

Parkfields & Allum Lane Spinney Green Space Action Plan 2016 - 2021



Produced by the Countryside Management Service
On behalf of Hertsmere Borough Council



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Introduction

Parkfields Open Space and Allum Lane Spinney are two adjacent sites located on the western edge of Borehamwood and owned by Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC). Parkfields is an extensive area of grassland with hedgerows and trees. Allum Lane Spinney is a strip of woodland that links Parkfields to the residential area to the south of the site. Between them they comprise an area of nearly 20 hectares.

Parkfields

Parkfields is one of the largest areas of semi-natural neutral grassland in the district at 16 hectares in size. There are damp areas in the east and drier soils in the south and west. The grassland is relatively unimproved and supports a range of native wild flowers. The extreme southern corner supports the richest flora with abundant knapweed and sneezewort, the latter at its western most point within the county.

The Cressall's Ditch, which is partially culverted and partially canalised with a concrete lining, runs of the length of the site. Due to the nature of the banks and stream bed there are no aquatic plants. Plans, drawn up on behalf of HBC by the Environment Agency, are in hand to restore the natural channel of the ditch, removing the concrete, realigning the channel to a more natural course with a more natural profile and planting native marginal vegetation.

There are substantial hedgerows of hawthorn and blackthorn across the site, several of which are old field boundaries and include large, mainly oak trees. Occasional isolated oak trees are scattered through the grassland. There are several areas of trees that were planted under a Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme in around 1997, part of which planting failed.

A large bank bisects the site, to the west of the ditch. It was created as a boundary for the new golf course in the 1990s, although the golf course never actually extended this far. It is now covered by mature willow scrub.

The site is bordered by residential areas to the east, separated from it by the Midland Mainline railway with Elstree and Borehamwood station just half a mile away. To the west lie further areas of semi-improved grassland and a small wood, which are owned by HBC but on long term lease to the adjacent golf club. The boundary between Parkfields and the golf club land is indistinct. Negotiations are currently under way to transfer some of this land back to the borough council, which would take the area of Parkfields under HBC management to approximately 21.75 hectares.

The site was the subject of a Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreement which ran from 2004 to 2014. This was a government scheme designed to encourage environmentally sound land management. For Parkfields, this predominantly entailed the grassland being cut annually in late summer, allowing the plants to flower and seed. The scheme has now expired but the management continues and the area consequently supports a large population of invertebrates, particularly butterflies and grasshoppers.

Much of Parkfields is notified as a Local Wildlife Site (excluding the play area and associated mown grass area in the south east corner).

Allum Lane Spinney

Allum Lane Spinney was historically old parkland, (i.e. not Ancient Woodland) forming part of the grounds of Boreham House. Its 3.25 hectares are now semi-natural in character, with oak, hornbeam, ash, lime, horse chestnut and sycamore. The northern section is predominantly mature hornbeam, (with a notable large Holm oak next to the track). The central section is mostly semi-mature oak. The southern section is a mixture of mature ash and horse chestnut, and much of the ash is of good quality. The wood contains a pond/wet area and ditches which are valuable for wildlife. There are also wood banks and hedge banks which are of historic and cultural interest. The spinney is also valuable for nature conservation.

Access and recreation

Both areas are important for local recreation and are particularly well used by dog walkers. They lie on the routes of the London Outer Orbital Path (LOOP) and Watling Chase Timberland Trail and are crossed by several public footpaths and a permissive bridleway.

Access is from Allum Lane, Park Crescent, Red Road, Beechfield Close and Organ Hall as well as via public footpaths linking to Watling Street. A surfaced path runs from Allum Lane through Allum Lane Spinney, into Parkfields and along the eastern boundary to link to entrances on the east and north-east side of the site. These include a foot bridge over the railway onto Red Road, a low tunnel (a disused cattle creep) under it onto Beechfield Close and a tunnel to the Organ Hall entrance.

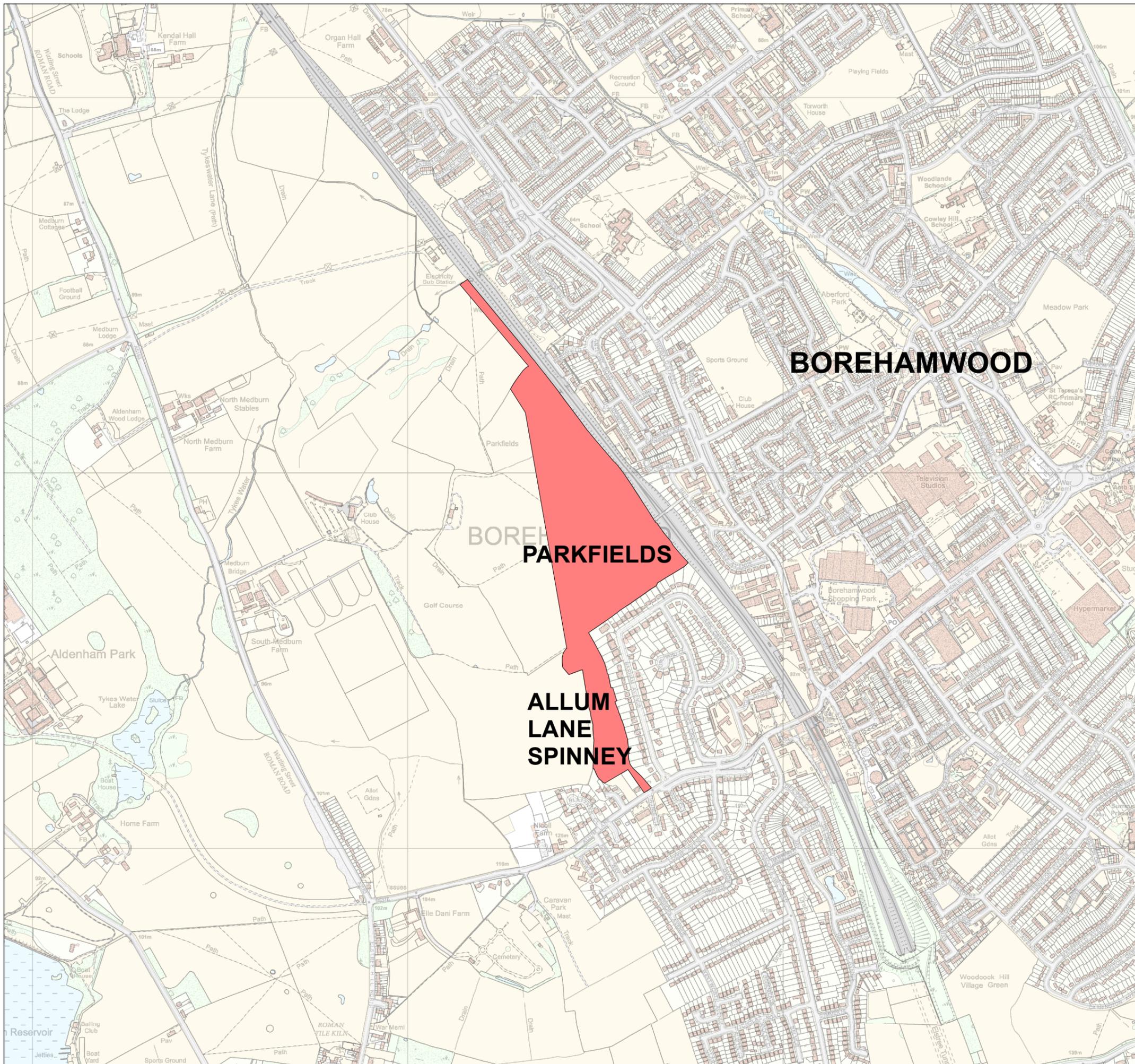
Until 2015, the bridge at Red Road gave vehicular as well as pedestrian access to the park. However, it was too low for modern railway requirements and was replaced by Network Rail with a footbridge during summer 2015. An access assessment was made prior to this and alternative vehicular access is being provided by Network Rail through Allum Lane Spinney. This involved widening and upgrading the existing path through the wood to enable access for maintenance equipment including grass cutting machinery.

Formal facilities include a toddler's play area, adult fitness equipment, an all-weather kick-around pitch and picnic area. These are currently being improved with an upgrade to the toddler's area and new equipment for older children. There is some signage at the site entrances but no interpretation.

The whole area is managed within the HBC grounds maintenance contract.

Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney Greenspace Action Plan 2016 to 2021

Site Location



N
Scale 1:10,000 at A3



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Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney Greenspace Action Plan 2016 to 2021

Site Description

KEY

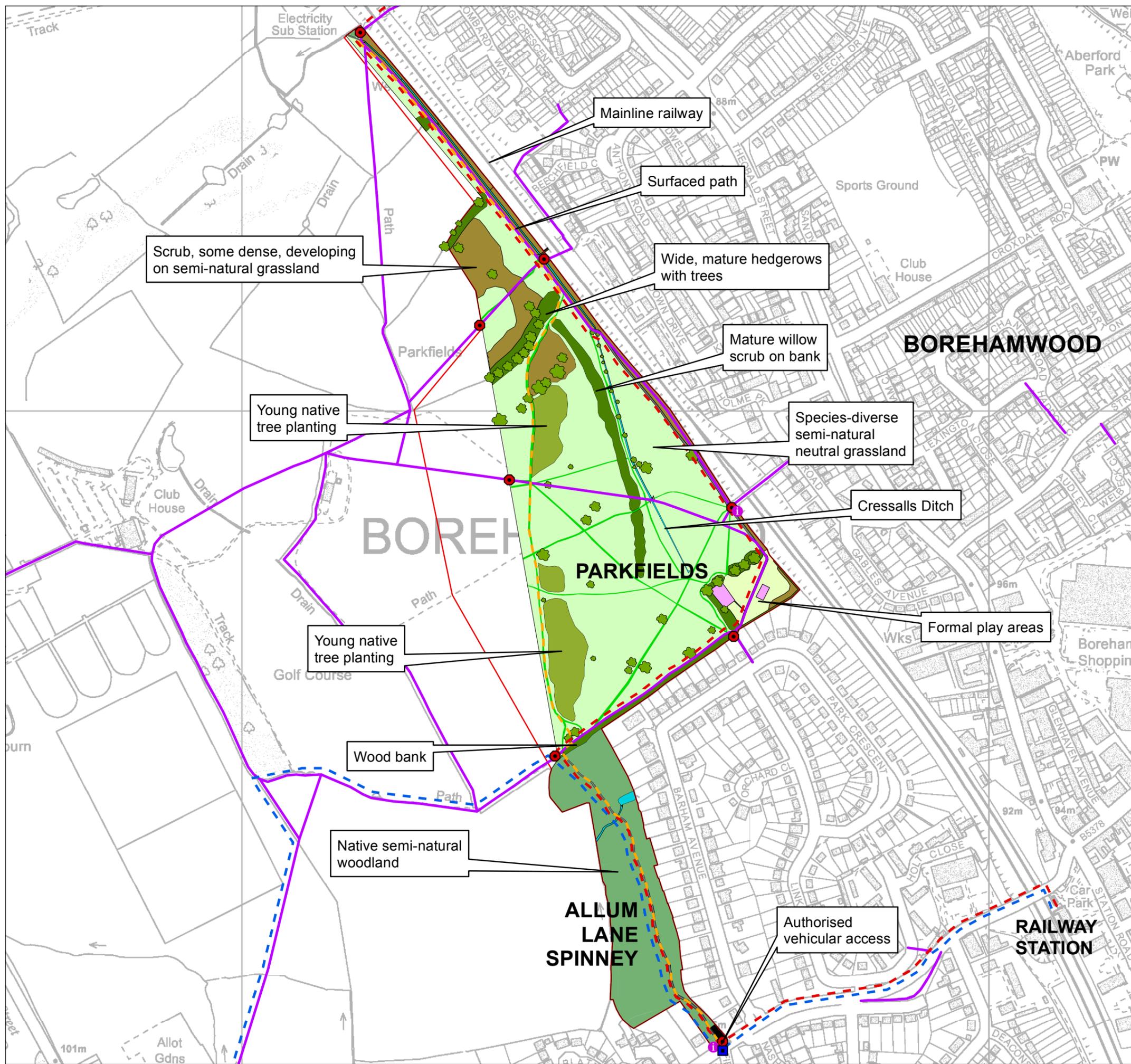
-  Pedestrian access
-  Vehicle access
-  Welcome sign
-  London LOOP
-  Permissive bridleway
-  Timberland Trail
-  Footpath
-  Trees
-  Site boundary
-  Proposed new boundary 2016
-  Mown path
-  Surfaced path
-  Conservation grassland
-  Amenity grassland
-  Mature woodland
-  Young woodland
-  Scrub
-  Hedgerow
-  Stream / pond
-  Play area
-  Sub-station

N

Scale 1:5,000 at A3



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Vision

To maintain and improve Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney as inviting and safe green spaces for recreation and wildlife.

Objectives

1. Make Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney a welcoming place for visitors
2. Conserve and enhance the biodiversity sustainably and over the long term
3. Involve the community in the development of Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney
4. Promote Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney to new users through a variety of means
5. Maintain Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney as a clean, well maintained, safe and secure open space
6. Secure funding to support site improvement works

Evaluation

Make Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney a welcoming place for visitors

The site is a fantastic facility for residents and visitors but currently this is being undersold. There is some welcome and directional signage around the site but it is very limited and in varying conditions / ages. With the exception of the Allum Lane entrance, there is no signage from the road, with little to tell people the site is there. Some of the entrance furniture is quite industrial and would benefit from replacement with softer, more welcoming structures. New welcome signage and directional signage should be installed throughout the site. This should be accompanied by on-site interpretation to show visitors where they can go in the site and give information on, for example, its wildlife and management.

The site also provides an opportunity for linear access for local people and visitors. It is already on several promoted recreational routes and bicycle use is allowed on the main path. However, more could be made of local use of the site to provide a safe and pleasant route around the town, for instance to get to the station, etc.. The main surfaced path that runs through the site from north to south is good quality but has lost some of its width due to the encroachment of adjacent scrub (along the boundary with the railway) and organic matter. The original width should be restored, which would provide more than adequate width to enhance co-use by walkers and cyclists.

The play areas are currently undergoing a complete upgrade which is due for completion in 2016.

A section of the permissive bridleway through the scrub in the centre of the site is wet and boggy. This can be rectified with minor surfacing works to improve the path for riders and walkers.

There are few benches around the park for people to sit and enjoy the area or just rest on their way through / round it. More should be installed to provide this opportunity and make it easier for the less mobile to use more of the park.

Conserve and enhance the biodiversity sustainably and over the long term

Much of the grassland at Parkfields is already under conservation management with an annual cut in late summer. Although this has been generally positive, the late timing of the cut is allowing areas of the grassland to becoming dominated with common hogweed and this needs controlling. This can be achieved, if funding and ground conditions allow, by altering the cutting regime, initially to two cuts a year for a couple of years and then by bringing the annual cut forward to late July / early August.

During the Red Road railway bridge replacement works carried out by Network Rail and mentioned previously, a considerable amount of damage was done to the species-diverse grassland along the access route taken by works vehicles. Due to wet ground conditions at the time this was not properly reinstated. In addition, a considerable amount of rubble and rubbish was left or imported into the area where attempts had been made at reinstatement. The Borough Council have reinstated the area themselves during the spring and summer of 2016.

The grassland to the northwest is not currently managed and is suffering from scrub encroachment. Although a mixture of scrub of different ages across the site is to be encouraged, some of the grassland in this area supports a good range of wild flowers and grasses. The scrub therefore needs to be kept in check so that it does not become woodland. A programme of scrub control and coppicing should be introduced to achieve this. This management could be extended into the grassland area that is proposed to be taken back in hand from the Golf Club.

The young plantation is now at a stage where it would benefit from thinning and the establishment of a graded woodland edge habitat through rotational coppicing of the woodland edge. The opportunity could be sought to extend this new woodland into the lower part of the area taken back from the Golf Club.

Allum Lane Spinney is a relatively narrow woodland with a good range of species and some mix in age groups. Management here should be in keeping with its size. Selective felling was undertaken along the main path through the wood during 2015 to enable the path to be widened for large vehicular access. This has helped let in more light to the woodland and will benefit the wood as a whole. Little other work is currently required in the wood. Selective removal of individual trees along the path can be undertaken in future based on the results of tree safety surveys, which should be undertaken on a regular basis. Elsewhere, the opportunity to open up parts of the woodland to encourage natural generation can be taken as and when trees fall or are damaged. The coppice stools along the old wood bank / ditch side would benefit from re-coppicing, whilst the sycamore along this section should all be removed to allow light to the native species.

There are a few mature and semi-mature trees dotted sporadically through the grassland. Several of these are in clusters of two or three and would benefit from singling by removing the smaller trees to leave one specimen. More single trees should be planted around the grassland to create more of a 'parkland' landscape.

A number of the trees across the site, including in the young plantation areas, are ash. These are currently under threat from Chalara ash dieback and significant numbers are likely to be affected and killed by this fungal disease over the coming years. The situation is evolving and management should aim to promote the health, diversity and resilience of the trees and woodland for the future. It should follow best practice and scientific advice at the time. Currently it should aim to retain as many ash trees as possible whilst ensuring that other native species such as oak and field maple are favoured where a choice has to be made. Thinning will help promote the health of all tree species including ash, giving them as much chance of survival as possible. Monitoring for the presence and spread of the disease will also help inform future management requirements. A regular programme of tree safety surveys, especially along the main public routes, will enable action to be taken to deal with any dangerous trees, whether ash or not, where necessary.

There are several old boundary hedges in the park which have become over-wide with dense scrub developing. Although these have value for wildlife the old field patterns will eventually be lost if they are not kept in check. Consideration should be given to restoring them through trimming back the scrub to the original hedge line and maintaining the resultant hedges.

A section of hedge along the railway line boundary near the Red Road entrance would benefit from laying, to make it thicker and provide a better habitat for wildlife as well as a screen to the railway. In addition, a gap in this same hedge line near the formal play area would benefit from planting up with new hedge plants.

The Cressalls Ditch is currently a concrete lined ditch through the centre of the park. As already noted, a project is underway to restore the channel to a more natural course. This project is due for completion in 2016.

The bank adjacent to the Cressalls Ditch is covered with semi-mature willow scrub. This is starting to collapse in places and will continue to do so. The willow could be managed by establishing a coppice rotation for the scrub, cutting alternate wedges into the scrub so that over a 10 year period the whole bank is brought into management. Alternatively, if budgets do not allow, trees can be dealt with as needed on a safety basis.

Areas of the grassland lie wet for parts of the year and present the opportunity to create open water to extend the available wildlife habitats on site. Two small shallow ponds / scrapes could be created in this area, creating a feature from this already wet part of the site.

There are areas of Japanese Knotweed in the spinney. This is a highly invasive non-native plant which needs to be controlled / eradicated to prevent its spread. Any new areas should be treated the same way.

Involve the community in the development of Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney

It is important to involve the community in the management of the park and give them the opportunity to get involved. This management plan will go out for public consultation, with stakeholders and local residents, before being adopted.

The public should be kept informed of major activity / works in the park, including the restoration works to Cressalls Ditch.

Opportunities for volunteers to be involved in the site should be taken where appropriate. This can include planting or marginal vegetation along the banks of the newly restored Cressalls Ditch.

Promote Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney to new users through a variety of means

The site provides a great facility for existing users and a great opportunity for people who have never visited before. Many of the proposals mentioned above will help encourage new visitors, including improvements in signage and interpretation, the upgraded play facilities and improved access.

In addition, a new series of walk leaflets has been produced for the borough. These include 3 routes incorporating Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney and will help encourage a wider audience to visit and use the site. They are available from the council offices, local libraries and to download from the Borough Council www.hertsmere.gov.uk and CMS www.hertslink.org/cms websites.

Maintain Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney as a clean, well maintained, safe and secure open space

The site is generally managed as a clean, well maintained, safe and secure open space through the grounds maintenance contract including litter picking and maintenance of structures, equipment and furniture. A regular tree safety survey is also undertaken.

Improvements to access, signage and waymarking are required as outlined above. In addition, near the Organ Hall entrance, the surfaced path runs northwards to the site boundary, where it meets a boundary ditch. The ditch is quite deep and steep sided but there is no barrier. A safety barrier should be installed here. In addition, the Organ Hall entrance is in need of surfacing to deal with the wet and muddy surface.

The damage caused during the bridge works by Network Rail needs to be made good to reinstate a sound surface for the public and restore the damaged grassland. This should be done without importing topsoil or seed if at all possible.

Secure funding to support site improvement works

A number of the works outlined in this plan are already funded under the existing Grounds Maintenance programme. However, there are a number of capital items as well as several revenue items that will need resourcing. Work will need to be undertaken in Year 1 to recruit funding for the works.

Action Plan

The following action plan has been established to achieve the objectives set out the Management Plan. The plans are comprised of annual work programmes which address management activity that falls outside of the contracted grounds maintenance operations. They cover the period from April 2016 to March 2021 inclusive. In some cases, tasks are ongoing and so appear on more than one action plan.

Column 1 and 2 of the action plan lists the management objective for each particular task. In some instances, an objective will be fulfilled by a number of actions. Column 3 briefly describes the action to be taken. Column 4 sets out the organisation/s responsible for delivery of the stated action (see list of abbreviations below), and Column 5 gives an estimated cost for carrying out the works.

ABBREVIATIONS

CMS	Countryside Management Service
Con	Contractor
GM	Grounds Maintenance Contractor
HBC	Hertsmere Borough Council
Vols	Volunteers

At the end of each annual period, the action plan will be updated to show the progress of the activities for that year. In theory, all should be marked as complete but if for any reason actions haven't been achieved, details are to be recorded here. If appropriate, remnant activities can then be moved in to one of the future actions plans.

Year 1

Obj ref	Objective	Action	Who	Cost (est)
1.	Make Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney a welcoming place for visitors	Cut back adjacent scrub and scrape off organic matter to restore full width of surfaced path that runs parallel to railway line	HBC / Con	
		Complete upgrade of play facilities	HBC	
		Cut back scrub along south-eastern internal boundary of Parkfields, parallel with Barham Avenue	HBC / GM	
		Carry out minor surfacing of wet spots on permissive bridleway	HBC / Con	£1,000
2.	Conserve the biodiversity sustainably and over the long term	Restore channel of Cressalls Ditch, removing concrete lining and re-routing to a more natural course	HBC / EA / Con / CMS	£40,000
		Plant marginal vegetation along newly restored course of Cressalls Ditch	CMS Vols	£2,000
		Plant c 40m hedge in gap along fence between formal play area and railway line	HBC	£300
		If funds allow, carry out additional cut and lift of grassland in early spring (Year 1 and Year 2) to reduce dominance of rank grasses	Con	
		Cut grassland in early August	GM	
		Single out existing parkland trees, removing encroaching trees to leave single specimen, and plant new parkland trees around the site	HBC / Con	£2,000
		Draw up proposals for land taken back from Golf Club once confirmed	HBC / CMS	
3.	Involve the community in the development of Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney	Consult on management plan	HBC / CMS	Staff time
		Keep public informed of restoration works on Cressalls Ditch and run volunteer event(s) to plant up newly restored channel	HBC / CMS / CMS Vols	Staff time/SLA
		Complete upgrade of play facilities		
5.	Maintain Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney as a clean, well maintained, safe, secure open space	Install safety barrier where surfaced path meets stream at far north of site near Organ Hall entrance and improve path surfacing at this entrance	HBC	£400
6.	Secure funding to support site improvements works	Seek funding for access and biodiversity improvements including interpretation and signage for implementation in Year 2	HBC / CMS	Staff time/SLA
		Apply for Watling Chase Community Forest funding for Cressalls Ditch planting	CMS	SLA

Year 2

Obj ref	Objective	Action	Who	Cost (est)
1.	Make Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney a welcoming place for visitors	Produce and install on-site interpretation, directional signage and welcome boards throughout the site	HBC / Con / CMS	£15,000
		Install benches around the park	HBC / Con / CMS	£2,000 to £4,000
		Enhance entrances to make them more welcoming and install new furniture to allow horse and cycle access	HBC / Con / CMS	£8,000
2.	Conserve the biodiversity sustainably and over the long term	Thin plantations and introduce management of boundaries through rotational coppicing	HBC / Con	£6,500
		Coppice northern edge of Allum Lane Spinney, including bankside trees. Remove sycamore	HBC / Con	£1,500
		If funds allow, carry out additional cut and lift of grassland in early spring (Year 1 and Year 2) to reduce dominance of rank grasses	Con	
		Cut grassland in early August	GM	
		Create shallow ponds in wet area of grassland	HBC / Con	£500
		Cut back scrub to restore old boundary hedges	GM / Con	
	Lay approx. 75m hedge along boundary adjacent to railway line south of Red Road entrance	HBC / Con or CMS vols	£200 to £1,000	

Annual Actions – Years 1 to 5

Obj ref	Objective	Action	Who	Cost (est)
2.	Conserve the biodiversity sustainably and over the long term	Cut conservation grassland annually in late July / early August (with exception of Years 1 & 2 – see above)	GM	
		Manage scrub in grassland through rotational coppicing and / or clearance	HBC / Con	
		In Allum Lane Spinney, open up to encourage natural regeneration as and when other trees fall / are damaged	HBC / Con	
		Cut back scrub to restore old boundary hedges	GM / Con	
		Control / eradicate Japanese knotweed	GM	
5.	Maintain Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney as a clean, well maintained, safe and secure open space	Cut back overhanging vegetation from paths	GM	
		Empty litter and dog bins as per ground maintenance specification	GM	
		Cut amenity paths and grass areas as per grounds maintenance	GM	
		Inspect play areas as per ground maintenance specification	GM	
		Tree survey and follow up works	GM	

Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney Greenspace Action Plan

Year 1 Action Plan

Annual Management

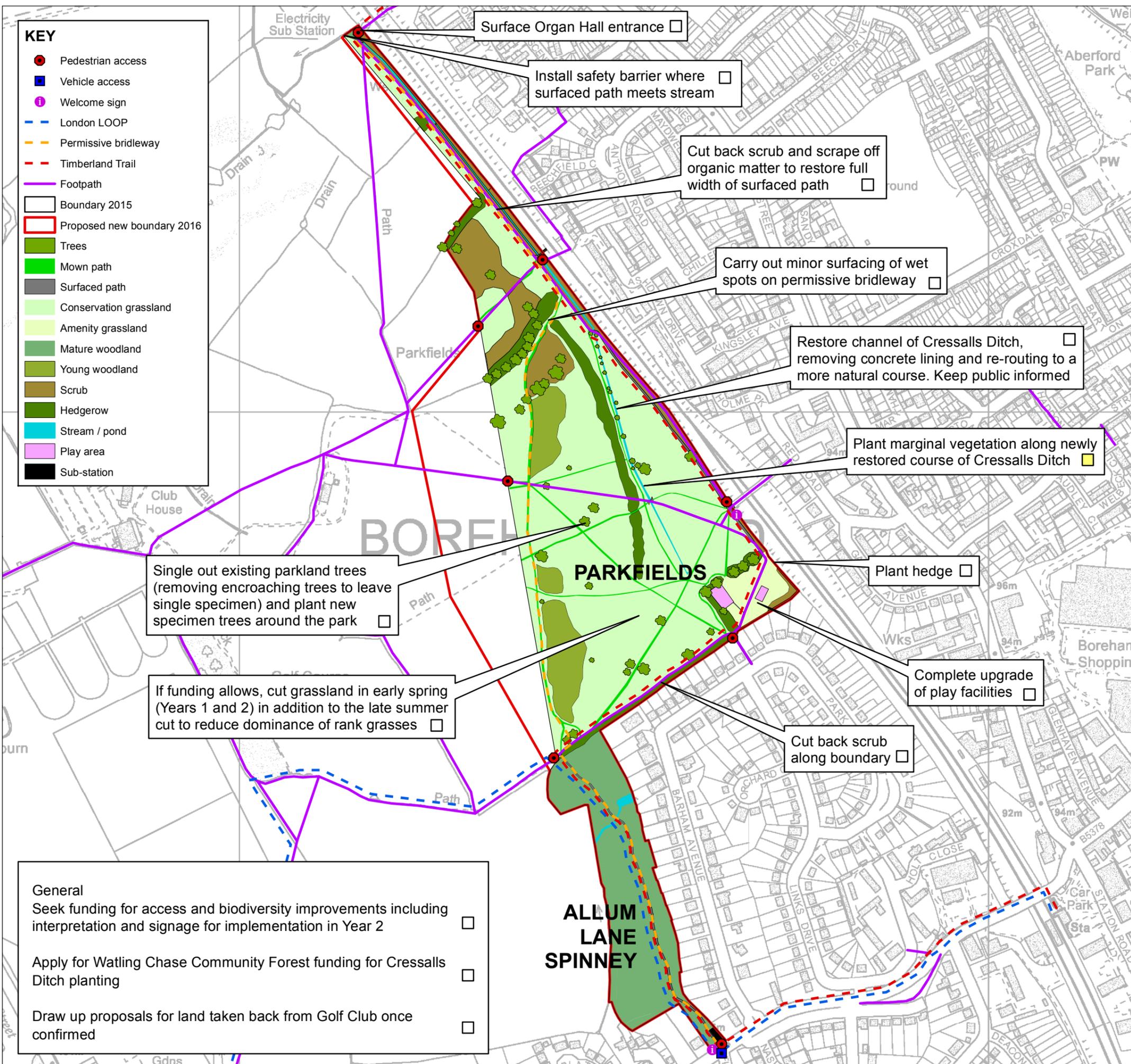
- Carried out by contractor/officer
- Carried out by volunteers

- Amenity cut of paths and grassland
- Cut back overhanging vegetation from paths
- Conservation cut of meadows
- Manage scrub in grassland
- Opportunistic management in Allum Lane Spinney
- Inspect play areas
- Maintain access furniture/signs/benches, etc.
- Litter picking
- Bin /dog bin emptying
- Tree survey and follow-up work
- Control / eradicate Japanese knotweed

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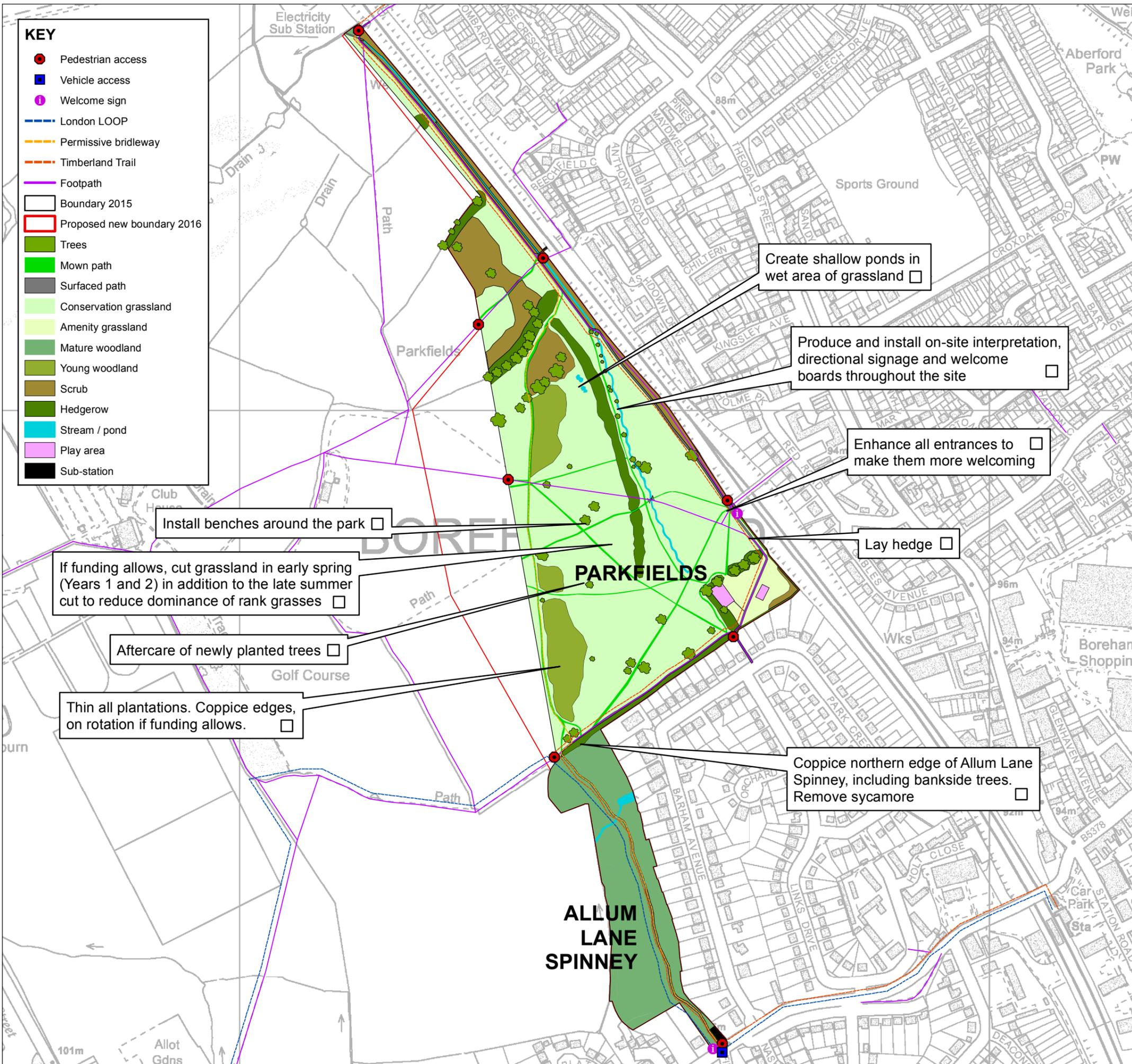
Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney Greenspace Action Plan

Year 2 Action Plan

Annual Management

- Carried out by contractor/officer
- Carried out by volunteers

- Amenity cut of paths and grassland
- Cut back overhanging vegetation from paths
- Conservation cut of meadows
- Manage scrub in grassland
- Opportunistic management in Allum Lane Spinney
- Inspect play areas
- Maintain access furniture/signs/benches, etc.
- Litter picking
- Bin /dog bin emptying
- Tree survey and follow-up work
- Control / eradicate Japanese knotweed
- Cut back scrub to restore old hedges



N

 Scale **1:5,000** at A3

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Parkfields and Allum Lane Spinney Greenspace Action Plan

Years 3-5 Action Plans

Annual Management

- Carried out by contractor/officer
- Carried out by volunteers

- Amenity cut of paths and grassland
- Cut back overhanging vegetation from paths
- Conservation cut of meadows
- Manage scrub in grassland
- Opportunistic management in Allum Lane Spinney
- Inspect play areas
- Maintain access furniture/signs/benches, etc.
- Litter picking
- Bin /dog bin emptying
- Tree survey and follow-up work
- Control / eradicate Japanese knotweed
- Cut back scrub to restore old hedges



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KEY

- Pedestrian access
- Vehicle access
- Welcome sign
- Interpretation
- Bench
- London LOOP
- Permissive bridleway
- Timberland Trail
- Footpath
- Boundary 2015
- Proposed new boundary 2016
- Trees
- Mown path
- Surfaced path
- Conservation grassland
- Amenity grassland
- Mature woodland
- Young woodland
- Scrub
- Hedgerow
- Stream / pond
- Play area
- Sub-station

