsden Back Common. References to industry in the Ramsden area are limited. Charcoal production is referred to and a reference is made in the 'Victoria County History for Essex' to W.W. Bull who pioneered a method of fruit-drying for use in jams and cider, indicating that there was some significant fruit-growing in the area.

Billericay was originally in the parish of Great Burstead, then grew and became a commercial centre in the 19th century, most notably after the railway's arrival in 1889. The 1895 map shows the town as concentrated around the high street, dwarfed in size by Norsey wood and surrounded by a patchwork of fields. The 20th century saw the growth of Billericay as a major commuter town swallowing hamlets such as Mill Hill and Gooseberry Green and joining to the villages of South Green and Great Burstead. In the 20th Century, housing has expanded in all directions, displacing much arable and livestock farming. Approximately 70-80% of the boundaries of the reserves of Norsey Wood and Mill Meadows are now bordered by housing.

It is in these reserves where the significant archaeological interest in Area 34 is found. Norsey Wood is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and hosted a deer park and coppicing industry in its time. For further information refer to <http://www.norseywood.org.uk/wood/history/history1.htm>.

Mill Meadows is included in the Sites and Monuments records since the discovery of some probably Neolithic flint tools in 2002. Billericay town itself has 49 listed buildings – for more information see <http://www.billericaysociety.co.uk>.

Farming effectively ceased at Mill Meadows in the 1970s when much of the surrounding land became residential.

Little Burstead has historically been primarily an area of mixed farmland, with a few small woodlands and the Laindon Common area which was used for grazing. In 1992 Burstead Golf Club was created on a large part of the arable farmland. The River Crouch has its source here before it passes through Little Burstead Woods.

Queens Park was formerly an area of orchards and plotlands-type developments which was transformed into a major housing area in the latter part of the last century and at this time the Country Park was created

The **Buttsbury** and **Stock** area also has a primarily arable history and once featured a watermill. Local industries included brick, pottery, potash and weaving. Today the landscape in Area 34 south of Stock has some interesting vistas and includes a good proportion of farmland under Enterprise Stewardship, an animal sanctuary along the River Wid and a golf course.

1.9 Key habitats

The key habitats in Area 34 are:

- Arable Farmland
- Ancient woodland including SSSIs and many veteran trees
- Equestrian grazing pasture
- Large mature gardens
- Meadows

- Hedgerow
- Scrub

There are no National Nature Reserves but Norsey Wood and Mill Meadows are **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** and both include SSSIs. There are 16 **Local Wildlife Sites**; - these are listed in Appendix B of this document.

1.10 Key species

Area 34 has small but scattered populations of many of the declining bird species on the national and county Red and Amber lists. Some of these, namely turtle dove and yellow wagtail, are on the brink of disappearing from The Area. There are records within the nature reserves of the expected reptile and amphibian species but these are also scattered and declining.

Many mammals, such as hedgehog, brown hare and water vole are rare or the status is unknown. There are a number of wildflower and insect species which are locally rare, especially in the Local Nature Reserves. Outside the LNRs, many wildlife species are either rare or poorly recorded and therefore need more research, followed by conservation action.

1.11 Important community and social values

The following are identified:

- Existing local nature reserves: Mill Meadows has footpaths and a marked trail; Norsey Wood has car parking, footpaths, nature trails, an easy trail for wheelchair access, educational material, a pond and an educational centre. Both of these reserves have a Society formed from the community and who work with Basildon District Countryside Services by helping with wildlife-based walks, talks, surveys and working parties
- Queens Park Country Park has car parking, footpaths and educational material. This also has a society who support Basildon Council with events and working parties
- Laindon Common is managed by a local group of conservators
- There is a good network of public footpaths throughout the area. These do not have managed car park facilities or nature trail information, other than at the Local Nature Reserves and Queens Park
- There are significant numbers of stables providing horse-riding along the bridleways
- There are lanes and tracks for cycling but with no formal management or facilities.

In summary there are good formal facilities provided by BDC around Billericay, but limited facilities and routes outside these areas and with much potential for improvement.

1.12 Important economic background

The main land-use economy of the area is arable farming: the main products being grain and hay. Other land-uses for products are woodland products, some fruit and honey production and plant nurseries.

The significant cultural and recreational land-uses are horse riding and golf. On a smaller scale, there is fishing, game shooting, archery and paintball games.

2 The Vision

The vision is to enlarge existing wildlife areas and join them up, with the aim of improving biodiversity and people's enjoyment of the area. This should be achieved by:

- increasing the number of managed wildlife sites
- establishing or improving the corridors between these and the existing managed nature reserves and the adjoining Living Landscape Area 35 (Hanningfield Reservoir and Woods)
- targeting some of the declining wildlife species and implementing changes to reverse these declines
- informing the public and schools about these wildlife improvements and encouraging their enjoyment of the area and its wildlife
- raising the public's awareness of the local businesses which manage the land and of the products of the landowners
- improvements to the network of public rights of way and Public Open Spaces to encourage more people to use them

2.1 Benefits

- Improvements to the biodiversity of Area 34 across the spectrum of wildlife categories (birds, mammals, insects, trees, wildflowers, fungi)
- An understanding within the community about the wildlife value and required management of the new wildlife areas
- a spirit of joint community-ownership between landowners and users of the access routes and wildlife sites
- improved benefits to the land-owners, e.g. from funded land-management, business advertising, public relations and consumer access to their products and services
- Improved community access to wildlife, in a manner that is non-detrimental to the wildlife and economic value of the land i.e. causes no damage and only reasonable disturbance
- Improvements to people's health with increased opportunities for walking and cycling

2.2 The delivery

The Vision is delivered through a number of projects, listed below in Section 6. These projects are diverse in nature; each requiring its own set of tasks and resources to implement it and it needs to be the responsibility of a volunteer or professional body.

It is intended to establish a new Forum, with representatives from interested organisations, landowners and the general public to agree, plan and implement the Projects which will be needed to make it a reality. We will also progress these projects as part of the Basildon Wildlife & Countryside Forum and the Chelmsford Biodiversity Forum and with regular liaison with the Essex Wildlife Trust so that initiatives can be shared across other Living Landscape Areas.

The extent to which the Vision can be delivered is, however, dependant on largely on the participation of the local community.

3 Objectives

3.1 Wildlife targets

3.1.1 Key Species

A number of wildlife species have been identified for which populations could be improved or maintained in Area 34. For some species, remedial action can be taken immediately. In other cases, more needs to be known about the status e.g. is it increasing, decreasing, stable, even present in The Area or is the status simply unknown? And, if a species is in decline, what remedial action can be taken? Where surveys are required, we will start by referring to existing surveys and to experts on the species. Also, we will try and use existing survey database facilities for recording so that the information is shared at county and national level.

The species list has been derived after considering the Section 41 (S41) list of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, after discarding species that would not be expected to found in The Area. Other species not in the S41 list have been added because they are known to have declined locally and their status is a concern – these are shown in *italics*

Birds

Ref	Species	target	Action
3.1.1.1	<i>Kestrel</i>	Re-established as a confirmed breeding species	- Provide 5-10 nest boxes - encourage small mammals and beetles
3.1.1.2	<i>Barn Owl</i>	Encourage as a breeding species	- Identify 2 potential sites and provide nest platforms
3.1.1.3	Turtle Dove	Retained as a breeding species	- Gain permission to study known remaining territory. Provide feeding areas: weeds in particular
3.1.1.4	Skylark (eBAP)	Increase breeding territories by 30%	- Survey whole area to understand population - Introduce number of skylark plots to meet target
3.1.1.5	<i>Swallow</i>	Maintain current population level	- Survey whole area to identify where there are no breeding pairs - look to improve potential nest sites e.g. rafters safe from predators
3.1.1.6	<i>House Martin</i>	Re-establish as a confirmed breeding species	- provide nest facilities within local buildings
3.1.1.7	Starling	Increase breeding territories by 30%	- provide summer and winter food and nest facilities
3.1.1.8	Song Thrush (eBAP)	Increase breeding territories by 30%	Liaise with BTO to identify actions needed
3.1.1.9	Yellow Wagtail	Retain as a breeding species	Liaise with BTO to identify action and approach landowners (e.g. nesting habitat and crop types)

3.1.1.10	Yellowhammer	Re-establish as a confirmed breeding species Sections in 1-5	- provide summer and winter food and improve/increase nest facilities with managed hedgerows and scrub areas
3.1.1.11	Reed Bunting	Retain as a breeding species near the River Wid; encourage it along the Crouch	
3.1.1.12	House Sparrow	Increase breeding territories by 30%	
3.1.1.13	Linnet	Re-establish as a confirmed breeding species in all Sections	
3.1.1.14	<i>Bullfinch</i>	Contribute to national study	As we have a relatively good population, a study in LL34 could be of national value
3.1.1.15	<i>Willow and garden warbler</i>	Retain as a breeding species	Liaise with BTO to identify remedial action and approach landowners (e.g. nesting habitat and crop types)
3.1.1.16	<i>Swift</i>	Increase the dwindling population (est 5+ breeding pairs in Billericay)	Save our Swifts project (already initiated)

Also, a separate initiative is being proposed to the Essex Bird-watching Society to study woodland birds, so we also aim to improve the fortunes of some woodland species, such as lesser spotted woodpecker and nuthatch.

Mammals

Ref	Species	target	Action
3.1.1.20	Brown Hare	Retain as a resident species	Needs survey / census
3.1.1.21	Dormouse (eBAP)	Ensure residing in all suitably-sized woodland areas	- Needs co-ordinated survey in private woodlands - Add nest boxes
3.1.1.22	Pipistrelle Bat (eBAP)	Ensure residing in all suitably-sized woodland areas and increase population by 30%	- Needs co-ordinated survey in private woodlands - Add nest boxes
3.1.1.23	Noctule	Investigate if present – aim to introduce/conserv	Survey possible sites for presence
3.1.1.24	Water Vole (eBAP)	Investigate if present – aim to introduce/conserv	survey possible sites for presence
3.1.1.25	Hedgehog	Arrest the decline and increase by 200%	Need data gathering – good potential to involve the community in this, and also to use the EWT garden recording project

Reptiles and Amphibians

Ref	Species	target	Action
3.1.1.30	Great Crested	Increase known locations	

	Newt (eBAP)	by 200%	Survey and improvement of habitat
3.1.1.31	Grass Snake	Increase known locations by 100%	
3.1.1.32	Common Frog	Increase known locations by 100%	
3.1.1.33	Common Toad	Increase known locations by 100%	

Insects

Ref	Species	target	Action
3.1.1.40	<i>Tortoiseshell Butterfly</i>	Re-establish healthy populations throughout the Area	Further study needed then introduce some conservation measures e.g. allow areas of stinging nettles in some areas
3.1.1.41	Small Heath	Re-establish healthy populations throughout the Area	
3.1.1.42	White Admiral Butterfly	Establish a population in at least one section	Further study needed then introduce some conservation measures e.g. allow areas of stinging nettles in some areas
3.1.1.42a	Grizzled Skipper	Investigate if a population still exists, and encourage a growth or return	Further study needed then introduce some conservation/encouragement measures
3.1.1.43	Garden Tiger Moth		Survey key sites to establish if we have populations- potential for community/ school involvement especially Garden Tiger Moth
	Buff Ermine Moth		
	White Ermine Moth		
	Cinnabar Moth		

Flora

Ref	Species	target	Action
3.1.1.50	Glandular Eyebright		Survey hedgerows and field margins to establish if we have populations
3.1.1.51	Cornflower		
3.1.1.52	Shepherd's Needle		
3.1.1.53	Spreading Hedge Parsley		
3.1.1.54	Sneezewort	At 4 locations in the Area	Research for populations outside Mill Meadows, look to encourage these in other meadow areas
3.1.1.55	Harebell	At 3 locations in the Area	

3.1.2 Managing for Biodiversity

Broaden the proportion of The LL Area that is actively managed for biodiversity.

Ref		Current status	Target
3.1.2.1	Woodland	Norsey Wood Great Bishops Wood also under environmental scheme. Total approx 75 hectares	Increase managed woodland by 50%.
3.1.2.2	Meadow	Mill Meadows Norsey Meadow Queens Park Meadow (Approx 26 hectares)	Identify other meadow(s) to be managed: increase by 50%
3.1.2.3	Ponds	Norsey Wood: 5 Mill Meadows: 6 There are also many ponds on golf courses and within private land that need to be quantified	Target specific ponds for grant-assisted clearance Create a pond 'chain', with minimal distances between ponds, across the area
3.1.2.4	Arable farmland	Approximately 200 hectares are in environmental stewardship	Increase by 200%
3.1.2.5	Heathland	None	Investigate feasibility of restoring some
3.1.2.6	Scrub	Exists primarily within the nature reserves – while vital for many species it can become a threat to other habitats if unmanaged.	Allow patches of scrub to prevail throughout the area: create a map of the areas and identify where it is lacking

3.1.3 Local Wildlife Site Management Plans

Establish management plans for **8** of the **16** Local Wildlife Sites, and move these into Positive Conservation Management.

3.1.4 Wildlife Corridors

Create a network of wildlife corridors, to link the Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites. (See the table below for a list of these).

We have to confirm the purpose of each corridor (e.g. hedgerow for 'dormouse route', bat or bird feeding flock route), then assess its current suitability, then identify ways in which it can be improved. For example, new and enhanced hedgerows, field margins, or plantations may be added. There are parts of the Area where a small piece of woodland or hedgerow could provide a vital link between wildlife sites. Similarly, as part of new housing developments, strips of land may be acquired and managed as conservation areas.

	Location/ action	Purpose	Species benefiting	Sections
3.1.4.1.	Crowsheath Community Woodland Plantation (LL35) / Ramsden Back Common Maintain good hedgerows and scrub patches	Allow species expansion/ movement from the new Community Woodland plantation to the farmland, and vice versa, as the plantation matures	All wildlife including possibly target wildflowers and brown hares (if present)	3
3.1.4.2	Hanningfield Woods (west) (LL35) to Kiln Common Maintain good hedgerows and scrub patches	Allow species/ expansion movement from the managed woodland areas around Hanningfield Reservoir and into the Hanningfield Reservoir land from Ramsden Woods	All wildlife including possibly target wildflowers and brown hares (if present)	3
3.1.4.3	Great Bishops Wood/ Barrenleys Wood Ensure a continuity of mature trees and hedgerows	Maintain the continuous woodland north to south: allowing movement and expansion of mammals and birds	All woodland bird species, bats, dormouse	1,2,3
3.1.4.4	Little Farm / Queens Park Area Maintain a broad hedgerow corridor with field margins and with scrub pockets if possible	Allow species expansion/ movement and provide winter feeding	Bats, farmland birds including linnet	4,7
3.1.4.5	Forty Acre Plantation / Queens Park area Ensure a continuity of mature trees and hedgerows and scrub pockets if possible	Support sustainable populations of woodland species in Queens Park area	Mammals, woodland birds	4
3.1.4.6	Barrenleys Wood/ Mill Meadows Maintain a broad hedgerow corridor with field margins and with scrub pockets	Support sustainable populations of woodland populations in the area	Mammals incl bats, woodland and farmland birds	1
3.1.4.7	Norsey Wood/ Devils Wood Ensure a continuity of mature trees and hedgerows and with scrub pockets if possible	Support sustainable populations of woodland populations in the area	Reptiles and amphibians, mammals including bats and dormouse	4,2
3.1.4.8	Mill Meadows to Frith Wood/ Laindon Common maintain a broad hedgerow corridor with field margins with scrub pockets if possible	Cross-population of key species	Winter-feeding bird flocks, butterflies, hedgehogs and small mammals	1, 5

3.2 People targets

3.2.1 Education

Currently, local schools use Basildon District Council's Norsey Woods Local Nature Reserve and Essex Wildlife Trust's Hanningfield Reservoir Visitor Centre. Local Schools use Norsey Woods at approximately 12 times per year, on an ad hoc basis. A Forest School has also been run in Norsey Wood, with 6 sessions conducted. Norsey Wood is the natural choice for school's use as it has good visitor facilities including ample parking, an education room and conveniences. Basildon Council would like the facilities to be used more frequently. Billericay School is conducting a Summer Ecology Project on Mill Meadows with the support of BDC and some input from MMS. Other schools are known to conduct studies

Hanningfield Visitor Centre, in the neighbouring Area 35 specializes in providing facilities for secondary schools. It is busy with school bookings from April to October, and runs a range of events (including Forest Schools, orienteering and camping) for families and children. Hanningfield has already connections with Ramsden Hall School (Special Educational Needs), Billericay School (Secondary), Mayflower High School (Secondary), Downham Church of England (Primary) and South Green Infant School (Primary).

The following table shows the total number of schools and approximate numbers of pupils in near Area 34:

	Total	Primary	Infant	Junior	Secondary	Special needs
schools	14	3	3	4	3	1
Pupils)	6300	>750	>750	1300	3500	50

We should look for opportunities to make more use of the open spaces for educational purposes in Area 34, so that children can broaden their knowledge of, and develop a concern for, their local natural environment.

By 2014 we aim to achieve:

- 3.2.1.1 20% of students engaged within formal environmental education, linked to the Primary and Secondary National Curriculum needs
- 3.2.1.2 All Billericay Secondary schools to be conducting annual studies at one or more of the nature reserves – as part of the Secondary National Curriculum
- 3.2.1.3 20% special needs students engaged with informal and formal education –
- 3.2.1.4 40% of the Primary, Junior, Infant and Secondary Schools to develop their grounds for wildlife gardening and outdoor learning
- 3.2.1.5 Over 15% students engaged within the formal environmental education linked to Advanced and further education requirements
- 3.2.1.6 Increase by 25% the number of students engaged with informal environment education, such as school holiday activities, forest schools, pre-school

3.2.2 Recreation, Leisure and enjoyment of Nature

Organised recreation within Area 34 is provided by groups such as the Billericay Society (fortnightly, attended by an average of 30 people); and by the local Ramblers Association 'Greenway' (100 walks per year averaging 40 walkers)¹.

Billericay Town Council, with the Chamber of Commerce and Billericay Society, conduct Heritage Walks which include rural and town points of interest about 12 times per year. In total, this equates to approximately 5000 instances of a person attending an organised walk.

Specific walks focused on an aspect of nature are organised by BDC and supported by members of the nature reserve societies. These include wildflowers, bats, moths, butterflies, birds and fungi. This equates to some 300 instances of a person attending a nature walk per year.

We will involve these groups in the development of nature walks along the public footpaths, aiming to improve paths and permissive rights of way to complete circular walks if necessary.

The targets are:

- 3.2.2.1 By end 2012: improve the network of nature walks, linking the four geographical corners. Some or parts of the network will be accompanied by leaflets, available in paper or online describing the key features of the walks. The leaflets will include free advertising for local businesses owning land and offering products and services around the network. New walks will complement or augment existing publicised walks.
- 3.2.2.2 By 2014: to double the number of person/walks in Area 34 which have a specific natural history interest to 600. These should include routes outside the nature reserves so that recreation can be combined with learning about wildlife.

3.3 Local community targets

3.3.1 Community involvement in conservation

The Norsey Wood Society, Mill Meadows Society and the newly-formed Friends of Queens Park have membership totalling approximately 500 households. The groups are autonomous and work with BDC, focusing on their Local Nature Reserves. All three groups attend work parties organised by BDC.

There is no volunteer conservation forum which oversees the whole of Area 34, or even parts of it, outside the local nature reserves. Such a forum is desirable, to participate with the Borough Councils and EWT in driving the projects to implement the Area 34 Vision.

Both established societies would benefit from an increase in active members, especially people willing to serve on the committee and people who can bring new ideas for events which inspire more community participation in conservation.

The following targets are suggested:

¹ It should be noted, though, that many of these walks are conducted outside LL34. Conversely, walking groups from outside Area 34 will make use of the local footpaths

- 3.3.1.1 By mid 2010: create an Area 34 group conservation body², which is an affiliation of current societies, and exists to advise and support landowners, conduct work parties and stimulate public interest throughout Area 34
- 3.3.1.2 By 2013: increase the collective membership of the societies/group to 800 households
- 3.3.1.3 By 2013: have a turnover in the collective committees of 3 people per annum
- 3.3.1.4 By 2014: increase the number of working party person-days by 50%

Conservation monitoring is generally informal and irregular, other than to support specific projects such as the Bird Atlas, which is being conducted by a few BTO volunteers. Some surveys of wildlife are conducted on the reserves and BDC maintain a database of species records.

- 3.3.1.5 By 2014: have 50 people involved in conservation monitoring

Work parties are supported occasionally by the Air Training Cadets and The Scouts, as well as people conducting Community Service. The former have until recently been active with the Mill Meadows Society but now have to divert much of this time to fund-raising. It would be useful to be able to divert funding to these groups in remuneration for conservation work.

- 3.3.1.6 Remunerate groups such as the ATC and Scouts for conservation work.

3.3.2 Young people's groups

The local nature reserves are used by groups such as the Brownies and Beavers on an ad hoc basis. Walks, with quizzes, are created informally but there is no formal marketed offering to all young people's groups. A new group, the B's NE's, has been initiated by volunteers and is supported by BDC. This group is open to children of any age, will conduct nature-related activities and is currently recruiting members and putting together a programme for 2010.

Suggested targets are:

- 3.3.2.1 By 2012: 100 children using nature clubs in Area 34
- 3.3.2.2 By 2011: 2 formalised guided walks for young people groups (Cub-Scouts, Beavers, Brownies) are conducted every year

3.3.3 Enjoyment of the Countryside for the disabled and handicapped

Only Norsey wood offers a trail which is suitable for wheelchairs.

Suggested targets:

- 3.3.3.1 Add two more sites enabling people dependent on wheelchairs to enjoy the countryside

3.3.4 Community Awareness

There is one Open Day per year, at Norsey Wood. This is well-attended by stall-holders and approximately 200 members of the public. It is, however, constrained by the car park size.

Suggested target:

² due to the size of Area 34 more than one body may be required e.g. one per Borough may be possible.

3.3.4.1 1000 people to be attending open/community events in Area 34 per annum

3.3.4.2 At least 2 open/ community events to be held per annum

Information about Local Nature Reserves is provided in leaflet form for Norsey Wood, Mill Meadows and Queens Park Country Park by BDC and the societies. There are information boards at those same locations and also at Laindon Common. Additionally, the three Societies have mobile display boards.

Suggested targets:

3.3.4.3 Provide information leaflets about 3 additional locales: advising on their wildlife, history and access

3.3.4.4 Provide a regular communication about progress in Area 34

It would be mutually beneficial to improve the community's understanding of the relationship between land management and wildlife biodiversity.

Targets:

3.3.4.5 By 2012: Provide educational material and/or events to explain a local example of where farming is practiced with conservation aims (example: tour of a farm in the Enterprise Stewardship (ES) Scheme such as is conducted at Abbots Hall and Foulness)

3.3.4.6 By 2015: 100 people per annum benefiting from this education

Gardening for wildlife and recording wildlife seen in gardens are two methods by which wildlife can benefit from community involvement.

Suggested targets:

3.3.4.7 By 2012: establish a wildlife garden in the area, with frequent visitor and educational events

3.3.4.8 By 2015: 100 households in the area contributing records to local, county or national wildlife surveys

3.4 Local economic targets

Landowners should be able to benefit from the delivery of the Area 34 Vision. Benefits could be direct i.e. grants which enable the sustainability of the land use. Or the benefits could be indirect i.e. increase demand for products and services through public awareness and promotion of their support for wildlife biodiversity.

3.4.1 Grant schemes

Appendix A Map 3 shows the land currently taking advantage of schemes. There are several landowners in Environmental Stewardship (ES) Schemes and 2 landowners in Woodland Grant Schemes.

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) has been designed by the Countryside and Landowners Association (CLA), National Farmers Union (NFU) and industry partners to retain the environmental benefits of set-aside. The scheme is voluntary. If there isn't a high rate of take-up, a regulatory approach may be adopted. Advice can be provided by the Farmers Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) to help farmers implement ES.

Target:

- 3.4.1.1 By 2014, enable 6 new landowners to receive the benefit of ES schemes and/or approximately double the amount of land in the schemes to 400 hectares

The approximate percentage of woodland using a grant scheme (excluding SSSIs) is approximately 25%. Much of the woodland is within Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS).

Target:

- 3.4.1.2 By 2014, increase the percentage of land using woodland conservation grants to 60% (excluding SSSI)
- 3.4.1.3 By 2014, enable 4 landowners to receive the benefit of Positive Conservation Management grants

3.4.2 Product Promotions

The majority of land produce is arable and not sold direct to the consumer market. There is some local honey and fruit produce, but the Billericay and Ramsden Areas are not nationally renowned for this produce. There is some rotational coppicing providing wood product at one site but many other former coppiced sites are no longer used.

- 3.4.2.1 By 2013, add 3 more woodland sites that are producing wood for commercial use
- 3.4.2.2 By 2013, establish 2 food products from within Area 34 as locally-known brands linked to the Living Landscape concept (could be direct to the public or via retail outlet such as a supermarket)
- 3.4.2.3 By 2013, establish 2 acres of eco-friendly orchards to create a flagship wildlife-friendly fruit production.

3.4.3 Leisure Activity Promotion

Formal 'saleable' leisure activities within Area 34 include horse-riding, golf, fishing and paintball.

- 3.4.3.1 By 2013, 3 businesses offering leisure activities are to be promoted as locally-known facilities linked to the Living Landscape concept

4 Statement of ecological significance

The ecological breakdown can be summarised as primarily arable farmland with a significant volume of grazing, almost all of which is for equestrian use, with some cattle; and woodland, approx 60% of which is ancient woodland. There are also large gardens, at least two areas of orchard, fishing lakes and 2 golf clubs.

Approximate breakdown of land use (hectares)									
	Section								Total (hectares)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 ³	
				est ⁴		est			
Arable (crops)	126	68	88	75	52	25	76		510
Grass/ Hay		33	16	10	5	25	51		140
Grazing	30	40	17	10		25			122
Woodland	25	36	75	75	18	5	5		239
golf courses					42		67		109
Other*	19	22	4	10		10			65
Ponds (if significant)	< 1	1		<1			4		6
TOTAL	200	262	270	180	127	100	203		

5 Ecosystem services within the Living Landscape

Natural ecosystems are important to the health of the environment and hence to human populations. Healthy ecosystems assist in maintaining the quality of air, the quality of surface and underground water, the quality of soils. Accesses to natural ecosystems are also important for the physical and mental health of human populations, particularly by enabling quiet recreation. Thus ecosystems are important to the quality of life of human populations.

The area covered by each of the main habitats and land uses has been estimated from individual maps per section. These habitats and land uses offer different values as ecosystem services.

Attempts are being made to put a value on these ecosystem services. This gives an indication of the value of these habitats and land uses to the community as a whole rather than just to the landowner. Further study work is being conducted on this topic by the University of Essex. The best current estimates of the existing value for their ecosystem services are:

Type	Per Hectare	Approximate Hectares	Value
Ancient woodland	£45,600	140	£6,384,000
Secondary Woodland	£36,000	100	£3,600,000
Agricultural	£16,800	510	£8,568,000
Grasslands (unimproved)	£36,000	26	£936,000
Ponds	£14,400	6	£86,400

³ excluded in this draft

⁴ very high-level estimate – no survey conducted as yet

6 Resources required to deliver the Living Landscape

This section defines a number of projects that are needed to meet the Objectives described above. A **Project Matrix** is being maintained as a separate document. This provides more information on the projects i.e. the basis for the cost estimation, potential sources of funding and work, method of approach and a cross-reference to the Objectives in Section 3.

6.1 Projects to meet wildlife targets

6.1.1 Local Wildlife Sites into Positive Conservation Management

To bring 4 of the woodland LoWSs into PCM: £10,000 to undertake assessments and provide management plans and to provide resources to help with initial woodland management tasks (prior to the landowner managing on a profitable basis)

The acquisition of one area of woodland for management as Local Nature Reserve: £250,000

To bring 3 new areas of meadow into PCM: £4,500 to undertake conditional assessments, and provide management plans and undertake initial work such as scrub control and planting.

6.1.2 Creation/ Restoration of Hedgerows

To support the 8 identified wildlife corridors, 16 kilometres of hedgerow require planting or bringing into favourable condition: £70,000

6.1.3 'The Great Pond-erisation'

Increase the number of ponds and improve existing ponds and lakes throughout the Area. The ponds should support native wildlife species and there should be minimal distance between them wherever possible to enable cross-populations of amphibians, reptiles and pond-dependant insects and plant-life.

For the restoration of two major ponds/moats: £30,000

For the creation or restoration of 12 small ponds: £36,000

6.1.4 Orchard Planting: Creation of 2 acres of eco-friendly orchards: £12,000

6.1.5 River restoration

A study of the areas of river (Crouch and Wid) that pass through Area 34 is recommended so that we can assess current wildlife and determine if any action can be taken to improve the biodiversity.

Estimated cost of the study: £5,000.

6.1.6 Homes for Wildlife and Wildlife Studies

- To establish nest boxes for kestrel, tawny owl, dormouse, bat, house sparrow and starling: £5,000.
- To establish 3 hibernaculums near good areas for rivers and ponds: £1,000
- Provision of nest boxes and erection of these for the Save our Swifts (Billericay) project: *tbd*
- Swallow and House Martin survey and nest site improvement: improvement: £500
- Surveys of other species that have an unknown status or are at risk of local extinction: turtle dove, skylark, yellow wagtail, bullfinch, brown hare, water vole survey, butterfly and moth target species, wildflower target species: £2,000 provision – although we should use existing online methods of recording e.g. BTO and EWT web sites as much as possible.

6.2 Projects to meet People Targets

6.2.1 Primary school environment education

Education and promotion of nature reserve facilities for 2,800 pupils by EWT Education with Borough/District Councils: 100 sessions per annum over 5 years: £20,000

6.2.2 Secondary school environment education

Education and promotion of nature reserve facilities for 3,500 pupils by EWT Education; also with the support of Borough/District Councils for environmental studies: 125 sessions per annum over 5 years: £25,000

6.2.3 Special needs pupils

Education in local wildlife: 2 sessions per annum over 5 years: £5,000

6.2.4 Adult education

Development of educational material in wildlife conservation in the local environment: £5,000

6.3 Projects to meet Community Targets

6.3.1 Wildlife Gardens: to be created in each Parish as examples for local residents: 5 gardens: £25,000

6.3.2 Area Green Walk

To establish a documented portfolio of walks throughout The Area, including the Greenway, published parish and town walks as well as newly-defined routes; working with Parish Paths Partnership (P3) and Rights of Way Improvement Plan initiatives (ROWIP)

Path clearance/ drainage and bridge repairs: £10,000

Design and produce information leaflets: £1,000

6.3.3 Volunteer promotion

Develop and implement specific marketing campaigns about the reliance on volunteers and the benefits of volunteering: £2,000

6.4 Projects to meet Local Economic Targets

6.4.1 Enlargement of Land in Stewardship Schemes

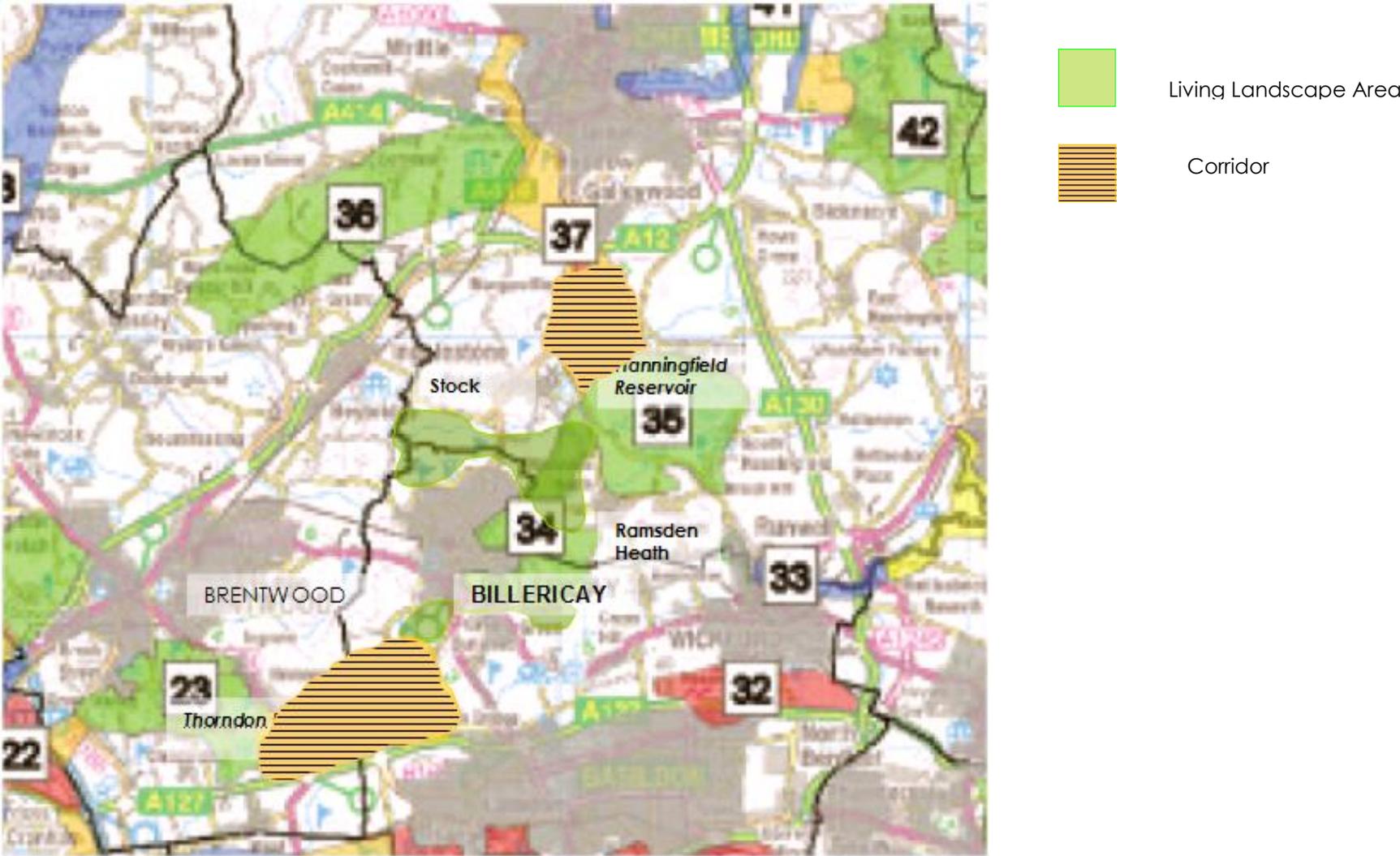
To promote the benefits of the ES and HLS, provide advice and encourage the adoption of the scheme by 6 landowners (e.g. by engaging FWAG): £4,000

Some of the projects listed above to meet Wildlife Targets will also provide economic benefits to landowners.

6.4.2 Promotion of local produce: £5,000

Appendix A: Maps

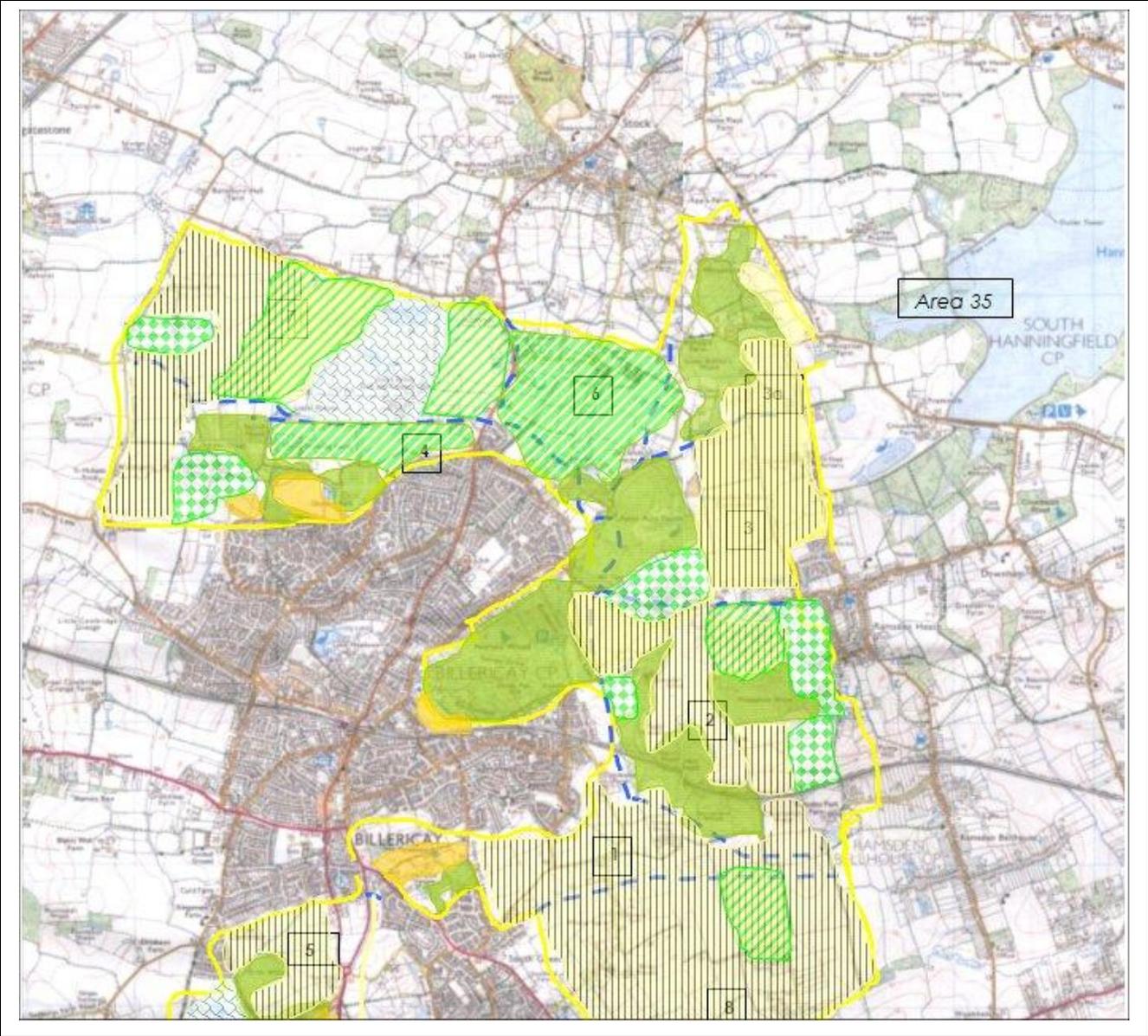
Map 1 Area 34 in Local Context



Map 2: Current position

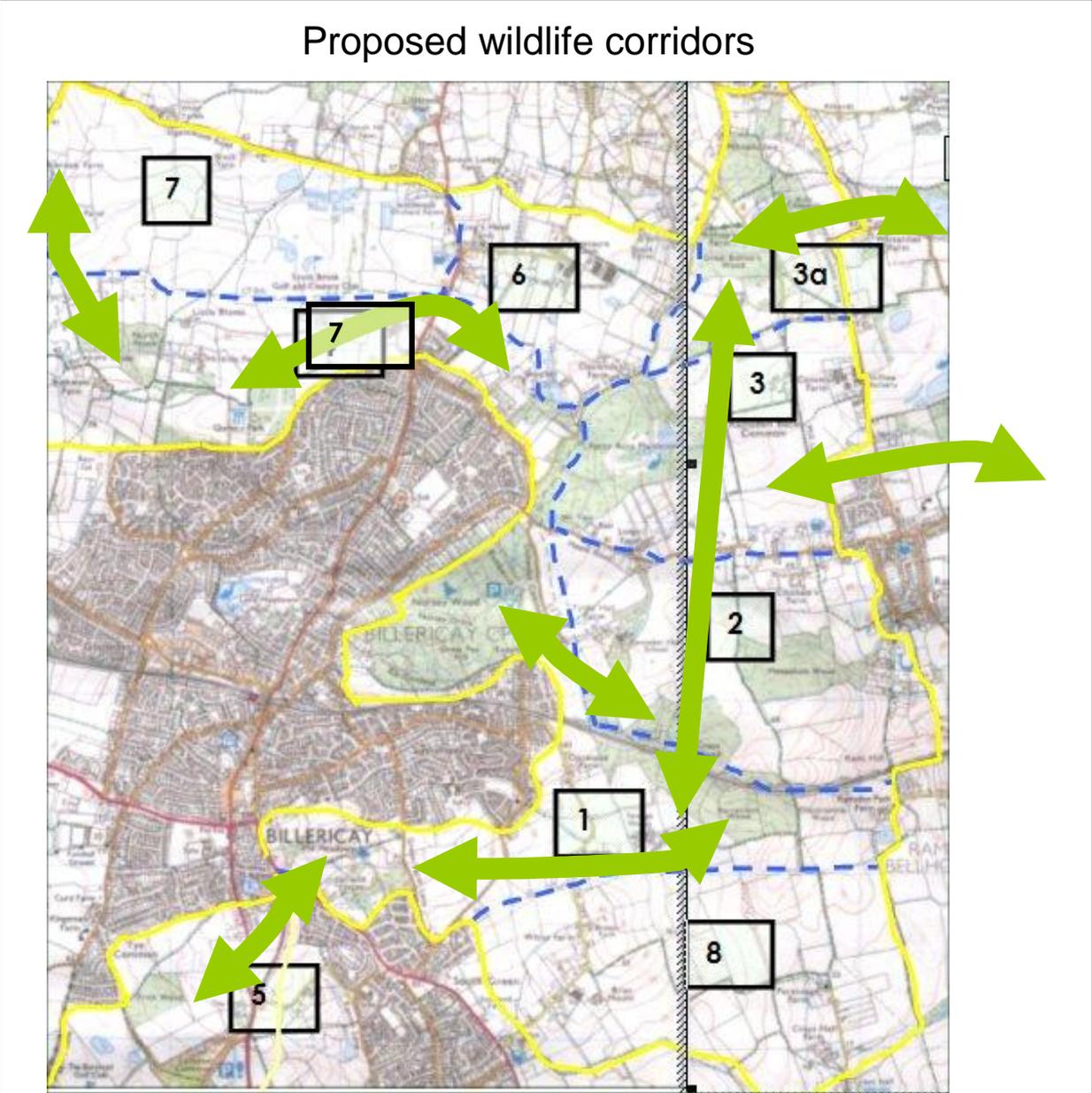
- Area 34 boundary
- section boundary
- Woodland
- unimproved grassland
- amenity (golf)
- arable (crop/ hay)
- grazing
- mosaic of arable/ grazing

The habitat map is general – more detail can be found in Section Assessment documents

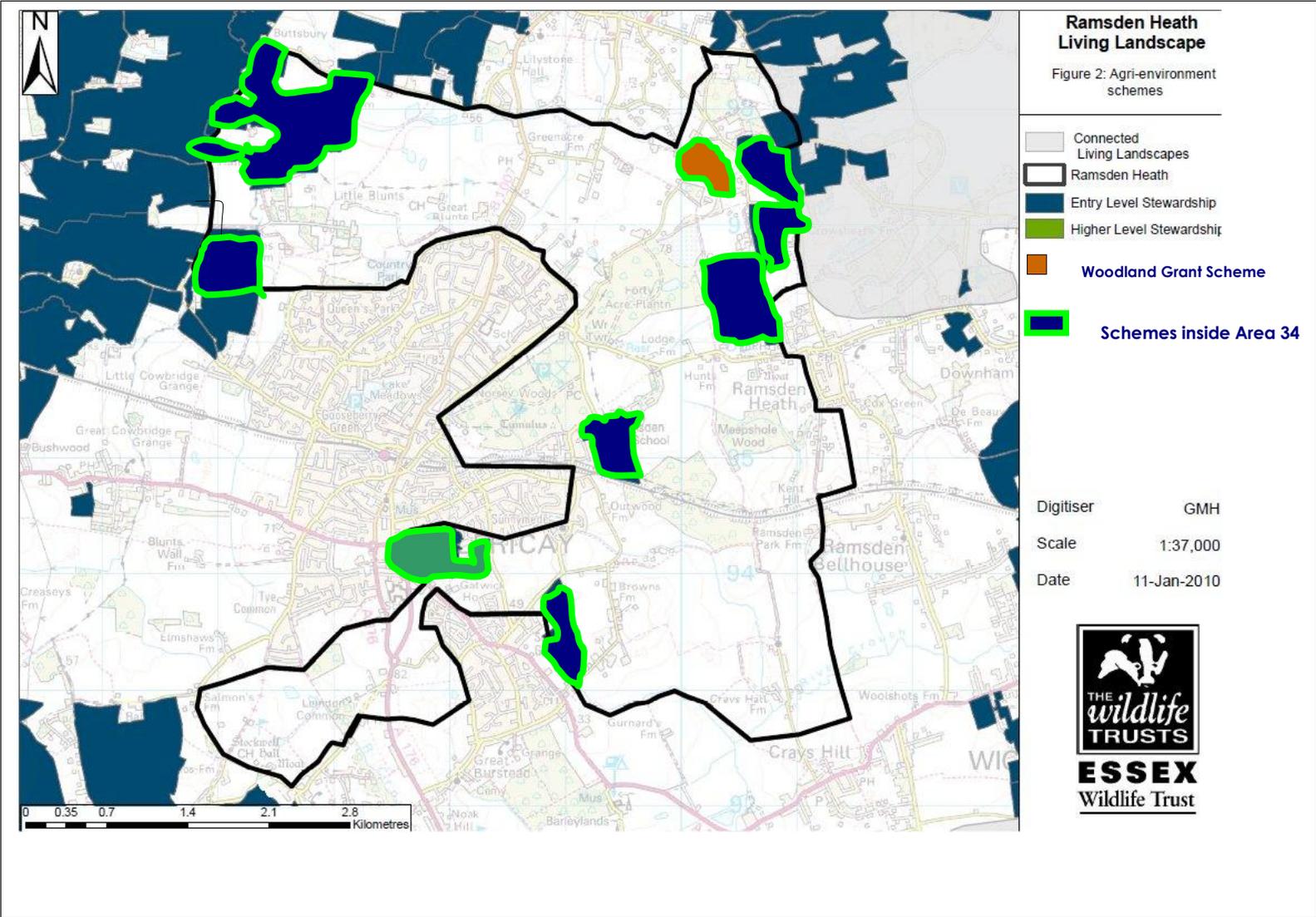


Map 2: Proposed Wildlife Corridors

(see section 3.1.4)



Map 3: Current Agri-environmental schemes

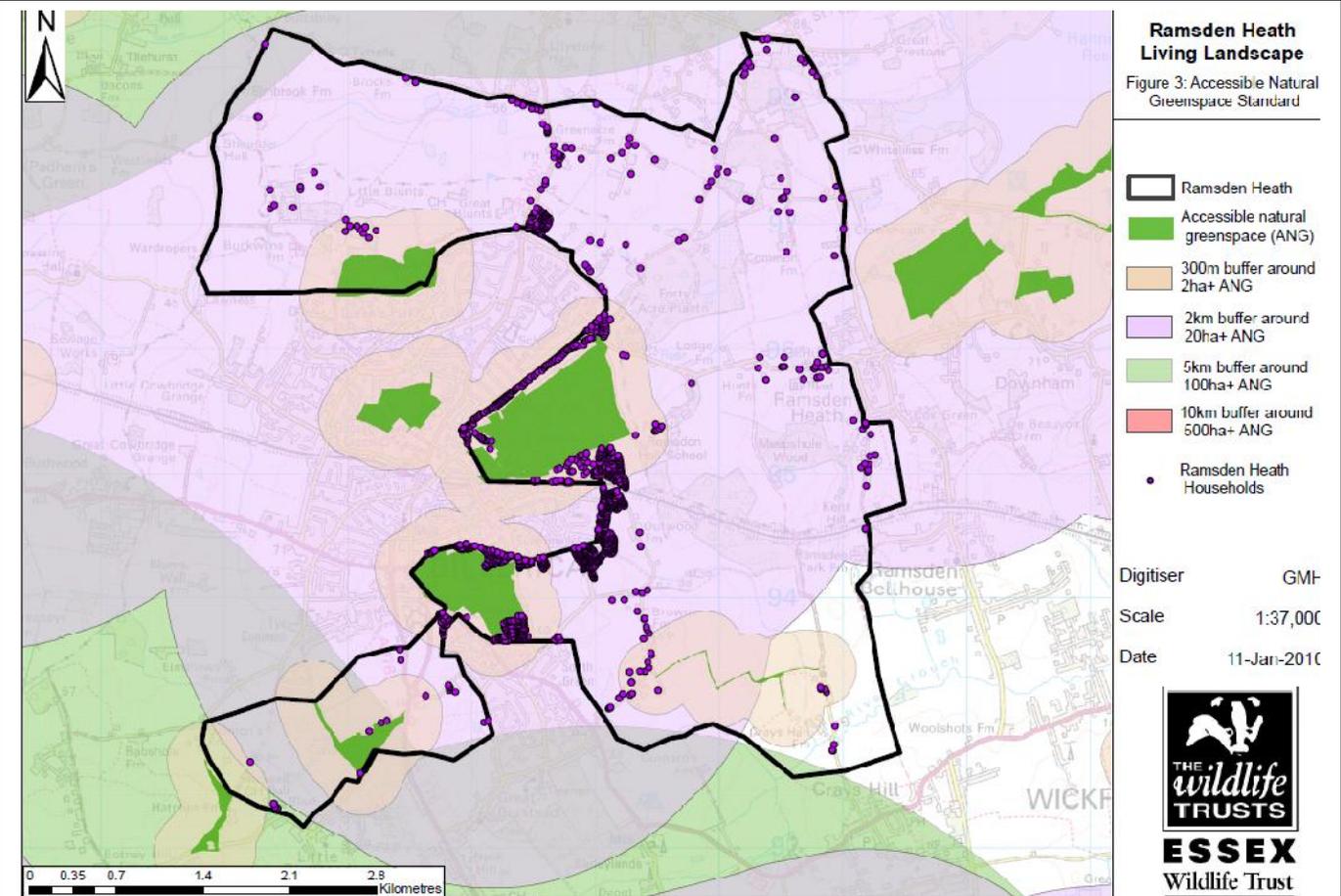


Total Area of the Living Landscape: 1969 ha

Entry Level Stewardship 195 ha

Higher Level Stewardship 23 ha

Map 4: Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt)



Appendix B – Local Wildlife Sites

Section

1	<p>BA18 Mill Meadows: unimproved grassland www.millmeadows.org.uk,</p> <p>BA28 Barrenleys Wood: ancient woodland, predominantly oak, but also ash, and containing some veteran trees. A management plan will be drawn-up with the aim of taking the site into positive conservation management.</p> <p>BA51. Barrenleys Meadow: The grassland community contains some of the species typical of acidic grasslands in Essex</p>
2	<p>CH58 Crays/Devils Wood: ancient woodland, a higher proportion of sweet chestnut</p> <p>CH64 Meepshole Wood: ancient woodland, west side predominantly sweet chestnut. <i>(Access is being requested to obtain more information)</i></p>
3	<p>CH52 Forty Acre Plantation: A mix of commercially-coppiced and ancient woodland, also incorporating fishing lakes, a good scrub area and a new plantation.</p> <p>CH59 Great Bishops/Broom Wood, sweet chestnut formerly coppiced. Also oak-dominant mixed deciduous woodland along the roadside. <i>(more information needed)</i></p> <p>CH63 Little Bishops/Kiln Common: former sweet chestnut coppicing with a plantation of birch, and areas with a mix of oak, hornbeam, hazel and a few alder.</p>
4	<p>BA20 Norsey Meadow, small area of unimproved grassland</p>
4	<p>BA17 Queens Park CP: a large area of meadow with islands of trees, mature hedgerows, an area of rough grass with scrub and a newly-plated woodland.</p> <p>BA10 Queens Park Meadow: a low-lying cattle-grazed meadow, including a pond.</p> <p>BA13 Buckwyn's Wood. A small area of deciduous woodland</p> <p>Collectively the above form a diverse habitat: meadow, plantation, scrub, small woodlands, pasture and hedgerows with a pond and boggy area.</p>
5	<p>BA12 Frith Wood, a small managed area of ancient woodland within which coppicing is practised, allowing for a varied and species rich flora</p> <p>BA14 Laindon Common has acid grassland (managed), ancient woodland and scrub.</p> <p>The two sites are linked by an important corridor of woodland adjoining Burstead Golf Course.</p> <p>Ba9. The Wilderness a small Hornbeam/Oak wood with a pond containing aquatic and marginal species.</p> <p>Ba16. Little Burstead Woods: an unusual chain of three wet woodlands along the course of the infant River Crouch, in a small valley. Includes Hornbeam, Ash, Oak, Hazel, Field Maple and a varied ground flora including Wood Melick and Wood Millet</p>
7	<p>CH 42 Stock Brook Meadow a small damp species-rich meadow containing a variety of grasses and herbs</p>

Appendix C – Glossary and abbreviations

Abbreviation	Name or term	Notes
BDC	Basildon District Council	
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	
CBC	Chelmsford Borough Council	
CLA	Countryside and Landowners Association	the membership organisation for owners of land, property and businesses in rural England and Wales
eBAP	Essex Biodiversity Action Plan	specific and focused objectives concentrating on protecting those species and habitats that are confined to, or are characteristic of Essex, as well as those that have declined regionally, nationally or globally. http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/Default.aspx?pageid=47
ECC	Essex County Council	http://www.essexcc.gov.uk
ES	Environmental Stewardship (Scheme)	an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land.
FoQP	Friends of Queens Park	The society of local volunteers that supports BDC in the management and promotion of Queens Park Country Park.
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	A national charity that helps farmers and others who manage the countryside to protect native wildlife for future generations
LL34	Living Landscape Area 34	The area under study
LNR	Local Nature Reserve	places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally http://www.english-nature.org.uk/Special/lnr/office.htm
LoWS	Local Wildlife Sites	Areas of land with significant wildlife value. In reality they are typically an area of ancient woodland, a flower-rich hay meadow or a village pond. http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk/localwildlifesites.aspx
MMS	Mill Meadows Society	The society of local volunteers that supports BDC in the management and promotion of Mill Meadows. www.millmeadows.org.uk
NFU	National Farmers Union	
NWS	Norsey Wood Society	The society of local volunteers that supports BDC in the management and promotion of Norsey Wood. http://www.norseywood.org.uk/
PCM	Positive Conservation Management	Maintaining, restoring or enhancing the wildlife species on site for which it has been designated. For example, managing a meadow to encourage the rare plant species it supports
RoWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan	a 10 year plan for improving the provision of access to the countryside through rights of way. Every County Council, including Essex, has a legal duty to produce a RoWIP.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest	Special wildlife and geological sites http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/ssi/index.cfm