

**Victoria Park, Ashford**

**Conservation Plan**

**Volume 1 Text**

**Final**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose and scope of the plan

1.1.1 This conservation plan for Victoria Park and Watercross Fields, Ashford has been prepared with the following objectives:

- to set out the history of the site;
- to describe the significance of the park and its main individual features;
- to explore issues and set out policies for future use, conservation and development;
- to provide information that will support Ashford Borough Council (ABC)'s bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The study area is shown on Figures 1 and 2. It is linked across the railway to the town centre by two routes and along the river to the east and west by present-day and historical routes. There are equally strong connections to the south. The plan therefore discusses these routes, but proposals for them are outside its scope.

### 1.2 Structure and sources

1.2.1 The plan follows the standard format for conservation plans recommended by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and based on the work of J.S. Kerr.<sup>1</sup> It is divided into the following sections.

2. Context and principal features
3. Landscape character and present state
4. History: the Victorian and Edwardian park
5. History: two world wars and the time between
6. History: the post-war park
7. The history and conservation of the fountain
8. Significances
9. Issues and opportunities
10. Policies
11. References

### 1.3 Approach and sources

1.3.1 Landscape character assessment is based on current Landscape Institute and Natural England guidance.<sup>2</sup> Assessment of significance has followed Historic England's *Conservation Principles. Views* are discussed with reference to that organisation's *Seeing History in the View*.<sup>3</sup> Historical and present-day features are identified in a gazetteer (Appendix 1) and the locations are shown on Figure 4. Numbers in brackets in the main text are the gazetteer numbers.

1.3.2 The principal documentary sources used are the minutes of Ashford Urban District Council (UDC) and of Ashford Borough Council, which succeeded it in 1974. These are listed in section 11. There is a gap from 1955-74 where the minutes are only uncatalogued drafts which could not be examined. Other sources include the local newspaper, *The Kentish Gazette and Ashford News (KEAN)*, the county council Historic Environment Record, and the publications of Ruderman and Salter.<sup>4</sup> Map and aerial photograph regression have provided a lot of useful information, as have the extensive collections of photographs and

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Kerr, *The Conservation Plan: A Guide to the Preparation of Conservation Plans for Places of European Cultural Significance* 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (2004); Heritage Lottery Fund, 'Conservation Plan Guidance' (October 2012) <https://www.hlf.org.uk/conservation-plan-guidance>

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Character Assessment LI Technical Information Note 08/2015 [https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Landscape-Character-Assessment-TIN-08\\_15-20160216.pdf](https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Landscape-Character-Assessment-TIN-08_15-20160216.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> English Heritage, *Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance* (London, 2008); English Heritage, *Seeing History in the View* (London, 31 May 2011)

<sup>4</sup> A Ruderman, *A History of Ashford* (Chichester, 1984). See section 11 for Steve Salter's books

postcards at Ashford Museum and Ashford Library. Much of the section on the fountain is taken from reports by or for The Morton Partnership.<sup>5</sup> Trees and woodland information is partly taken from Green Tree Management and Consultancy Services' 2018 tree constraints report. Biological records are taken from an Ecological Scoping Survey by Bramley Associates following a search at the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC).

#### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

- 1.4.1 We are grateful for the help of Jon Winder, Emma Powell, Karen Amos, Alison Oates, Elizabeth Fagg, Sarah Dee, Dr Peter Frost, Mike Boulding, Bob Shrubbs and the staff at Ashford Library and Kent History and Library Centre.

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<sup>5</sup> Particularly Donald Insall Associates, 'Hubert Fountain Victoria Park Ashford Kent' Historical research report, December 1997

## 2. Context and principal features

### 2.1 General character and access

- 2.1.1 Victoria Park and Watercress Fields occupy 21.3ha on the south side of the Great Stour river 600m from Ashford town centre (Figure 1). The site of the original Victoria Park of 7.3ha (17 acres) was purchased from the Jemmett family in 1898. It lies at the east end of the site on ground rising from the flood plain of the river to 45m AOD at the southeast edge. The remaining land, purchased by the local authority in 1979, extends for 1km to the west of the original park as far as Leacon Road. It lies mainly within the floodplain, with residential development dating from the 1960s and 1970s on the higher ground at its south edge. The fields are named after Watercress Farm (Figure 3) which was built over in the 1960s/70s. Watercress needs shallow, flowing water. It was grown in the stream near the farm, but not on the fields, so the name is a bit misleading.
- 2.1.2 The site is separated from the town to the north by the Tonbridge to Ashford Railway and the high speed railway. There are two pedestrian access points. Gasworks Lane (Figure 2) was originally the main one, passing under the railway, but it is now cut off by the high speed link. 'Cattle market lane' crossing the railway and linking to Jemmett Road and thence to the rest of South Ashford, remains. Prior to the construction of the Cattle Market in 1856, this was one of the principal routes from the south to the original market in Lower High St.
- 2.1.3 The main vehicle access to the site is along Jemmett Road from the south and Christchurch Road from the east, with parking adjacent to the indoor bowls pavilion in the southeast corner of the park. On the south side of the river there is a wide footpath/cycleway which is part of the Stour Valley Walk and provided east-west access, crossing the river at a ford (39) near the west end of the site. The nearest vehicle access points to this route are Bowens Field in the east and Leacon Road in the west. There is also pedestrian access from Hillbrow Road at the south edge of the original park and at several points from the Watercress Fields development.
- 2.1.4 Residential areas that grew up in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries abut the east, south and west boundaries of the site, but the north edge is more complex. From Gasworks Lane eastwards, the river follows a gently-curving canalised alignment. This may have originated with the making of the Lord's Cut in the sixteenth century to serve a mill on the east side of the town. In this section, the park is very close to the south edge of the river. On the north side, where the former gasworks and power station sites are being developed for residential use, there is also a narrow waterside margin. Upstream of Gasworks Lane, the north bank has been mainly developed for commercial and light industrial use. The river follows a natural sinuous alignment leaving a band of willow, alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and poplar woodland up to 40m wide along the edge.
- 2.1.5 Within the site of the original park, the principal feature at the northeast end is the nineteenth-century Hubert Fountain set at the edge of a 1990s piazza. The land rises gently southwards and is crossed by paths that date mainly from the end of the nineteenth century. They are lined by avenues of trees planted to replace those lost in the 1987 storm. At the south end of the park, there is a nursery pavilion next to a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) with a play area on the west side. Southwards, a car park separates these features from an indoor bowls pavilion that also has a play area. To the west, the lightly-wooded Secret Garden falls to the watercourse that formed the boundary of the original park. It is marked by widely spaced oaks (*Quercus robur*) which extend intermittently along the river frontage and were probably part of the original park planting. Beyond the watercourse there is an adventure play area set within woodland. To the north, there is the long, wooded river corridor with a large open area between this and the Watercress Fields residential areas.

## 2.2 Designations and heritage sites

- 2.2.1 The Hubert Fountain is grade II\* listed (NHL1071019) following upgrading from grade II in 2016. The reasons for listing are given by Historic England as follows. *Design Quality: a monumental art cast iron fountain of three tiers with figures of cupids, atlantes and caryatids based on antique and classic models in the Ecole des Beaux Arts style, cast by a foundry which acquired a worldwide reputation for such fountains and described in the 1862 International Exhibition catalogue as 'a fine monumental work' and 'of exquisite design and perfect form';* *Rarity: the finest of only three examples of listed cast iron ornamental fountains in England, one of only three surviving listed ornamental fountains in the country displayed at C19 International exhibitions, and the only listed ornamental fountain in England cast by a French foundry;* *Comparators: comparable with the Ross Fountain in Edinburgh (listed Grade A), also exhibited at the 1862 Exhibition, the Hubert Fountain was considered in 1862 as the finer of the two fountains although the Ross Fountain now has stronger group value.*
- 2.2.2 The balustrades and steps around the fountain were listed separately as grade II in 2016 (NHL 1433682). There is some confusion, because the notification and listing entry refer to the layout before the balustrades were substantially altered in 1994.
- 2.2.3 The park is noted in the Kent Gardens Compendium prepared by the Kent Gardens Trust in the 1990s. However, the compendium has been superseded by inventories for individual local authority areas, but there is not one for Ashford Borough.
- 2.2.4 Sites recorded in Kent County Council's Historic Environment Record are shown on Figure 3. Additional sites recorded in the fieldwork for this plan are shown on Figure 4 and described in the gazetteer (Appendix 1).
- 2.2.5 The river is within the Ashford to Fordwich Kent Local Wildlife Site identified by the Kent Wildlife Trust. The wildlife site as a whole is described as being largely natural in character and supporting a wide range of submerged, emergent and marginal aquatic plants including several which are rare and uncommon in Kent. Water quality is good throughout almost the entire length. The overall boundary has been drawn to include areas of fen, marsh, swamp, wet woodland and wet grassland, and areas of standing open water which are contiguous with the river corridor. Through Ashford, the banks of the river are largely natural, with only a few stretches having hard embankments. As a result, the river through the town supports a good range of emergent and marginal plant species, as well as a good range of submerged aquatic plants. Within the park there are mature alders (*Alnus glutinosa*), white, crack and goat willows (*Salix alba*, *S. fragilis*, *S. caprea*) and planted poplars along the north bank. The citation describes a good range of aquatic plants, but within the park the edges are substantially masked by dense common nettle (*Urtica dioica*).
- 2.2.6 A KMBRC search shows that several protected species are known to occur within or very close to the park. These include white-clawed freshwater crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), bullhead (*Cottus gobio*), palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*). Birds present include kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) and little egret (*Egretta garzetta*). The east end of the site is 100m from the wetland at Bowens Field.

## 2.3 Planning policy

### National planning policy

- 2.3.1 National planning policy for the historic environment is given in section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012. Local planning authorities are charged with identifying and assessing the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and the subsequent impact. The NPPF notes that substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets including grade I and II\* listed buildings, such as the Hubert fountain, should be wholly exceptional.
- 2.3.2 The NPPF for the natural environment states the following. *When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:*
- *if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
  - *proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
  - *development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;*
  - *opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;*
  - *planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.*

### Ashford Borough Council policies and strategies

- 2.3.3 The borough council has an admirably concise **Corporate Plan**<sup>6</sup> which includes as Priority 3 healthy choices for physical cultural and leisure engagement, and as Priority 4 attractive Ashford countryside and townscape, tourism and heritage.
- 2.3.4 The council's **Open Space Strategy**<sup>7</sup> has the following themes:
1. *Protect the existing open space network;*
  2. *Enhance and improve the accessibility and quality of existing provision;*
  3. *Provide new open space to expand the network strategically;*
  4. *Create multifunctional strategic hubs of open space; and*
  5. *Work together to protect, deliver and effectively manage open space provision across the borough.*
- Appendix 3 of the strategy gives a detailed analysis of the Green Corridor that threads through the borough. Under section B3 it makes the following points about Victoria Park and Watercress Fields. Victoria Park is part of the largest and one of the most important areas of public open space in Ashford and is regularly used as a venue for festivals and events. Over the 15 years leading up to 2017 the council has undertaken a large number of improvements. (These are described in section 6). The strategy notes that a masterplan has been

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/transparency/our-performance/the-corporate-plan-and-our-performance/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/the-environment/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy/>

developed by Allen Scott<sup>8</sup> and describes the site's place in the HLF grant process. Watercress Fields was previously occupied by formal football pitches, but is now solely an area for informal recreation. It is an important site linking areas in the south of Ashford to the town centre and other parts of the Green Corridor. Prior to the Allen Scott masterplan, the council commissioned a 'Visioning and Masterplanning Exercise' from Lloydbore, which was completed in December 2015.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Land Management Improvement Plan 2014-2019** (December 2014)

2.3.5 This plan offers an evaluation of the state of land managed by ABC, including public parks, open space, housing land, cemeteries and general amenity areas, with an assessment of issues specific to different land areas and recommendations for action. It is to be read alongside the council's key aim of making Ashford a pleasant and enjoyable place to live, work and visit and against requirements to:

- *provide attractive green solutions to promote Ashford and civic pride;*
- *meet the growth agenda for a sustainable high quality landscape;*
- *protect habitat health and quality to maximise biodiversity over the long term;*
- *respond effectively to climate change;*
- *create wider more beneficial partnerships;*
- *gain green flag status for some of our open spaces.*

A two-year progress report in February 2017 identified the creation of Aspire (see 3.14), and the development of a borough-wide tree database.

2.3.6 Victoria Park and Watercress Fields is identified as one of two prestige town parks. The plan describes it as well-used, an active recreational area with excellent pedestrian and cycle links along the Ashford Green Corridor. Issues include lack of investment, lack of a co-ordinated approach to works, poor quality planting schemes, future usage pressures, inadequate parking, and poor facilities. The need for a long term management plan is identified. The 2017 update reports on:

- production of the Park Masterplan in 2015 and adoption of the masterplan framework in March 2016;
- submission of the Round 1 HLF Parks for People bid;
- clearance to improve links between the original park and Watercress Fields;
- partnership working with Kentish Stour Countryside Project on the community orchard and riverside.

The plan considers separately a range of features including Green Corridors, trees, ditches, ponds, riverbanks and play areas, all of which are relevant to management of the site.

2.3.7 Within the Submitted Local Plan 2030,<sup>10</sup> relevant policies are to be found under sections D and E and are summarised below.

2.3.8 **Policy ENV1 – Biodiversity Proposals** that conserve or enhance biodiversity will be supported. Opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity should be identified. In particular, development should take opportunities to help connect and improve the wider ecological networks. Proposals should safeguard features of nature conservation interest and should include measures to retain, protect and enhance habitats, including BAP (Priority) habitats, and networks of ecological interest, including ancient woodland, water features, ditches, dykes and hedgerows, as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife. Development should avoid significant harm to locally identified biodiversity assets, including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and the Ashford Green Corridor as well as priority and locally important habitats and protected

<sup>8</sup> Allen Scott, 'Victoria Park and Watercress Fields Parks for People, Round 1 Application Masterplan and Background Information' February 2017

<sup>9</sup> Lloydbore 'Visioning & Masterplanning Exercise Ashford Borough Council Victoria Park and Watercress Fields Ashford Kent' Draft 14.12.2015

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/5464/submission-version-of-plan.pdf>

species. The protection and enhancement of the Ashford Green Corridor is one of the key objectives of the Plan and therefore all proposals coming forward within or adjoining the Ashford Green Corridor should comply with Policy ENV2 in the first instance.

- 2.3.9 **Policy ENV2 - The Ashford Green Corridor** The protection and enhancement of Ashford's Green Corridor is a key objective. Development proposals within the identified Corridor designation (and proposed extensions) will be permitted, providing that it is compatible with, or ancillary to, their principal open space use or other existing uses within them, and it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not harm the overall environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning of the Green Corridor. Development proposals on land adjoining the Green Corridor shall provide suitable access and links to the existing networks of the adjoining Green Corridor wherever possible; and make a positive contribution to the Green Corridor in respect of its environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning and its setting.
- 2.3.10 **Policy ENV3a - Landscape Character and Design** All proposals for development in the borough shall demonstrate particular regard to the following landscape characteristics, proportionately, according to the landscape significance of the site:
- a) Landform, topography and natural patterns of drainage;
  - b) The pattern and composition of trees and woodlands;
  - c) The type and composition of wildlife habitats;
  - d) The pattern and composition of field boundaries;
  - e) The pattern and distribution of settlements, roads and footpaths;
  - f) The presence and pattern of historic landscape features;
  - g) The setting, scale, layout, design and detailing of vernacular buildings and other traditional man made features;
  - h) Any relevant guidance given in the Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document;
  - i) Existing features that are important to the local landscape character shall be retained and incorporated into the proposed development;
  - j) Any non-designated, locally-identified, significant landscape features.
- 2.3.11 **Policy ENV13 - Conservation and Enhancement of Heritage Assets** Proposals which protect, conserve and enhance the heritage assets of the Borough, sustaining and enhancing their significance and the contribution they make to local character and distinctiveness, will be supported. Proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets through regeneration, particularly where these bring redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate and viable use consistent with their conservation, will be encouraged. Development will not be permitted where it will cause loss or substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets or their settings unless it can be demonstrated that substantial public benefits will be delivered that outweigh the harm or loss.
- 2.3.12 **Policy COM1 - Meeting the Community's Needs** Infrastructure and facilities required to meet the needs generated by new development, including sports, arts, community (including youth) and voluntary sector space, education and health provision, open space and play areas shall be provided as the community is established. Infrastructure or facilities designed to meet localised needs should normally be provided on-site. Other needs will be delivered in liaison with the relevant stakeholders and service providers to ensure that the provision is supplied in a way that meets their requirements and supports sustainability.
- 2.3.13 **Policy COM2 - Recreation, Sport, Play and Open Spaces** As a target, the Council shall seek to deliver the quantum of provision as new recreation, sport, play and open space provision by 2030 as set out in the plan. Informal green space will normally be provided on site in line with the guidance and provisions

contained within the Green Spaces and Water Environment Supplementary Planning Document.

- 2.3.14 The Local Plan is supported by the findings of the Draft Cultural Strategy and Tourism Strategy<sup>11</sup> and by the Heritage Strategy.<sup>12</sup> The latter is a full account of the heritage assets in the borough prepared in response to and compliance with the NPPF. It has been used as one of the sources for sections 4-7.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-to-2030/local-plan-2030-evidence-base/community-and-cultural-background-documents/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/your-community/history-and-heritage/>

### 3. Landscape character and present use

- 3.1 The site can be divided into the following 11 character areas, with some sub-divisions to aid descriptions (Figure 2). The descriptions given below are compatible with those identified by the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership.<sup>13</sup> Although areas A and B are outside the site and the proposed HLF project they are, or were, the principal accesses from the town and are integral to perceptions of the park. The path from the railway crossing to Jemmett Road does not seem to have a name, so we have called it cattle market lane.
- A. Jemmett Road and cattle market lane
  - B. Gasworks Lane
  - C. Piazza and Entrance Lawn
  - D. Central Park
  - E. MUGA and Nursery
  - F. Indoor Bowls Pavilion and Grounds
  - G. Secret Garden
  - H. Woodland and Activity Area
  - I. River Corridor
  - J. West River Corridor
  - K. Watercress Fields
- 3.2 **A. Jemmett Road and cattle market lane** (Figures 5, 6)
- 3.2.1 From the railway crossing, cattle market lane follows a narrow corridor between the grounds of Victoria Road Primary School on one side and a development site on the other. At the electricity substation and crossing of Victoria Road it opens out to an area of low, soft landscape beds. The school and substation are screened by distinctive angular fences. Across Victoria Road the route lies within a narrow hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) avenue before crossing the bridge over the river and opening out at the north end of Jemmett Road. There is a rather ill-defined area at the junction of paths into the park with the path along the river and the one joining Jemmett Road.
- 3.2.2 The piers of one of the original gates (41) are present near the bridge and there is a fine set of iron gates (15) further up the hill on Jemmett Road opposite the end of Christchurch Road. But the absence of a fence or continuous planting blurs the boundary of the park as can be seen from Figure 5. There are, however, intermittent large trees along the roadside. Opposite these, the late Victorian and Edwardian houses fronting onto Jemmett Road are more substantial and imposing than the ones behind. This reflects their status overlooking the park.
- 3.3 **B. Gasworks Lane** (Figure 7)
- 3.3.1 This route from the town centre was severed by the high speed rail link. From the latter it now passes under the railway and lies between two fenced areas of vacant land before crossing Victoria Road. South of this point, there is now a narrow surfaced track leading to the timber-balustraded bridge over the river. There are development sites on either side. The original width of the entrance path can be seen from the fence lines on either side, reflecting the fact that this was formerly the main entrance to the park.
- 3.4 **C. Piazza and Entrance Lawn** (Figures 8, 9)
- 3.4.1 This area is dominated by the 1860s Hubert Fountain, painted at its most recent restoration with a finish that resembles terracotta. The sides of the bowl in which it is set has had the render stripped. There is a hedge of common amenity shrubs such as *Aucuba japonica* on the north side which also has semi-mature cherries (*Prunus* sp) and a small, but prominent, pump house. On the east side there are five steps down to a substantial paved area. The steps are flanked by

<sup>13</sup> Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, 'Our Stour Ashford's River Character Areas' (2011)

balustrades. This arrangement replaces much narrower steps and curved balustrades present until the 1990s (Figure 56). Lines of setts and tree grilles mark the short avenue created in the 1990s that aligned with the original balustrades. The 1912 plaque on the fountain that was central to the original alignment can still be seen.

- 3.4.2 The piazza in front of the fountain has a luridly-painted sitting area to one side and two short sections of steps, ramps and artificial boulders adjacent to the outer path. The original entrance gate posts are isolated and have distinctive cycle barriers adjacent. A path lined with horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and hornbeam leads from the south side of the fountain to cross the diagonal path between the Gasworks Lane entrance and the Christchurch Road entrance. The latter path is lined with London plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) in the north and mixed oak and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) elsewhere. There is a grid of walnut trees (*Juglans regia*) in the south corner. The mixture of trees, including horse chestnut and false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) along the path at the east edge are at a wider spacing than the avenues and the walnuts. A lot of this planting postdates the 1987 storm. Here and elsewhere it is not clear if the species used are like-for-like replacements, new choices, or a combination of the two.

### 3.5 **D. Central Park** (Figure 10)

- 3.5.1 This is a simple area of grassland crossed by avenues. There is an open landscape at the west end where the original Victorian path has been moved eastwards to accommodate the Secret Garden (24, 25). The east-west avenue is principally a mixture of Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) and hornbeam. The north-south one has a wide range of sizes and species including common lime (*Tilia x europaea*), London plane, oak, pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) and Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*). At the south end there is prominent cluster of large trees including several sycamores (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). There is a prominent, perhaps pre-park, ash at the south end. From the higher ground there are views over the riverside development to the town. Views to the east and west are constrained by houses and woodland respectively. The evergreen hedge around the MUGA and nursery is a prominent barrier.

### 3.6 **E. MUGA and Nursery** (Figures 11, 12, 13)

- 3.6.1 The MUGA is enclosed by a high evergreen hedge with the single-storey nursery building adjacent. There is a narrow path on the southwest side hemmed-in by the fence around the MUGA. The car park beyond this has a fairly uniform cover of planted multi-stemmed silver birch (*Betula pendula*). There are small amenity shrubs and grass on the low mounding. Semi-mature trees including common limes and Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) provide some screening at the east end. The junior age play area at the west end is slightly screened by mounding. There is no sense in this area of being in a public park.

### 3.7 **F. Indoor Bowls Pavilion and Grounds** (Figures 14, 15)

- 3.7.1 This is separated from area E by a wide track lined with larger horse chestnut, oak and lime. A toddler age play area with palm trees (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) and cordylines (*Cordyline australis*) lies between the track and the large indoor bowls pavilion. There is open grassland to the northwest with boundary oaks adjacent. To the southeast there is grassland, shrubberies and conifers set within a beech hedge. Behind the building there is a row of fruit trees, together with a band of trees and shrubs adjacent to the residential properties. The shrubs are mainly hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and other native species. The trees include large oaks with diameters of over 750mm. These would have been planted at or about the time when the park was first established.

### 3.8 **G. Secret Garden** (Figures 16, 17)

- 3.8.1 The lower slopes of this area were the site of huts or shelters and a paddling pool. There is now a row of seats roughly where the huts would have been. The earthworks for the paddling pool may have been partially retained in the present east-west terraces which are studded with artificial boulders. The terraces are crossed by narrow paths with short flights of steps. At the bottom of the slope, close to the seats there is a pond with a substantial amount of sedges (*Carex* spp), yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and fool's watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*). The ground vegetation on the slopes above the pond is dominated by common shade-tolerant grasses, sedges and plants of secondary woodland like cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and red campion (*Silene dioica*). There is occasional common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), together with plants of disturbed ground like white dead-nettle (*Lamium album*), and plants of impeded drainage like pendulous sedge. A patch of the ancient woodland indicator plant wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*) may well have been planted, but another ancient woodland indicator, bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) on the south margin may well be a survival from a pre-park hedgerow. Clumps of cultivated forms of ivy and *Lamium* are probably survivors of a landscaping scheme in the 1990s.
- 3.8.2 The trees on the north and east sides consist of young to semi-mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), cherry, field maple (*Acer campestre*), birch and alder now in need of thinning. There is also hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and occasional elder (*Sambucus nigra*) forming an intermittent understorey. Three semi-mature common limes are adjacent to the line of the original path. The west side of the garden consists of scattered, unmanaged scrub with cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*). Elsewhere, understory and shrubs have recently been removed to prevent anti-social behaviour. A 4m-high 900mm diameter dead tree, which probably dates from the establishment of the park or before, lie at the centre. Mature oaks are embedded in the scrub. They may be of the same phase of planting as the dead tree in the centre, along the north edge (Figure 17) and the original park boundary within area H1 (Figure 18).

### 3.9 **H. Woodland and Activity Area** (Figures 18- 20)

- 3.9.1 **H1. Old Boundary** A watercourse arising in Watercress Fields forms the west boundary of the original park and has mature oaks along it. The watercourse itself is quite deeply shaded, but supports plants of nutrient-rich conditions like hemlock water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*) as well as patches of sedges and tall herbaceous plants such as great willowherb. Beyond the watercourse there are approximately 100 closely-spaced trees consisting a mixture of ash, willow and field maple. Ivy is the main groundcover beneath the dense shade and it has also encroached into the lower crowns of the trees.
- 3.9.2 **H2. Willow Wood** This area forms a dense woodland block between the open landscape to the east and the adventure play area to the west. The canopy is 20-30m high and is predominantly mature and semi-mature willow and ash. There is minimal understory and a sparse ground layer, mainly of ivy but with patches of cow parsley, wild arum (*Arum maculatum*), garlic mustard, etc in the few more open patches.
- 3.9.3 **H3. Adventure Play Area** This consists of adventure play features with surrounding clusters of willow trees, set within amenity grassland and with wood chip around the play features. There is a prominent graffiti wall on the north side. Curving water channels wind through the area and have wetland plants like reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) on their banks. There is an unused basketball court on the south side. This is reached by a path and bridge extending from the

Secret Garden. Two other bridges cross from the original park, although they do not appear to be very heavily used.

- 3.9.4 **H4. Edge Woodland** Here, there is a dense mixture of ash, alder, Scots pine and willow with some hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and hazel. The south edge is more open with a few understory shrubs and patches of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), cow parsley, wild arum, common nettle, garlic mustard, cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and other plants typical of secondary woodland.
- 3.9.5 **H5. New Plantations** The two plantations date from 1994/5. They surround a central clearing with a play structure of the same date. The west plantation comprises mainly oak, ash, Scots pine, hawthorn, birch, hazel and willow with trees planted in clusters of up to 10 of the same species. The one in the east has about twice as many trees but the same range of species. The plantations form the east end of a more or less continuous band of woodland along the north boundary of Watercress Fields and the river corridor that was open land until the late twentieth century.
- 3.10 **I. River Corridor** (Figures 21-24)
- 3.10.1 The landscape of the river corridor took its present form from the late 1980s onwards when a wide footpath/cycleway was built along the south bank. The plantations at the edge of Watercress Fields were established a few years later. On the western part of the north bank there are planted copses of poplar, alder, white willow and crack willow, as well as natural regeneration of these species and goat willow. Many of the trees are 20m or more high. One of the principal aims of this planting was to screen the industrial estates on the north bank of the river from the residential areas to the south of the park. It has certainly succeeded in this, so that views within the corridor are principally along it and across it from the footpath/cycleway to the north bank.
- 3.10.2 **I1. Parkside** The park is very close to the edge of the river here. The views from the boundary are principally of the development on the opposite bank, although broken-up by widely-spaced mature oak and poplars. A strip of rough ground dominated by common nettle and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) lies between the footpath cycleway and the river.
- 3.10.3 **I2. River and North Bank** The footpath/cycleway follows a much straighter course than the river so that there are often substantial areas of grassland between the two. The river channel has a winding course with areas of bank erosion and areas of silt deposition. The latter have robust marginal plants like yellow flag, greater pond-sedge (*Carex riparia*) and hemlock water-dropwort. These aquatic plants are overlain by vigorous growth of common nettle, cow parsley, hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), cow parsley, great willowherb and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) that covers the banks and forms the ground layer of the vegetation on the north bank. In summer this tall vegetation cuts out most views of the river channel.
- 3.10.4 Partially concealed within this, at about 20m spacing, there are Second World War flat-topped concrete pyramids (38) with the remains of angle irons embedded within them. These were strung with wires and were part of the Second World War defences of Ashford when the town became 'fortress Ashford.'
- 3.10.5 At the east end of this area, the trees are a dense mixture of early-mature willows and poplars. They are very close together and a significant management problem. Further west, alders are mixed with the willows and poplars but the overall character of the vegetation remains the same. At the westernmost end on the site of the proposed eco-island there is a dense group of early-mature willows.

- 3.10.6 **I3. Wooded Path** Because views of the river from the footpath/cycleway are restricted and the route is close to the Watercress Fields plantations, it can be regarded as a separate character area.
- 3.11 **J. West River Corridor** (Figure 24)
- 3.11.1 Although this is a narrow area with buildings close to it on either side, it feels much more like a river corridor than area I because the path is close to the water. On the other hand, the buildings on the south side are so close that there is not always a clear distinction between public and private space. A line of Lombardy poplars (*Populus nigra Italica*) along Leacon Road contributes to the area's distinctive character. At the west end a ford (Figure 24) links the north part of Beaver Lane, which leads off the A28 Chart Road, with the southeast section of the lane. This extended to Watercress Farm where it forked (Figure 4). The east part led past Beaver Farm and is now Hillbrow Lane/Road. The south part went to Beaver Green and is now Clockhouse/Watercress/Beaver Lane.
- 3.12 **K. Watercress Fields** (Figures 25-27)
- 3.12.1 **K1. Plantations** These four interlocking plantations comprise dense young mixtures of native species, including ash, alder, Scots pine and willow with some hawthorn, hazel and dogwood (*Cornus alba*). They have not been thinned since planting and retain a structure of edge species leading to understory species with taller trees in the interior. The ground layer is similar to that in H4 but with more grasses.
- 3.12.2 **K2. Fields** This large area of former grazing land was acquired by the council for use as football pitches. They were abandoned after problems with drainage and the cost of providing changing rooms and toilets. There is a community orchard, now on poor condition, at the east end adjacent to the hard-surfaced path across the area, and a hedgerow on the west side. There are wide views in all directions, but as intended, the plantations cut off most views to the north bank.
- 3.12.3 **K3. Southeast edge** This area is dominated by vigorous growth of brambles with a scattering of Scots pine, willows and dogwood, together with ivy-clad oaks close to the garden boundary fences.
- 3.13 **Historical views**
- 3.13.1 As described in the following section, when the park was first established there was nothing but fields between it and the town. There was open pasture to the west. On the east side, the views of the houses along Jemmett Road (Figure 5) were much as they are today. Views southwards were restricted by the rising ground. There is little evidence that the early features of the park, such as the bandstand and shelters, were intended to be landscape features. Rather, they were located to give good views out across the park and to be out of the way of sports use. The original, mainly tree-lined, paths offered attractive routes for walks, but there is no evidence of focal points and vistas.
- 3.14 **Current management and maintenance**
- 3.14.1 Park maintenance is carried out by Aspire, the council's in-house grounds maintenance service launched in September 2016. It is based at the Cobbs Wood industrial estate in Brunswick Road north of the railway line. There is no depot on site. The Aspire team includes staff previously employed by Kent Landscape Services (transferred under TUPE<sup>14</sup> Regulations) who have many years' experience of maintenance of the site. The general management specification prepared by Aspire in January 2018 is a continuation of the works specified under

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<sup>14</sup> Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)

the previous arrangement and covers basic maintenance only, including the following:

- Grass cutting (a combination of high grass cut, flail cut and wildflower cut);
- Maintenance of shrub, rose and herbaceous areas (weeding, pruning, new planting as instructed);
- Hedge cutting;
- Minor arboricultural works (weed control, epicormics growth, tree stakes and ties) or other works (e.g. thinning, felling) as instructed by the council's Tree Officer;
- Water courses: inspection of safety equipment, inlets, outlet pipes and gratings, signage and remedial works as required. Management of water courses, ponds and lakes does not form part of the specification;
- Litter picking prior to grass cutting (cleansing and litter picking is otherwise carried out under a separate contract currently let to Biffa);
- Play area routine and operational inspections and works as required (an annual safety inspection is carried by RoSPA); surface sweeping;
- Aspire also maintain bins and benches, and tops up surfacing in the car park, although these are not specifically covered by the general management specification.

3.14.2 Aspire staff hold relevant LANTRA/NPTC qualifications, e.g. ride-on mowers, brushcutters, tractor operation, chainsaws, health and safety. However, there is scope to develop the team's wider horticultural skills through training. Structures at the site are the responsibility of the council's Property Services (cleansing is let under a further separate contract). The Hubert Fountain is due to be transferred to Property Services. Kent County Council as highway authority is responsible for the footpath/cycleway alongside the river and associated lighting. Historically, trees in defined areas (e.g. pathside) have been inspected annually for hazards by the council's Tree Officer. However, Aspire is currently working with the Tree Officer to produce a more comprehensive survey of trees on the site.

3.14.3 Habitat management is limited. Woodlands are largely unmanaged at present. Parts of Watercress Fields have been identified and managed for the creation of wildflower meadow, but with limited success. The Secret Garden has recently been cleared of the planting originally designed in the 1990s in order to discourage anti-social behaviour. The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership has previously contributed to the creation of the Ashford Green Corridor Plan and wider habitat management along the river corridor within the site and continues to work with the council. Future habitat management will also be informed by ecological surveys carried out under the Parks for People project.

3.14.4 Volunteer involvement in site maintenance includes a fortnightly litter pick carried out by Keep Ashford Clean to supplement routine litter collection. The council also co-ordinates litter picking events by the Scouts and an annual 'Spring Clean' with the help of volunteers.

### 3.15 Use and perceptions

3.15.1 The Round 1 bid makes the following observations '*Victoria Park and Watercress Fields is currently underused due to poor quality facilities, lack of activities and in part because the cycle path along the river allows people to bypass the park, acting as a thoroughfare with few opportunities or reasons for people to venture into the park interior. The high rise block of flats and residential area south of Watercress Fields is not served by formal paths and the industrial estate to the north is severed from the park by the river. A stakeholder and community workshop in 2015 reported very few positive comments - the pervading tone of views of the park was 'average, underused, unloved and tatty'. The capital works and activities will work hand-in-hand to address these short-comings and ensure a wider range of people and greater numbers visit the parks to enjoy the heritage and natural environment.'*

- 3.15.2 The council's Community Safety Team Leader's appraisal of its 'Report it app' where members of the public can report issues such as street litter, etc gives further bad press. She states that there have been a number of reports linked to the state of the public toilets and graffiti. The main issues reported are as follows:
- *The public toilets are very old and attract a number of issues including drug taking, criminal damage and are not inviting for people to use.*
  - *The children's play park is old and in a bad state of repair e.g. soft flooring peeling away and play equipment is tired*
  - *There is no facilities for drinks or food*
  - *There are a lot of people that live in Ashford but do not use the park for the reasons stated above.*
- 3.15.3 The police recorded 31 incidents in the park in 2017, ranging from assault to a lost dog. Further discussion with Alison Oates needed to resolve the following: Dogs and dog-free areas. Unrecorded anti-social behavior. Fear of crime.
- 3.15.4 While all this information provides a negative image the park is nevertheless widely used by walkers, cyclists and dog walkers. It is also of major importance as a busy link between the town centre and South Ashford as well as an integral part of the Green Corridor. Organised activities include fun runs and festivals. It is the venue for the Create Music Festival which attracted an audience of 12,000 in 2017. Despite their limitations the play area is still well used.
- 3.15.5 Use may be restricted by access. Onsite parking is limited and vehicle access from the north is complicated. There are opportunities for on-street parking in the Watercress Farm development, off Leacon Road and at the ford but it is not known if these are used. The pedestrian link from the north via Gasworks Lane is no longer accessible and while disabled access is possible over the railway bridge to Jemmett Road there are long and tedious ramps. Pedestrian access from the south and east sides is generally good and access in the north will be improved by the new bridge upstream of Gasworks Lane. The Green Corridor works well as a long and short-distance route.
- 3.15.6 Within the original park, there is an adequate network of paths but access within the Secret Garden and crossing into the adventure play area is not DDA compliant. Surfaced routes west of this are restricted to the footpath/cycleway and one diagonal path. Because of its alignment, the former does not give good access to the river's edge.

#### 4. History: the Victorian and Edwardian park

- 4.1 Ashford on its prominent hilltop site is medieval in origin, although there is evidence of much earlier settlement such as the prehistoric finds on the opposite bank of the river from Victoria Park.<sup>15</sup> The earliest visible surviving fabric of the church is mid fourteenth-century and there was the first of three grants of a market in 1243.<sup>16</sup> The cattle market was in the Lower High Street until 1856 and its broad triangular form can still be traced. Figure 28 shows the town in the mid-nineteenth century when it 'looks little more than a village.'<sup>17</sup> The town takes its name from the ford or fords across the Great Stour river. The principal one was at the Beaver Road crossing of the Roman road from Benenden to Canterbury (Figure 3) with another at the west end of Watercress Fields on Beaver Lane (Figure 4). The first element of the name derives from the Old English for ash copse, *aescet*.<sup>18</sup>
- 4.2 The town was one of the smaller ones in Kent. As late as the 1850s (Figure 28) there was no development on the south side of the river. The tithe map of 1843 (Figure 29) shows the area now known as Watercress Fields as 'pasture meadow' divided into many small plots, which are unlikely to have been hedged. Probably, like Bowen's Field to the east, they were used to hold cattle until they were taken across the river to the market.<sup>19</sup> The site of Victoria Park itself was called Banky Field. Tithe maps generally did not show trees in fields or hedgerows, nor would the map with the conveyance for the park (Figure 30). Those shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1876 (Figure 31) may therefore already have been present. They were probably trees planted along field boundaries, although all of the large trees now on the site, including those on the south edge, could have been planted in the early days of the park. An undated early photograph at Ashford Museum (Figure 32) shows an avenue or tree-lined lane and is ascribed to Victoria Park, but this is not certain.
- 4.3 Long before the park was established the course of the river had been straightened-out past the site. As noted above, this may have been when the Lord's Cut was made to serve the mill at the bottom of East Hill at some time before 1562.<sup>20</sup> Another important feature that appears on Figures 29-31 and 33 is the track along the line of what is now Jemmett Road, crossing the river at the same point as today and continuing over the railway as a narrow bridge with steep steps that was present until at least the 1970s.
- 4.4 The railway service to London came to Ashford in 1842 followed by the railway works to the east of Beaver Road five years later.<sup>21</sup> This resulted in the creation of the new town south of the works. The works themselves were one of the major sources of employment until the 1960s. However, the growth of the town was

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<sup>15</sup> HER EKE10299

<sup>16</sup> Ruderman, pp.115-16

<sup>17</sup> KEAN 9.7.1898 *OLD ASHFORD FROM THE BEAVER FIELDS*. We are enabled this week to give two or three sketches, which will give our younger readers some idea of the town in which their parents lived some forty or fifty years ago. In the first sketch, which is taken from Beaver Fields, it will be noticed that Ashford looks more like an extensive village. This really was the case, for, beyond the long street leading...down to Marsh-street [now station road] corner and Marsh-street itself, there were scarcely any side streets. When the railway was opened the only road by which one could reach it from the town was by Marsh-street. A footpath, however, took you from the churchyard through fields in that direction...houses, however, were dotted here and there along the south side of the town, as will be seen from the sketch above. EF

<sup>18</sup> M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Stamford, 2000), p.75

<sup>19</sup> Memorial stone by the river and <https://www.kentishstour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/bowens-field-final-compressed.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Ruderman, p.18

<sup>21</sup> Ruderman, pp.52-4

steady rather than spectacular. It remained one of the medium-sized towns in Kent with a population of less than 20,000 at the end of the century. In 1824 Improvement Commissioners were appointed for Ashford under an act of Parliament, and this remained the form of local government until the election of a local Board of Health in 1863. The board was in turn replaced by Ashford Urban District Council in 1894 which remained in place until local government reorganisation in 1974.

- 4.5 The densely-built town was separated from the river and railway by a narrow band of low-lying land containing features such as the cattle market, Bunyard's Nursery and the gas works, established in 1868. This meant that any recreation ground accessible from the south of the town had to be on the rising ground beyond the railway and the floodplain. The Board therefore rented land on the southeast side of the track (the Christ Church Road Recreation Ground, Figure 30) in 1886 from George Elwick Jemmett, a member of one of the families that had dominated land ownership and business at Ashford for centuries. The Board also leased the open-air swimming baths adjacent to Beaver Road established in 1867<sup>22</sup> from Jemmett. There was also a recreation ground at Pell Hill and perhaps others.<sup>23</sup> But facilities seem to have been very basic: in June 1895 the Recreation and Swimming Bath Committee proposed that three additional plank and stump seats be placed in each recreation ground.<sup>24</sup> Part or all of the grounds were let for grazing.<sup>25</sup>
- 4.6 In February 1896, Jemmett offered to sell the freehold of the baths to the new UDC.<sup>26</sup> This resulted in a public inquiry and ultimately their purchase. Two years later, he asked for the surrender of the recreation ground lease and offered to sell the council 17 acres of land (i.e. the Victoria Park site at Banky Ground) as a replacement.<sup>27</sup> Jemmett's purpose was to continue the development that he had begun along Christchurch Road up to what is now Jemmett Road. The council agreed, subject to Jemmett making hard the continuation of Christchurch Road to the new recreation ground, giving up all rights of access and making hard the road from the Gasworks gate up to the bridge over the river into the new site.<sup>28</sup> The UDC was responsible for the construction of the Gasworks Lane bridge at point C on Figure 30, linking the south bank to the railway underpass, which must also have been the access for taking cattle to the adjacent market. At a further meeting, the council requested a restrictive covenant not to build any houses with rear gardens backing onto the park.<sup>29</sup> On 22 August a public inquiry was held into the purchase of the gasworks (£14,000) and the park site (£2,750) of land for '*purposes of Public Walks and pleasure Grounds*'.<sup>30</sup> The purchase was completed later in the year. There were allotments on the old recreation ground and the committee considered having them on the new one, but nothing seems to have come of this.<sup>31</sup>
- 4.7 There is no evidence of an overall design for the new park, although in May 1901 it was described as being divided-up so that the upper and south part were used for lawn tennis and similar games, the middle for the public generally and the lower or north portion for cricket and football.<sup>32</sup> New planting, paths, shelters, a

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<sup>22</sup> The management of the baths took up a lot more of the UDC's time than the recreation grounds, and the management committee was known as the Baths and Recreation Committee until 1974. Unless stated otherwise, references are to the minutes of this committee and the first number in the reference is the volume, followed by the date.

<sup>23</sup> UDC mins 8 28.8.97

<sup>24</sup> UDC mins 7. 29.6.1895

<sup>25</sup> UDC mins 7. 28.11.96, 2.12.96 The grazing income was £3 per annum

<sup>26</sup> UDC mins 7. 8.2.96; 2.5.96; 18.6.96 public inquiry

<sup>27</sup> UDC mins 8. 5.1. 98

<sup>28</sup> UDC mins 8. Extraordinary meeting 22.1.98

<sup>29</sup> UDC mins 8. Extraordinary meetings 28.2.98 28.5.98

<sup>30</sup> UDC mins 8. 22.8. 98, 7.9.98

<sup>31</sup> UDC mins 8. 19.12.98 Allotments are shown on the old site on the 1907 OS.

<sup>32</sup> UDC mins 10. 10.5.01

bandstand and other features were added under the close supervision of the Baths and Recreation Committee over the period 1898-1904. However, a landscape structure was given to the park by the initial planting which is first shown on the 1907 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 34). In December 1898 the council's surveyor was instructed to *'bring up a plan for planting the grounds with trees at intervals.'* Later in the month the committee amended the request to ask that a professional gardener *'advise as to laying out and planting the recreation Ground.'*<sup>33</sup> The surveyor looked no further than George Bunyard's<sup>34</sup> nursery on the other side of the river. Bunyard put forward proposals for laying out and planting to the value of £84.15.6. A path from the gas works entrance to main entrance from Christchurch Road was also requested.<sup>35</sup> Bunyard's plan does not survive but avenues along the principal paths are shown on Figure 34. The oaks on the south, west and north boundaries may well have been part of this planting, and perhaps a small number of other trees such as the ash at the south end of area D. Few other trees of any size survived the 1987 storm and subsequent clearance. In the 1930s 'American oaks' replaced dead and diseased elms that may have been planted by Bunyard. It is possible that these were the tall trees shown at the northwest edge of the park in 1929 (Figure 46). A chestnut close to the Christchurch Road entrance which figures in several early photographs (Figures 35, 36) must surely pre-date Bunyard's work.

- 4.8 The new park was officially opened in July 1899 with the minimum of ceremony. Indeed, the opening was delayed in order to allow hay to be harvested for the council's horses.<sup>36</sup> It was named Victoria Park in the following October.<sup>37</sup> The council gradually began to form a typical local Victorian/Edwardian public park. A young man with knowledge of gardening was engaged at 25/- week. Space for three public tennis courts was identified and they were provided with nets and markers.<sup>38</sup> A circular iron seat was placed around the large chestnut at the Christchurch Road entrance and 12 metal garden seats were obtained (Figure 36).<sup>39</sup> Small iron gates were moved to the riverside and the present gates (Figure 37) replaced them.<sup>40</sup> The new gates were supplied at a cost of £50 by the local firm of JU Bulger and Co which had a foundry on St John's Lane just off the High St.<sup>41</sup> The grounds were fenced, but open to the public from 7am to dusk and 9-4 in winter.<sup>42</sup> There was also fencing along the bridge parapets and along the

<sup>33</sup> UDC mins 8. 2.12.98; 19.12.98

<sup>34</sup> George Bunyard (1841–1919) was one of Britain's foremost nurserymen, a leading fruit authority and head of George Bunyard & Sons Ltd, of Allington and Maidstone. The business prospered with the enormous investment in fruit that occurred in the last decades of the nineteenth century as the modern British fruit industry was founded. George Bunyard was at the centre of this activity. His nursery provided many of the trees for the new orchards and he was a key figure in the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers and a celebrated author. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/62186>

<sup>35</sup> UDC mins 9.30.12.98.

<sup>36</sup> UDC mins 9. 1.5.99. The same minutes record that the surveyor was to get prices for a mowing machine, but hay was being harvested in the 1900s

<sup>37</sup> KEAN 7.10.99 *The recreation ground was upon the recommendation of the Committee designated 'Victoria Park'*

<sup>38</sup> UDC mins 9.30.6.00 purchase of nets and markers

<sup>39</sup> UDC mins 9 12. 5.99; 3.6.99; 17.12.9 The circular seat cost £4.8.6 and the garden seats 19/- each. 9.13.6.00 records the purchase of another dozen iron garden seats at about 19/3 each and folding chairs at 3/9

<sup>40</sup> UDC mins 9. 1.5.99

<sup>41</sup> UDC mins 9.3.6.99; Filmer, Ashford in *Old Photographs* (Gloucester, 1988), p. 39

<sup>42</sup> UDC mins 9. 12.5.99; 9. 10.2.00 *'Resolved to erect ordinary post and rail Carriage Gate and a wicket gate at the Gasworks entrance'* 7.4.00 *Surveyor to erect an inexpensive gate next the bridge over the Stour on the Beaver Fields footpath, guard fence on each side of the south end of the Bridge over the river at the Gas Works entrance to the Grounds and along the river bank by the deep water, and also that similar fences be erected upon the brickwork on either side and just within the NE entrance to the ground by the footbridge over the Stour.*

river either side of the gates into the park.<sup>43</sup> A least two drinking fountains were provided and there were urinals on the north and west edges.<sup>44</sup>

- 4.9 The pond mentioned in 1899<sup>45</sup> was the one in the northeast corner shown on Figures 30 31, 33 and 38. Shrubs had been established by the following year (Figure 39) when the occupier of Beaver Farm was allowed to graze the park on condition that he fenced-off shrubs and made good damage done by sheep.<sup>46</sup> The annual bedding begun in 1900 continued until the 1970s.<sup>47</sup> Band concerts were already underway by May 1900 using a temporary trestle and plank structure.<sup>48</sup> In the following month, the chairman of the Baths and Recreation Committee, Mr Hancock, offered to provide a permanent bandstand<sup>49</sup> which was soon under construction and came into use in April 1901 (Figures 40, 41).<sup>50</sup> It was lit by a centre light and six columns erected outside the stand.<sup>51</sup> Band concerts were one of the major features of the park from then until after the Second World War.
- 4.10 All of the footpaths had been gravelled by September 1901 and the council was providing football equipment.<sup>52</sup> In the following month, it was agreed to light the entrance.<sup>53</sup> At the end of the year, new tree planting was planned. It is not known if this was to replace losses in Bunyard's scheme or to add to it.<sup>54</sup> The success of the sports facilities is evident from the records of reseeded the tennis courts and the construction of a cricket pitch in the spring of 1902.<sup>55</sup> That year also saw shelters donated by Mr FG Hyland and Mr Lewis placed at the south end of the park.<sup>56</sup> They were subsequently given brass plates to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.<sup>57</sup> The locations were probably at gazetteer sites 31 and 34 (Figure 49) and they appear to have survived until the 1960s. Their appearance was described as being very similar to that of Figure 42 which was a shelter presented to the council in 1904 by the Allied Joint Stock Bread and Flower Co.<sup>58</sup> This was described as being near the Beaver path entrance and having two glass panels separate the upper portions of the partitions and seating for 20 people. Strangely, this shelter is not mentioned in the Baths and Recreation Committee minutes, nor is the large shelter donated by the MP Laurence Hardy (Figure 43) at some time before his death in 1918. It was located to the northwest of the bandstand and was present until at least 1967.<sup>59</sup> In April 1903 the drinking fountain was replaced.<sup>60</sup> Throughout the period before the First World War there was intense competition for booking the tennis courts and the football pitches.

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<sup>43</sup> UDC mins 10. 20.4.01

<sup>44</sup> UDC mins 9. 11.6.00 ; 10 20.4.01

<sup>45</sup> UDC mins 9.24.6.99 Edward Hutton cautioned for removal of water lily from pond. 11.6.1900 standpipes for drinking water to be provided. 9. 11.6.00 '*pond to be cleaned out and lined with beach gravel*' UDC mins 10. 20.4.01 mention a dispute with the riparian owners in which it was said that the pond and the pipe connecting it to the river were in place when the council acquired the site.

<sup>46</sup> UDC mins 9 10.3.00 7.4.00

<sup>47</sup>UDC mins 11.6.1900

<sup>48</sup> UDC mins 9.18.5.00

<sup>49</sup> UDC mins 11.6. 00

<sup>50</sup> UDC mins 9. 25.8.00 bandstand to be constructed on a base of concrete and Kentish Rag. M Boulding pers comm describes space under the bandstand being used as changing rooms. Opening described in UDC mins 10. 20.4.01

<sup>51</sup> UDC mins 10. 20.4.01

<sup>52</sup> UDC mins 7.9.01

<sup>53</sup> UDC mins Ordinary Meeting 10. 3.10. 01

<sup>54</sup> UDC mins 10. 21.12.01

<sup>55</sup> UDC mins 11. 19.4.02; 10.5.02

<sup>56</sup> UDC mins 10. 18.6.02; 11.22.9.02

<sup>57</sup> UDC mins 11. 22.9.02

<sup>58</sup> KEAN 8.11.04 '*Opening of a new shelter at Ashford*'

<sup>59</sup> HEA AP 37 67 131 10 May 1967 37/67

<sup>60</sup> UDC mins 11. 30. 4. 03

- 4.11 With the major exception of the Hubert Fountain and its immediate setting, the Edwardian park was largely complete by 1903. In that year, the entrance gates, bandstand and shelters were repainted<sup>61</sup> and new or additional toilets were planned.<sup>62</sup> Band concerts were so popular that a 100ft-diameter enclosure (Figure 41) was placed around the bandstand. Additional lighting was provided.<sup>63</sup> An amusements committee was formed and additional chairs were purchased.<sup>64</sup> It was decided not to have a greenhouse<sup>65</sup> and no evidence of them has been found before an aerial photograph of 1929 (Figure 46). There was additional planting at the gasworks entrance.<sup>66</sup> However, parts of the park were being grazed as late as 1909 when 100 hurdles were purchased.<sup>67</sup> In 1910 and 1911 Empire Day/Arbor day was celebrated by the planting of trees along the south and west boundaries by councillors and other prominent townspeople. Trees in these locations can be seen on aerial photographs until 1967 but they had been removed by the 1970s. A royal oak was planted near the bandstand to mark the death of Edward VII in 1911.<sup>68</sup> The minutes refer to other planting at this time, but the species and location are unknown.<sup>69</sup>
- 4.12 One intriguing and unresolved issue begins in this period. In July 1905 an offer to pollard the trees around the swimming baths was refused by the council, which made other arrangements.<sup>70</sup> Pollarding and the purchase of lop and top from trees along the river adjacent to the park and around the baths are subsequently mentioned in 1913 and 1920.<sup>71</sup> There is nothing unusual in this. Willow pollards are still present in the locality and abundant on historical photographs. But the minutes also mention the sale of pollard boles in 1921, when replacement trees were planted,<sup>72</sup> and in 1933 trees were purchased by the London firm of Warsop and Sons, one of the leading maker of high-quality cricket bats.<sup>73</sup> Trees for this purpose must be cricket bat willow (*Salix alba caerulea*) about 20 years old and un-pollarded, so that there may have been a specialist market that the council used.
- 4.13 Section 7 discusses the design of the fountain and how it came to Olantigh House. It was first offered to the council at the beginning of December 1911. The offer was declined because of the £190 that it would cost to move the fountain and re-erect it.<sup>74</sup> Early in the new year the donor, Mr Harper who was chairman of the UDC, agreed to pay for the removal and installation, if council provided the foundations and laid on the water.<sup>75</sup> The Local Government Board subsequently approved its installation at the site selected by Mr Harper.<sup>76</sup> The committee decided on the position of the stags.<sup>77</sup> The fountain was repainted<sup>78</sup> and set

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> UDC mins 12. 25.2. 05

<sup>63</sup> UDC mins 12. 15.4.05; 27.5.05; 12.6.05

<sup>64</sup> UDC mins 12.10.3.06 5 long chairs and 100 seats; 12.24.2.06; 28.4.06 purchase 100 chairs at 3/9 and 5 garden seats at £1.1.3

<sup>65</sup> UDC mins 12 22.12.06

<sup>66</sup> UDC mins 13 23.2.07 Chairman and surveyor to agree planting on land at gasworks entrance

<sup>67</sup> UDC mins 13 13.2.09 purchase of 100 hurdles for £6.6

<sup>68</sup> *KEAN* 27.5.11 *Empire Day*

<sup>69</sup> UDC mins 14 28.10.11

<sup>70</sup> UDC mins 12 24.7.05 2.9.05 ordinary meeting 5.7.17

<sup>71</sup> UDC mins 15 20.12.13; 18 26.11.20

<sup>72</sup> UDC mins 18. 17.2.21; 25.2.21

<sup>73</sup> UDC mins 27. 14.12.33

[www.handmadebats.co.uk/store/index.php?route=information/information...id=7](http://www.handmadebats.co.uk/store/index.php?route=information/information...id=7)

<sup>74</sup> UDC mins 15 full council 2.12.11 full council 7.12.11; *KEAN* 16.12.11 '*Unique Offer to Ashford Wanted a generous person*'

<sup>75</sup> UDC mins 15 26.1.12

<sup>76</sup> UDC mins 15 24.2.12

<sup>77</sup> UDC mins 15 29.6.12

<sup>78</sup> The painting first instructed was either ineffective or not carried out since painting was mentioned again in 15 15.3.13 and 3.10.18. On 23.4.19 it was resolved to invite tenders for painting except the parts with gold and let a separate contract for gold. On 30.5.19 painting was left to the chairman and surveyor to arrange. See section 7 for paint analysis

within a bowl and balustrades designed by the council's surveyor, William Terrill.<sup>79</sup> It was surrounded by a holly hedge and flowerbeds and approached by a new path.<sup>80</sup> Terrill's setting (Figure 44) remained in place until 1994 and the brass commemorative plate requested by the council is still there.<sup>81</sup>

- 4.14 The last actions before the outbreak of the First World War were the construction of a footpath along the edge of the river between the Beaver Fields footbridge and the gasworks bridge, the construction of new play equipment and new planting. Four new swings and two see-saws were installed and the trees between the fountain and the boundary fence were transplanted further into the site.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> KEAN 27.7.12 '*Gift to Ashford Presentation of Noted Fountain;*' *South Eastern Gazette* 30. 7.12

<sup>80</sup> UDC mins 15. 1.3.13

<sup>81</sup> UDC mins 15.3.8.12 15.3.13

<sup>82</sup> UDC mins 15. 30.8.13

## 5. Two world wars and the time between

- 5.1 Troops were stationed at Ashford during the First World War but there appears to have been little research on how they affected the life of the town or the use of areas such as Victoria Park. Ashford was twice affected by air raids. In 1915 a zeppelin dropped bombs on the north side of the town.<sup>83</sup> In May 1917 Gotha aircraft attempted to bomb the railway works killing 18 year-old Alice Sparks, the only civilian to die as a result of enemy action on the home front in Ashford.<sup>84</sup> The Baths and Recreation Committee hardly met at all during the war so we have little idea of what went on in the park, although military sports were held. Parades in the park by the Canadian Ordnance Corps implies that munitions were held in or near Ashford.<sup>85</sup> It seems very likely that management of the landscape was very limited. Grazing is mentioned in 1917 and continued until at least 1919.<sup>86</sup> In addition to its famous British tank, now at the town centre, at the end of the war Ashford acquired a German gun which was on display in the park, probably near the Christchurch Road entrance. It is only mentioned twice in the council minutes and the second reference is to its being scrapped in 1938.<sup>87</sup> Such guns acquired under the auspices of the War Office Trophies Committee were common throughout Britain, although many communities regarded them with hostility.<sup>88</sup> The council also formed a cultivation of lands committee, but, in contrast to what happened in the Second World War, no evidence has been found of allotments within the park.
- 5.2 In the period of high post-war unemployment local authorities commissioned public works to be carried out by the unemployed, quite often in parks. A committee for this purpose was formed at Ashford, and the path in the southwest corner of the park was constructed by the unemployed, but no further work is known.<sup>89</sup>
- 5.3 The inter-war years appear to have been a period of full use and minor changes to the Edwardian park. It was used for a wide range of events from horticultural shows to Sunday school treats.<sup>90</sup> The fountain was turned-on at special occasions<sup>91</sup> and an electric pump for it was purchased in 1931.<sup>92</sup> The tennis courts appear to have been fully booked. There was a bowling green and a cricket pitch in frequent use. The football pitches were often overbooked.<sup>93</sup> By the early 1920s, a programme of weekly band concerts between May and September was in place, and this continued until the late 1930s.<sup>94</sup> A portable grandstand was leased-out to other venues.<sup>95</sup> There does not appear to have been a permanent refreshments kiosk until after the Second World War, but people were granted permission to sell fruit and ice cream from time to time.
- 5.4 An oblique aerial photograph taken from the northeast in April 1929 (Figure 46) clearly shows the principal features of the park and its setting. To the north and west the land was grazed right up to the river edge and the edge of the channel

<sup>83</sup> Ruderman, p.97

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20reports/SPARKES%20G.A.pdf> EF

<sup>85</sup> UDC mins 16 20.3.15; 17 5.7.17 ordinary meeting

<sup>86</sup> UDC mins 17 22.3.17 extraordinary meetings 18 28.3.19 22.3.17

<sup>87</sup> UDC mins 28.18. 6.38

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1020000870>

<sup>89</sup> UDC mins 20 13.11.23

<sup>90</sup> E.g. UDC mins 17 6.3.19 ordinary meeting annual show of Cottage Gardener's Society ordinary meeting. 17. 5.6.19 park to be closed to the public for the Church Sunday school treat

<sup>91</sup> E.g. UDC mins 18 2.6.19 resolved to have fountain display for four hours on 16 July

<sup>92</sup> UDC mins 26 27.1.31 pump purchased for £16

<sup>93</sup> E.g. UDC mins 26 29.1.20; 29.2.20; 23.3.20 22.4.20; 27.5.21

<sup>94</sup> UDC mins 19 15.2.23

<sup>95</sup> UDC mins 21 3.7.24; 26 25.2.30; 27.5.30

flowing from Watercress Fields. The approach and bridge at Gasworks Lane was much wider than the Jemmett Road one. Within the park, the layout of the main paths was the same as in 1907 with the addition of the diagonal path to the Christchurch entrance. Trampled paths can be seen on the right hand side leading from the new residential area at Hillyfields.<sup>96</sup> The fountain lay within the platform and balustrades created in 1912. The three circular beds, described as rose beds in 1987, and present until the 1990s, were in place. There was a triangular shrubbery with trees adjacent. One of the circular beds must have been the site of the floral clock, finally abandoned in 1937 because of its cost.<sup>97</sup> Other shrubberies were few, the principal ones being at the gasworks entrance, in the northwest corner, in the southeast and along the Jemmett Road edge. The pre-park chestnut at the Christchurch Road entrance can be clearly see, together with other mature trees near the Hillyfields entrance. As noted above, the tall trees on the northwest edge may have been elms. The bandstand within its fenced enclosure is a prominent feature, as are the shelters. These comprised the Hardy shelter to the west of the bandstand, the 1902 shelters to the north and south and the 1904 shelter in the northeast. A large sand pit can be seen near the Hillyfields entrance. The buildings at the edge of the area used for tennis court appear to be greenhouses, although these are not mentioned in the minutes until 1937 when an additional one was provided.<sup>98</sup>

- 5.5 In 1932 a putting green was suggested<sup>99</sup> but no evidence has been found for one until after the war. The tennis courts became more established with permanent netting and fencing.<sup>100</sup> Two years later the allotment near the gasworks entrance shown on Figure 46 was removed.<sup>101</sup> Throughout the 1930s, and more or less through the war, the tennis courts were fully booked a year in advance by organisations and sports clubs, but one was retained for individual public bookings.<sup>102</sup> A new drinking fountain was put up near the main entrance in March 1936.<sup>103</sup> In the following year, the First World War gun was removed and replaced by the rather ramshackle rockery bed shown in Figure 45.<sup>104</sup> The paddling pool shown on Figure 47 was constructed in the following year.<sup>105</sup> This figure also shows three rectangular structures to the west of the pool which may have been shelters or changing rooms. The pool was part of wider changes in 1937 and 1938. Five new tennis courts were constructed in addition to the public ones and provided with new equipment. A new shelter for old people was sponsored by the Ashford Cooperative Society:<sup>106</sup> this may have been the building (13) shown at the Christchurch Road entrance on Figure 47. A second-hand cricket pavilion was purchased together with a roller and mower.<sup>107</sup>
- 5.6 The history of the park and the land around it during the Second World War is an intriguing story which can only be explored in outline here. Further fieldwork and research could be taken-up as part of the implementation of the HLF scheme. Immediately after the evacuation of Dunkirk, many troops passed through Ashford or were temporarily stationed there, but very little is known about this. In May 1940 General Ironside became Head of Home Forces and devised the static form of anti-invasion defence. It required the building of a network of anti-tank obstacles, trench systems, minefields, barbed wire obstacles, concrete

<sup>96</sup> UDC mins record a long-running story of the council trying to manage access from Hillyfields 27. 18.5.33; 19.4.34

<sup>97</sup> UDC mins 29 18.11.37

<sup>98</sup> UDC mins 28 20.5.37 Additional greenhouse adjoining existing for estimated £72

<sup>99</sup> UDC mins 26 24.3.32

<sup>100</sup> UDC mins 27 30.10.33

<sup>101</sup> UDC mins 27 18.1.34

<sup>102</sup> UDC mins 28 20.2.36

<sup>103</sup> UDC mins 28 19.3.36

<sup>104</sup> UDC mins 28 18.6.38

<sup>105</sup> UDC mins 28 20.5.37. The cost was £270

<sup>106</sup> UDC mins 21.4.38; 29 18 11.37 (18.4.40 lists 6 tennis courts) 29 16.12.37 the cost of the shelter was £84.5.0 Tennis courts 29 22. 9.38 On 20.10.38 shelter formally handed over

<sup>107</sup> UDC mins 29 19.5.38

pillboxes and gun emplacements. Wherever possible rivers, drainage ditches, canals and railway embankments were used. These features formed defence or stop lines and there was one from Charing, through Ashford to the edge of Romney Marsh at Hamstreet. In March/April 1941 a new stop line was started along the Stour from Canterbury to Ashford, with road blocks and bridges prepared for explosive demolition.<sup>108</sup> It is this second phase of home defence that is particularly relevant to the park. The strategy in 1941 was to have more mobile forces with strongly defended nodal points at important junctions of routes and infrastructure locations. 'Fortress Ashford' was such a nodal point.

- 5.7 Work began on the fortress in May 1941 with deepening the river and placing pipe bombs around one and a quarter miles of the boundary.<sup>109</sup> Concrete and other anti-tank obstacles were constructed for three miles and there was an outer wire defence four and a half miles long. Canadian soldiers had completed the pipe mines by 2 July. The exact location of the fortress has not been worked out, but Dr Peter Frost describes the defences formed around the important junction of the railway and the A28 400m north of the park.<sup>110</sup> There was also a strong point at the turnpike toll house at the junction of Beaver Lane and the A28 and an anti-aircraft battery close to the railway near the gas works. Aerial photographs of September 1941 (Figure 47) show the north bank of the river opposite the park having been recently regraded. There were dense rows of anti-tank pimples along the south edge of the gas works and turning northwards across the railway to the southwest corner of the town. A corresponding row lay to the east of Gasworks Lane to protect the electricity works. There was a bank or bank and ditch parallel to the north side of the railway, together with a substantial bank heading northeast from the start of the canalised section of the river. Upstream of this there do not appear to have been any works to the river channel where the sinuous course and the steep banks form a natural defence. However, on the lip of the north bank, between the west edge of the former gasworks site and the junction of the footpath/cycleway with the path from Ford Way there are 20-30 anti-tank pimples with angle irons embedded in them (38). The angle irons are perforated for wires which would have been part of the defences.
- 5.8 In summary, the river adjacent to the park may have been the south boundary of Fortress Ashford. But the park was certainly used by the army during the war because £87 was paid to the council by the War Damages Commission.<sup>111</sup> There is thus a lot of scope for further research.
- 5.9 The town was bombed moderately heavily, with the railway works being a prime target. In the course of the war 83 people were killed and over 300 injured.<sup>112</sup> By far the worst air raid was on March 24 1943, when in just three minutes there were 50 dead, 76 badly wounded and 78 injured. This was the largest single death toll in a single air raid in Kent during the Second World War. The main target was the railway, but the nearby town was also hit. One bomb struck the Victoria Road County Primary School, but thanks to well-practiced evacuation procedure none of the 300 children were killed.<sup>113</sup> Peter Frost also recalls V1 rockets flying over the town in 1944.<sup>114</sup>
- 5.10 Wartime events that directly affected the park were typical of those that occurred throughout the country. There were parades and demonstrations by the Home

<sup>108</sup> VTC Smith and P Seary, 'Kent's Twentieth-century Military and Civil Defences Part 3 – Canterbury' *Archaeologia Cantiana* 132 (2012). p. 172

<sup>109</sup> H R Pratt Borman, *Ashford's Progress* (1977) has what appears to be a partial precis of the war diary for Ashford TNA WO166/6852 1May 1941-January 1943

<sup>110</sup> P. Frost, 'A Small Boy in Ashford' *Pill Box Study Club Journal* (1994), pp. 17-19

<sup>111</sup> UDC mins 33 13.11.48

<sup>112</sup> Ruderman, .p.98

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20reports/ASHFORD%20WW2.pdf>

<sup>114</sup> <https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/history/peckhams-deadliest-night-ww2-v1-rocket-struck-old-corset-factory/>

Guard and regular units.<sup>115</sup> The railings were removed for the war effort in 1942, but the park was re-fenced two years later, perhaps with the same ones.<sup>116</sup> The main information found for this period relates to allotments and the use of the greenhouses, although the Baths and Recreation Committee did not meet during the war and some evidence may have been missed. By early 1941 the greenhouses had been turned over to producing tomatoes. This continued until well after the war, with the council selling to greengrocers or to the public direct.<sup>117</sup> A horticultural committee was formed and urged the setting-up of demonstration plots in the park and the use of flower beds to grow food.<sup>118</sup> It is not clear if this was ever done. But the proposal to make eight five-perch plots by the bandstand<sup>119</sup> certainly was implemented because they can be seen on post-war aerial photographs (Figure 48). Fencing was subsequently requested to keep out dogs and stray cattle.<sup>120</sup> Tennis and football appear to have continued largely as normal.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> UDC mins ordinary meeting 30 2.7.42; 6.8.42; 31.29.4.43; 6.5.43

<sup>116</sup> UDC mins General Purposes 30 27.11.41 Buildings Highways Works 27.7.42 General Purposes 33 12.6.44 fencing approved at £62

<sup>117</sup> UDC mins 30 27.2.41; General Purposes 27.11.41 26.6.41; 33 14.2.49

<sup>118</sup> UDC mins 30 27.2.41 ordinary meeting 6.3.41 General Purposes 30.10.41

<sup>119</sup> UDC mins General Purposes 30 27.11.41

<sup>120</sup> UDC mins ordinary meeting 30 6.8.42 General Purposes 15.10.42

<sup>121</sup> UDC mins 30 3.4.41; General Purposes 13.4.42 Finance and Establishment 29.10.42

## 6. The park since the Second World War

- 6.1 It is more difficult to trace the detailed history and use of Victoria Park after 1945 than before, partly because some of the key documents are not available, but also because the park was a minor topic in the growth and development of post-war Ashford. A new approach to the council's open spaces was already being planned in 1944, with proposals for a masterplan.<sup>122</sup> The UDC minutes up to 1954 are largely concerned with strategic changes. The minutes for the period 1954 to 1974 survive only as uncatalogued drafts and have not been examined. The new Ashford Borough Council formed in 1974 covered a much larger area than the old UDC, so that only major projects appear in the minutes. Some of the main uses of the pre-war park, such as parades, open-air meetings and band concerts gradually fell away. Organised cricket matches conflicted with other uses of the park. Football was moved to Watercress Fields. The main changes can be traced through planning applications, air photographs and maps, but the full history of the post-war park remains to be written based on the recollections of people who knew it.
- 6.2 The park in 1947 (Figure 48) differed little from that in 1929 apart from the more substantial growth of trees along the boundaries and main paths, although the outer south path retained shrubs and small rather than mature trees. The other pre-war shrubberies and the shelters remained in place and the bandstand, paddling pool and tennis courts can be seen. On the north bank of the river parts of the 1941 defences survived, and Watercress Fields was a single large area of grazing. Some wartime uses remained and the council continued to run a thriving business growing tomatoes in the greenhouses.<sup>123</sup> Regular band concerts continued until 1949, but were then abandoned.<sup>124</sup> Use of the park for fairs and religious or political events was restricted,<sup>125</sup> another indication of changing attitudes. Following complaints, cricket was banned, except with use of a soft ball, but tennis seems to have been as popular as ever.<sup>126</sup> Dogs were banned except when on a lead.<sup>127</sup> Unauthorised access from the Hillyfields estate continued to be a problem, with the council closing it off, but then relenting.<sup>128</sup>
- 6.3 The fountain appears to have been in a poor state, partly as a result of war damage. Repairs were estimated at £220,<sup>129</sup> although these may not have been carried out. Proposals in 1950 for a lily pond or aquarium in the bowl indicate that it was rarely working, but it was brought into use for the Festival of Britain in 1951.<sup>130</sup> While the football pitches within the park remained very popular, the council also considered acquiring 16 acres of land adjacent to the park within Watercress Fields.<sup>131</sup> The fields were not purchased until 1979 and aerial photographs of the 1950s do not show marked-out pitches, but the 1962 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 49) shows the area as playing fields and an aerial photograph of 1954<sup>132</sup> shows a building which may have been changing rooms or toilets, which had been removed by the 1960s. Adverts for the booking of pitches in 1950 were presumably for these fields.<sup>133</sup> The pitches may not have been very successful, because they partially overlay the former channel shown on Figure 53

<sup>122</sup> UDC mins 31 27.4.44 Highways and Town Planning Committee Masterplan to include Open spaces and Social Amenities including Sports Grounds etc

<sup>123</sup> UDC mins 33 18.7.49 34 19.9.49

<sup>124</sup> UDC mins 32 17.4.47; 2.6.47; 33 17.1.49

<sup>125</sup> UDC mins 33 27.5.47; 6.8.47; 22.9.47; 18.5.48

<sup>126</sup> UDC mins 33 19.7.48; 22.9.47 33 20.6.49; 33.17.1.49; 35 15.1.51; 12.2.51

<sup>127</sup> UDC mins 33 19.7.48

<sup>128</sup> UDC mins 33 14.2.49 21.3.49; 19. 4 49

<sup>129</sup> UDC mins 33 15.11.48; 13.11.48

<sup>130</sup> UDC mins 35 19.6.50 ; 14.7.50 33 23.2.48

<sup>131</sup> UDC mins 33 18.7.49

<sup>132</sup> HEA 0024 F63 82/RAF/1006 31 Aug 54

<sup>133</sup> UDC mins 35 25.5.50; 14.7.50

and were liable to flooding. On the other side of the park, changing rooms were provided for cricketers using the field on the west side of Jemmett Road by the erection of a prefabricated building that the council already owned.<sup>134</sup> It is not clear where this building was, and it does not appear on Figure 49 which show the other pavilions clearly. A plant nursery was established at the end of Gasworks Lane in 1952<sup>135</sup> and can be seen as the hedged triangular area on Figures 50 and 51. In the same year the council sought tenders for the provision of a refreshment kiosk and year-round catering.<sup>136</sup> The location of this, too, is not known, but a logical place would be one of the structures near the paddling pool (27).

- 6.4 In 1959, the London County Council negotiated 5000 new homes to be built in Ashford as overspill from London. This created much of what is now South Ashford. The development lay mainly to the south and southeast of the park. It was not until the early 1970s that the Watercress Farm development took place, creating the blocks of flats and houses which now dominate the south edge of Watercress Fields. Aerial photographs of 1954-1967 and the Ordnance Survey maps of 1958, 1962 and 1974 (Figures 49-51) show little change from the early post-war landscape. Within the park, the sandpit was reduced in size to a small rectangle and paths were created across the west boundary to the playing fields. In 1967 there were hard surface tennis courts but these were still in the southeast corner. By 1974 (Figure 51) there had been substantial reorganisation. There were five hard surface tennis courts abutting the southeast edge with a building at their east end. North of this, there was a playground with a small shelter at its centre (Figure 52) and a small putting green to the east. The bandstand had been demolished. On and around its site, there were more tennis courts, an adjacent bowling green and small paddling pool (the pre-war one remained in use). At the opposite end of the park there was another small shelter. Few images of the park and how it was used on this period have been found, although Figure 52 show a popular but rather rundown play area.
- 6.5 One of the first actions of the new Ashford Borough Council's Recreation and Amenities Committee in November 1974 was to reduce maintenance liabilities. The entrance gates and the large flowerbed in the immediate vicinity of the main entrance were kept. The bed was planted with flowering shrubs after being levelled. The three circular rose beds remained but the other beds were filled-in and grassed over. A scheme for the main entrance was to be drawn-up for consideration. The toilets were to be retained and screened pending the construction of a new bowling green pavilion, which would incorporate new toilets. The pre-park chestnut at the entrance (Figure 45) was to be retained.<sup>137</sup> There were complaints about the state of the bowling green and remedial work was costed at £700, but it is not clear if this work was carried out.<sup>138</sup> The overall borough provision for tennis courts was agreed to be eight hard and nine grass, of which the three hard courts at the park needed resurfacing<sup>139</sup>
- 6.6 In 1976 the council turned its attention to major new projects, including those that could be carried out by Manpower Services Commission teams. Moving the fountain to the Memorial Gardens in the town centre was considered but it was repaired in situ in 1977. The council also had an ambitious and ultimately successful project to construct a Riverside Walk from the ford to Langport Bridge<sup>140</sup> (the minutes mention potential lottery projects these can't have been national lottery projects which started in 1994, so what were they?). It was resolved to buy land outside council ownership to enable the walk to be

<sup>134</sup> UDC mins 35 18.9.50

<sup>135</sup> UDC mins 36 17.3.52

<sup>136</sup> UDC mins 37 21.7.52; 15.2.53; 5.3.53; 16.3.53; 38 15.3.54

<sup>137</sup> Ashford Borough Council Recreation and Amenity Committee (RA) mins 13.11.74; 12.2.75

<sup>138</sup> RA mins 12.6 75 2.4.75

<sup>139</sup> RA mins 19.9.76

<sup>140</sup> RA mins 14.12.76; 15.2.77;12.4.77;27.1.76 ;18.10.77

completed.<sup>141</sup> Watercress Fields was subsequently purchased in 1979 in two parcels. The north part enabled the Riverside Walk to be constructed while the south part was purchase for '*general recreation purposes*.<sup>142</sup> New toilets were proposed just inside the east boundary of the new area and eventually built in 1981.<sup>143</sup> They had been demolished by 1996. Work continued on the Riverside Walk in the late 1970s and early 1980s and it was completed by 1987.<sup>144</sup>

- 6.7 In the years leading up to 1987 there were several substantial changes. It was proposed to create a skateboarding area on the site of the paddling pool, although it is not clear if this was carried out.<sup>145</sup> A new pavilion and toilets were built on the site of the present ones.<sup>146</sup> The bowling green, tennis courts and refreshment kiosk continued in use.<sup>147</sup> In 1987, £6000 was optimistically allocated for the full repair of the fountain.<sup>148</sup> Figure 53 is an aerial photograph taken six days before the October 1987 storm. It shows the tennis courts and play area, but the putting green had been replaced by a car park. To the north was a climbing frame/play area next to the grass tennis courts with the new pavilion and bowling green beyond. The park had a good cover of mature trees, 50% of which were blown down in the storm. This damage and the rather run-down state of the park<sup>149</sup> led the council to propose an ambitious scheme for refurbishment and restoration. It was rejected at first on the grounds of cost, but since the park continued to deteriorate a landscape masterplan was initiated in 1991.<sup>150</sup>
- 6.8 Figure 54 shows the design concept in the 1992 draft of the plan.<sup>151</sup> Figure 55 shows the scheme for the restoration of the park submitted with a planning application in 1994 and Figure 56 shows the scheme implemented for the piazza and setting of the fountain.<sup>152</sup> Work proceeded on implementing the plan in the early 1990s, including footpath/cycleway improvement, new park furniture and signs, lighting, refurbishment of the pavilion and toilets and reorganisation of the tennis court, bowls and putting green.<sup>153</sup> New shelters were put up.<sup>154</sup> The Secret Garden was completed for the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day in 1995.<sup>155</sup> The planting on the north edge of Watercress Fields was carried out in 1994/5.<sup>156</sup>
- 6.9 In order to complete the masterplan and restore the Hubert Fountain the council made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £556,500.<sup>157</sup> In the event, the grant was only £282,150 for the fountain. The National Heritage Memorial Fund was consulted. Its advisors felt that the park was small, of modest design and had lost most of its original Victorian significance.<sup>158</sup> Council officers recognised that this challenged the idea of restoring the Victorian park. Future work should instead promote Ashford as forward-looking town of regional importance. The council's management team recommended that the fountain should be properly restored. This was done with The Morton Partnership as

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<sup>141</sup> RA mins 18.10.77

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> ABC Planning applications AS/78/930 AS81/1333 RA mins 24.9.81

<sup>144</sup> RA mins 25.6.87

<sup>145</sup> RA mins 6.12.77; 7.2.78

<sup>146</sup> RA mins 28.1.82; 25.3.82

<sup>147</sup> RA mins 21.2.78

<sup>148</sup> RA mins 12.11.87 6k allocated for complete refurbishment of fountain

<sup>149</sup> RA mins 14.6.88; 15.9.88

<sup>150</sup> PR mins 12.9.91; 14.6.90

<sup>151</sup> Victoria Park Masterplan Draft September 1992

<sup>152</sup> ABC planning application 94/1099 AS

<sup>153</sup> RA mins 15.9.94; 10.11.94

<sup>154</sup> RA mins 22.6.95

<sup>155</sup> RA mins 16.4.95

<sup>156</sup> RA mins 19.1.95

<sup>157</sup> RA mins 14.3.96

<sup>158</sup> RA mins 12.6.97

consultants.<sup>159</sup> The balance of the council's match funding (£65,000) was spent on implementing other aspects of the masterplan. However, some features, such as the new formal gardens, boundary fences and shelters were never completed.

- 6.10 Since completion of the restoration of the fountain in 1998, the main changes have been the construction of the indoor bowls pavilion and the associated car parks and earthworks in 2003/4 with further changes to the car parks in 2017.<sup>160</sup> There were also improvements to the play areas in 2006.

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<sup>159</sup> RA mins 11.9.97

<sup>160</sup> ABC planning applications 03/00949 AS ; 17/00294/AS

## 7. The history and conservation of the fountain

- 7.1 The fountain was first seen in the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)'s garden at the Second International Exhibition held in South Kensington in 1862 (Figure 57). This exhibition has been overshadowed by the Crystal Place one in 1851. But it was popular and *'seemed to contemporaries to mark a great advance in English design. In retrospect 1862 rather than 1851 is the great exhibition of high Victorian design.'*<sup>161</sup> The fountain was one of two French ones which stood in the garden. The second, larger, one was cast by Antoine Durenne and is called the Ross Fountain after its purchaser. It is now in West Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh, and is listed at Grade A by Historic Scotland.<sup>162</sup> The RHS minutes record that its committee *'read a letter from M. Durenne's agent accepting the site offered to him for his French fountain. Sir Wentworth Dilke mentioned that an application had been made for permission to construct another fountain [i.e. the Hubert Fountain] and that other arrangements with regard to M. Durenne might thus be advisable. The meeting agreed to grant the new application but referred both it and M. Durenne to the garden committee to arrange as to the site and other details.'*<sup>163</sup> Engravings were published in the Book of the Royal Horticultural Society and Cassell's *Illustrated Exhibitor*.<sup>164</sup>
- 7.2 There is a description and illustration of the Hubert Fountain in the *Illustrated London News* for 7 June 1862.<sup>165</sup> It was falsely said to be bronze, although this indicates the original paint finish, which is supported by the paint analysis carried out for 1998 repairs. *'The two basins are supported by allegorical figures, serving as Atlantides and Caryatides; and allegory can hardly be dispensed with in designs for fountains. The four upper figures of children stand for the four quarters of the world, as we learn from their symbols and the words Europe, Asie, Afrique, and Amerique inscribed on the medallions of the pedestal beneath. The lower figures, two of which are male and two female, are simply and entirely conventional, not having any of the usual fluvial or aquatic symbols. They are attended by amorini or genii wreathing flowers, Masks, escutcheons, floral ornaments, and architectural mouldings are distributed about the various details of the design without injuring the general effect, which is extremely pleasing from the principal proportions conveying the impression of symmetry.'*
- 7.3 The article identified the firm that cast the fountain as Barbezat et Cie<sup>166</sup> whose foundry was at the Val d'Osne in the Haute Marne, and also the English firm of Hubert that assembled it. It gave the names of Lienard (Michel Joseph Napoléon Liénard, 1810–1870)<sup>167</sup> and Moreau (Mathurin Moreau, 1822–1912) as sculptor and modeller. The Historic England report of 2016 recommending upgrading from II to II\* is less certain and notes that many celebrated artists of the Ecole des Beaux Arts had their works cast by Barbezat et Cie.<sup>168</sup> Cassell's *Illustrated Exhibitor* lists the medals awarded to M Barbezat and continues *'His works are no less artistic than beautiful and among the bronzes and iron works in the Exhibition we find objects designed by artists of high class, Lienard, Mathurin Moreau, Alfred Jacquemard and Charouse.'* There are other fountains cast by Barbezat at this period as far afield as Quebec and Launceston, Tasmania.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Insall report quoting Simon Jervis

<sup>162</sup> <https://www.rdstrust.org/projects/fountain/>

<sup>163</sup> Insall report quoting RHS minutes

<sup>164</sup> <https://archive.org/details/cassellsillustra00inte>

<sup>165</sup> 'Bronze Fountain in the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens Designed by Lienard, Modelled by Moreau, Cast by Barbezat, Fitted and Erected by Hubert' *Illustrated London News* 7 June 1862

<sup>166</sup> Barbezat et Cie's works included not only fountains but balustrades, chimney pieces, vases, statues, benches, chairs and statues. Their pieces were distributed in England by Carlhian & Corbiere of 68 Cannon Street, London.

<sup>167</sup> He is known to have trained as a sculptor and been active as a designer from the 1840s. He was described as being a celebrity amongst 'artistes industriels' by the time of his death in 1875

<sup>168</sup> Historic England Case No 1432662 Advice Report 06 May 2016

<sup>169</sup> [www.marcmaison.com/architectural.../val-dosne-foundry-cast-iron-statue-sculpture;](http://www.marcmaison.com/architectural.../val-dosne-foundry-cast-iron-statue-sculpture;)  
<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/06/03/3773483.htm>

- 7.4 In July 1862 the RHS resolved to open a subscription for the purchase of one of the French fountains and some of the bronzes in its gardens. The Ross Fountain was valued at £5,000 and of the Hubert at £4,000.<sup>170</sup> However, the subscription was abandoned later in the year.<sup>171</sup> The Hubert Fountain was quickly bought by John Warley Sawbridge Erle-Drax-Grosvenor (1800-1887) and installed at his country seat, Olantigh near Wye.<sup>172</sup> It became part of the collection of sculpture in front of the mansion that include two stags on plinths (Figure 58). These had nothing to do with the fountain, but they nevertheless found their way to its setting in Victoria Park (Figure 59). In 1884, *Gardeners Chronicle* described the setting thus. '*as the visitor approaches the mansion he may be somewhat startled by the unexpected appearance of groups of statuary, which present themselves on each hand. These statues are in bronze and in marble, but chiefly of the latter material.... Some beautiful statues are placed in and around this garden, such as a bronze figure of Mercury, another representing Eve at the fountain, Hero and Leander in marble, and several other mythological subjects. The French fountain, which at one time it was supposed would become the property of the Royal Horticultural Society, and which attracted much interest at the International Exhibition in London in 1862, is placed between it and the beautiful lake. This fountain was purchased for a large sum of money by the owner of Olantigh Towers, and was erected by him where it now is.*'<sup>173</sup> Drax died in 1887 leaving no direct male heir. Olantigh passed to Wanley Elias Sawbridge Erle Drax who was resident when a disastrous fire gutted the house in December 1903. The fountain, stags and plinths were among many pieces sold in the following years.
- 7.5 They were bought in 1910 by George Harper, an antique shop owner, art collector and chairman of Ashford UDC. He made an anonymous offer to present them to the town on condition that the council would dismantle the fountain and re-erect it at its own expense. He eventually met these costs as well, provided that the council paid for the foundations and laid on the water.<sup>174</sup> He also stipulated that the fountain and the musical device it contained should be played every year on his birthday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July. The Local Government Board subsequently approved its installation at the site selected by Mr Harper.<sup>175</sup> The council's Baths and Recreation Committee decided on the position of the stags.<sup>176</sup> The fountain was repainted and set within a bowl and balustrades designed by the council's surveyor, William Terrill (Figure 59).<sup>177</sup> The painting first instructed was either ineffective or not carried out, since it was mentioned in the minutes again on 15 March 1913 and 3 October 1918 when councillors agreed to inspect the fountain with the surveyor and decide if it needed painting. On 23 May 1919 it was resolved to invite tenders for painting except the parts with gold (Figure 60) and let a separate contract for gold. This had still to be done in the following month.<sup>178</sup> The fountain was surrounded by a holly hedge and flowerbeds and approached by a new path.<sup>179</sup> The brass commemorative plate requested by the council is still there.<sup>180</sup> There was a grand opening on 24 July 1912 (Figure 61). Mr Harper was not present<sup>181</sup> and the water was turned on by his niece, Miss Miles. The souvenir brochure for the opening noted that the fountain *originally*

<sup>170</sup> Insall quoting *Gardeners Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette*, 16 August, 1862

<sup>171</sup> Insall quoting RHS minutes

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Ibsall quoting *Gardener's Chronicle* 8 November, 1884

<sup>174</sup> UDC mins 15 26.1.12

<sup>175</sup> UDC mins 15 24.2.12

<sup>176</sup> UDC mins 15 29.6.12

<sup>177</sup> KEAN 27.7.12 'Gift to Ashford Presentation of Noted Fountain' 30. 7.12 South Eastern Gazette

<sup>178</sup> UDC mins 30.5.19

<sup>179</sup> UDC mins 15. 1.3.13

<sup>180</sup> UDC mins 15.3.8.12 15.3.13

<sup>181</sup> He was ill, and committed suicide three weeks later. His story is told in R. Filmer, *Old Ashford* (1983) and the same author's *Ashford in Old Photographs* (1988)

*possessed a set of sixty four whistles which were activated by the water whilst the fountain was playing. These, however, are out of order and are not fitted in place.'*

- 7.6 In the year leading up to the Second World War the fountain was turned on at special occasions and an electric pump was purchased in 1931.<sup>182</sup> There are a lot of photographs and postcards of this period, all showing the stags still in place. They seem to have disappeared during the Second World War, perhaps when the railings were taken down to provide material for the war effort in 1942.<sup>183</sup> On the other hand they were tempting targets for bored soldiers and £87 of the £220 estimated for necessary repairs in 1948 was War Office compensation.<sup>184</sup> It is not clear if these repairs were ever carried out. Proposals in 1950 for a lily pond or aquarium in the base indicate that the fountain was rarely working, but it was brought into use for the Festival of Britain in 1951.<sup>185</sup>
- 7.7 The state of the fountain in the 1950s and 1960s is unknown. It was listed grade II in 1976. There were minor repairs and repainting in 1977. Further repairs were considered in 1981 but were never completed due to the high costs. Photographs of the late 1980s (Figure 62) show the bowls and rims painted a dark colour and the figures in cream or white. This was probably the 1977 scheme. Morton's 1997 feasibility study concluded that repairs were needed. Some of the fixings were showing signs of excessive corrosion and expansion was causing localised splitting and cracking of the component parts. The pumping and internal plumbing was also defective and a new system was needed. In 1998 Eura Conservation Ltd carried out extensive works which included the dismantling of approximately 175 individual pieces, cleaning and re-painting, a new internal plumbing system, pump room and lights. Work was also completed on the fountain base walls to include waterproof render.
- 7.8 In 2006 English Heritage reviewed the listing and concluded that grade II was still appropriate. However, 10 years later the listing was reviewed again and the fountain was upgraded to II\*. Greater emphasis was placed on its intrinsic aesthetic quality and its rarity as a major Beaux Arts sculpture in the UK. At this time the balustrades, which had been radically altered in 1996 (Figure 56), were listed grade II.
- 7.9 An inspection by Eura Conservation in February 2016 identified the following main problems:
- partial failure to bowls and pools resulting in partial leakage;
  - corrosion of internal plates and fastenings;
  - failure of the current coating systems;
  - water treatment systems do not meet current standards.<sup>186</sup>
- 7.10 Eura made the following recommendations
- Undertake necessary research and development work to establish the most effective treatment finishes for the structure and associated fitments. To assist the water engineers to design the most effective and efficient water treatment processes.
  - Off a prepared and covered scaffold and protected site, dismantle the Fountain down to the central plinth, including the God and Goddess figures and return to Eura Conservation workshops, treat, repair, re-finish and return to site.
  - Whilst access is available to the inner Fountain undertake internal anti-corrosion treatment and repairs and provide attendance on the Electrical and

<sup>182</sup> UDC mins 26 27.1.31 pump purchased for £16

<sup>183</sup> UDC mins General Purposes 30 27.11.41 Buildings Highways Works 27.7.42

<sup>184</sup> UDC mins 33 15.11.48; 13.11.48

<sup>185</sup> UDC mins 35 19.6.50 ; 14.7.50 33 23.2.48

<sup>186</sup> Eura Conservation Ltd Survey & Inspection Report Eura Ref: 4488: The Hubert Fountain, Ashford, Kent: 01.February 2016.

Mechanical Engineer so to allow the installation of a new and as necessary upgraded pumping and plumbing system.

- Carry out all necessary repairs to the lower masonry basin and complete waterproofing work.
- Re-install the dismantled Fountain and provide attendance for the Electrical and Mechanical Engineer to complete the first and second fix internal pumping and plumbing work.

7.11 General non-specialist training in the management of fountains has been provided to the council's staff by Rainbow Water Services.

## 8. Significances

### 8.1 Approach

8.1.1 This section follows Historic England's *Conservation Principles*<sup>187</sup> which is the usual method for conservation plans. It uses a lot of jargon and could be rewritten for a general audience without dumbing down. At this draft stage its purpose is to enable agreement on what the significances are. Nature conservation significance is assessed using the Ratcliffe Criteria (Appendix 2).

### 8.2 Values

8.2.1 Significance is expressed as historical, evidential, aesthetic and communal value.

- Historical value derives from the way in which past people, events, and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. This includes associative, illustrative and representational value. It encompasses among other things rarity of survival, the extent of associated documentation, the ability to characterise a period, and association with other monuments.
- Evidential value derives from the potential of the site to provide evidence of past human activity. It is mainly intended to cover archaeological potential. However, in the present case it also includes the potential for understanding social and economic history.
- Aesthetic value derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This includes not only formal visual and aesthetic qualities arising from design for a particular purpose but more fortuitous relationships of visual elements arising from the development of the place through time, and aesthetic values associated with the actions of nature.
- Communal value is based on the meanings a place may have for contemporary society. Commemorative and symbolic values are founded in collective memory and historical identity, while social value often derives from contemporary uses of a place.

### 8.3 Scale

8.3.1 Within each of these categories of heritage value, the following degrees of significance are used.

- Very high: elements of the place that are of key national or international significance, being among the best or only surviving examples of an important type of monument, or being outstanding representatives of important social or cultural phenomena.
- High: elements that constitute good and representative examples of an important class of monument (or the only example locally), or that have a particular significance through association (although surviving examples may be relatively common on a national scale) or that make major contributions to the overall significance of the monument.
- Medium: elements that contribute to the character and understanding of the place, or that provide a historical or cultural context for features of individually greater significance.
- Low: elements that are of low value in general terms, or have little or no significance in promoting understanding or appreciation of the place, without being actually intrusive.
- Detractors

### 8.4 Before the park: historic routes and droving

8.4.1 The route north-eastwards from Beaver Green (Figure 31) along what is now Jemmett Road and on to the site of the original market at Lower High St remains and can still be followed. Beaver Lane between the A28 and the ford is still in

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<sup>187</sup> English Heritage, *Conservation Principles, Policy and Guidance* (London, 2008) paras 30–60

place and the routes of the original lanes eastwards to Beaver Farm and south-eastwards to Beaver Green can be followed through the modern housing estates. The livestock holding area at Bowen's Field can be traced, and there is on-site interpretation of it. The other probable holding area at Watercress Fields is still recognisable on the ground. The crossing point on 'cattle market lane' survives. Cumulatively, these features are of medium historical significance in showing the way that droving and the importance of Ashford as a cattle market influenced the present-day landscape. They are also of medium evidential interest in that the history and use of the routes and cattle markets has never been fully explored. They remain to be studied through detailed fieldwork and documentary research. The aesthetic value of the surviving features is low, but the communal value is medium in that they connect Ashfordians with the small country town that it was until the mid-twentieth century.

## 8.5 The Victorian and Edwardian park

8.5.1 Apart from the fountain (8.6), the main paths and the boundary oaks, little now remains of the Victorian and Edwardian park. The Christchurch Road gates (15) survive as well as the piers (41) at the north end. But the setting of the fountain has changed radically and all of the shelters have gone and the south end is dominated by late twentieth and early twenty-first century play facilities and buildings. Nevertheless, this phase is of medium historical significance. The landscape structure of the park remains and it is recorded in a host of images and popular books about Ashford. During the Victorian and Edwardian periods it was Ashford's principal public open space and the main venue for sport, concerts, and open-air meetings. The town's leading citizens were involved in day-to-day management and donated the bandstand and shelters. The evidential value is also medium in that the wealth of images and documents allows the lost world of Sunday school parades, cottage garden shows and band concerts to be explored. The aesthetic value of the surviving features, with the exception of the fine iron gates at the Christchurch entrance, is limited. However the communal value is medium in that despite all the changes many local residents still identify the park firstly with its Victorian and Edwardian heyday and this is apparent on websites such as Ashford Remembering the Way it Was.<sup>188</sup>

## 8.6 The fountain

8.6.1 The following text is a summary of the notification when the fountain was upgraded to II\* and expresses its high historical and aesthetic value. It is an example of a very rare building type as it is one of only three listed cast-iron ornamental fountains in England. Neither of the other two are of the same quality of design. These are at Patshull Hall near Wolverhampton (grade II) and Victoria Park, Portsmouth (grade II). The Hubert Fountain is also a rare surviving example in England of fountains shown at international exhibitions. The Great Exhibition of 1851 had a crystal fountain in the central court but this was destroyed when the Crystal Palace burned down in 1936. The 1862 International Exhibition had a majolica fountain over 10m high designed by John Thomas (1813-1862) and constructed by Minton and Co, but this is no longer intact. The surviving fountains of the 1862 Exhibition are the Hubert Fountain, the Ross Fountain in Edinburgh, both constructed of cast iron from French foundries, and the terracotta fountain by the Pulhams, now in Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells. Cast iron French designed and cast ornamental fountains are also a rarity in the UK. The Hubert and Ross Fountains are perhaps the only two examples, certainly of this size.

8.6.2 The Hubert Fountain is completely intact and at the time of the Second Exhibition it was described as finer than the Ross Fountains exhibited from French foundries. Cassell's *Illustrated Exhibitor* considered both fountains to be '*of exquisite form and perfect design*' and the Ross Fountain '*a good specimen of*

<sup>188</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ashfordkentrememberingthewayitoncewas>

*casting*' but the Hubert Fountain was '*a fine monumental work*'. The Ross Fountain was designed by Jean-Baptiste Klagman. It is of similar Beaux Arts style to the Hubert fountain, quatrefoil in plan, the first tier with lions' heads, scallop shell basin and mermaids with overflowing urns with four female figures representing Science, Art, Industry and Poetry above, surmounted by a large female figure with cornucopia. Although the designer of the Hubert fountain has not been firmly identified, it is every bit the equal in design quality of the Ross Fountain and perhaps more elaborate and monumental.

8.6.3 To sum up, the Hubert fountain is an example of a rare building type as one of only three examples of listed cast iron ornamental fountains in England, and is of much finer design quality and impressive scale than the other two. It is one of only three surviving listed ornamental fountains in the UK which were displayed at international exhibitions and one of these is constructed of a different material. It is the only example in England of an ornamental fountain cast by a French foundry. Although it was removed from its secondary site at Olantigh Towers, it has been in its present location for over 100 years. Its design quality, date, material and style are directly comparable with the Ross Fountain.

8.6.4 The fountain's medium communal value arises from its prominence in histories of the town, its identification with 'old' Ashford, and the annual celebration of Mr Harper's birthday.

## 8.7 **The inter-war park**

8.7.1 No evidence of what happened to the park in the First World War has been found and this is a subject for future research. In the inter-war years there were minor additions to the Edwardian park, such as the now-lost paddling pool but the use and significance was broadly the same as that of the Edwardian park, although less well documented. The overall significance of this phase is therefore probably low.

## 8.8 **The Second World War park**

8.8.1 This is in many ways the most intriguing aspect of the history of the park. But the wealth of documentary evidence and the recollections of people who lived near the park have never been fully explored. The aerial photographs and the remains of the wire barrier probably show the edge of fortress Ashford while the ford was a vulnerable point which would surely have had some form of defence. Any attempt to understand these features would need to place them in the context of Fortress Ashford as a whole. The wartime park is thus of medium to high evidential value.

8.8.2 The only things that can definitely be ascribed to the park south of the river in 1939-45 are allotments and military parades. The wire barrier is outside the park as such, but needs to be considered in management and interpretation proposals. In addition, there were unspecified activities in the park which resulted in reparations being necessary and if the river was the boundary to the fortress, the park was an important part of its setting. The park is thus of medium historical significance for the Second World War, subject to further research. The aesthetic value is low. The memorial garden at the town centre is the natural focus of communal value, but this has the potential to change if more is known about fortress Ashford and what went on in the park.

## 8.9 **The post-war park**

8.9.1 The two major additions to the park up to 1987 were the riverside footpath/cycleway and the nursery pavilion. The park appears to have become quite run-down during this time. The damage caused by the 1987 storm was the stimulus for sweeping changes in the 1990s, including the new buildings at the south end, the Secret Garden, the planting alongside the footpath/cycleway and

the creation of the piazza. These changes have either had a neutral effect on the historic landscape or are detractors as set out on the table below.

#### 8.10 Table of individual significances

	<b>Historical</b>	<b>Evidential</b>	<b>Aesthetic</b>	<b>Communal</b>
1. Gasworks Lane	Medium	Low	Low/detractor	Low/medium
2. River crossing	Low/medium	Low/medium	Low	Low/medium
3. River realignment	Medium	Low	Low	Low
4. Early path	Low	Low	Low/medium	Low
5. Christchurch Road entrance	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
6. Edwardian path removed	Low	Low	Low	Low
7. Balustrades	Medium/high	Medium	Low/medium	Medium
8. Fountain	High	Low/medium	High	High
9. Post-war path	Low	Low	Low	Low
10. Realigned and widened path	Medium	Low	Medium/low	Low
11. Modern pond	Low	Low	Low	Low
12. Original path	Medium/low	Low	Medium/low	Low
13. Site of inter-war shelter	Medium/low	Low	Low	Low
14. Boundary with oaks	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
15. Gate piers	Medium	Low	Low/medium	Low
16. Site of 1904 shelter?	Low	Low	Low	Low
17. Original path	Medium/low	Low	Medium/low	Low
18. 'cattle market lane' bridge	Medium	Medium	Low	Low/medium
19. 'cattle market lane'	Medium	Low/medium	Low	Low/medium
20. Site of circular beds	Low	Low	Low	Low
21. Original path	Medium/low	Low	Medium/low	Low
22. Bridge	Low	Low	Low	Low
23. Site of sandpit	Low	Low	Low	Low
24. Original path	Low	Low	Low	Low
25. Realigned path	Low	Low	Low/medium	Low
26. Realigned path to Hillyfields	Low	Low	Low	Low
27. Site of structures	Low/medium	Low	Low	Low
28. Site of paddling pool	Low/medium	Low	Low	Low
29. Site of path around paddling pool	Low/medium	Low	Low	Low
30. Site of Hardy shelter	Low/medium	Low	Low	Low
31. Site of 1902 shelter	Low/medium	Low	Low	Low
32. Site of bandstand and enclosure	Low/medium	Low	Low	Low
33. Original path	Medium/low	Low	Low	Low
34. Site of 1902 shelter	Medium/low	Low	Low	Low
35. Site of post-war shelter	Low	Low	Low	Low

36. Site of tennis courts/play area	Low	Low	Low	Low
37. Aerial photo features	Low	Low	Low	Low
38. Second World War wires	Medium	Medium/high	Low	Medium
39. Ford	Medium	Medium/high	Low/medium	Low/medium
40. Site of greenhouses	Low	Low	Low	Low
41. MUGA	Low	Low	Low	Low
42. Nursery building	Low	Low	Detractor	Medium
43. Play area	Low	Low	Detractor	Medium
55. Car park	Low	Low	Detractor	Low
56. Bowls pavilion	Low	Low	Detractor	Low
57. Play area	Low	Low	Detractor	Medium/low

### 8.11 Nature conservation

- 8.11.1 The river is a Local Wildlife Site of county significance. The rest of the park is of much lower value at present, but has high potential and the site as a whole can be evaluated as follows.
- 8.11.2 **Size** Although the areas of wetland habitat along the river are narrow, there is the potential to extend wetland to other parts of the floodplain. There is a long stretch of river within the Wildlife Site.
- 8.11.3 **Diversity** At present, the habitat and terrestrial plant species diversity away from the river is low. The river flows through diverse landscapes and diverse geological conditions. The section within the park on former nutrient-rich farmland is part of this diversity.
- 8.11.4 **Naturalness** Most of the area is mown grassland and plantation. However, the course of the river upstream of the gasworks site appears to be natural.
- 8.11.5 **Rarity** The site may support rare and uncommon protected species.
- 8.11.6 **Fragility** As far as is known, there are no fragile habitats or fragile plant communities present.
- 8.11.7 **Typicalness** There are typical river corridor vegetation and plant communities for the county.
- 8.11.8 **Recorded history** There are previous surveys for the high speed rail link and the development on the north bank
- 8.11.9 **Position in an ecological/geographical unit** Part of the Great Stour corridor
- 8.11.10 **Potential Value** There is high potential for creating valuable new wetland which can be colonised by the species along the river.
- 8.11.11 **Intrinsic Appeal** Moderate.

## **9. Issues and opportunities**

### **9.1 Knowledge gaps**

- 9.1.1 There are two main knowledge gaps that would affect the design and management of the site. First there is the approach to tree planting since the 1987 storm. Has it been like-for-like replacement? In this case the current trees are an historical record that can inform new planting. Or have no historical references been made? This needs to be resolved before there is a major planting programme. Second, there is information on the vegetation and wildlife within the site and the measures that can be taken to enhance them. The ecological assessment carried out so far gives a good general picture but more precise information is needed as a basis for action (or leaving well alone).
- 9.1.2 The principal other gaps relate to an improved understanding of the site's history to inform interpretation and educational use. A full archaeological desktop to Chartered Institute for Archaeologists standards has not been carried out, but given the nature of the site, the location of areas of archaeological potential and the likely impact of the HLF proposals it would be better to concentrate on in-depth studies of features such as the ford and how it was defended.
- 9.1.3 Topics that would enhance interpretation and education include:
- a better understanding of historic routes and how they linked to the wider landscape;
  - agricultural history and access to the town's livestock market before the park was developed;
  - what happened specifically within the park during the two world wars?

### **9.2 Links and connections**

- 9.2.1 The landscape before Victoria Park was built had significant links to the surrounding countryside and into the historic core of the town centre. These include the present Jemmett Road/'cattle market lane' route and the ford/Beaver Lane routes. The river crossings were and are crucial focal points. It is important that they are retained and interpreted in the present-day landscape.
- 9.2.2 Ashford has developed with the park separated from the town by the railway and river, originally with two links from the north, but now effectively one. There are several less well defined links on the south side. Routes into the park are a significant element in perceptions of it. Their presentation, interpretation and clarity of orientation are important issues. There are many opportunities to define public routes more clearly, e.g. at the west end of the river corridor, to promote and enhance them, e.g. at east end of the park, and to interpret them, such as at the ford. The historical interest of the routes can be an aid to design and orientation.

### **9.3 Historical survival and creating a modern park**

- 9.3.1 Watercress Fields was farmland well into the post-war period. Although the path layout of the original park largely survives, the only other Edwardian and Victorian features are the fountain, the entrance gates and piers and the boundary oaks. Changes need to make reference to the past, such as in the routes described above and broadly to maintaining the historical layout. But there is an opportunity to establish a twenty-first century park with contemporary design and materials.

#### 9.4 **The fountain and its setting**

- 9.4.1 The recent upgrading of the listing for the fountain emphasized its aesthetic merit and rarity. Any work to it must accord with best conservation practice as set out in the Eura report. However, the Edwardian setting was removed in the 1990s and the listing description is of the balustrades before this was done. The present piazza setting appears to be underused and rather-run down. There is, therefore, now the opportunity to reconsider the use and design of the space around the fountain in consultation with Historic England.

#### 9.5 **Zoning, access points and identity**

- 9.5.1 The analyses by LLOYDBORE and ALLEN SCOTT divide the site into a sequence of zones from east to west, depending on landscape character, potential uses and the surround land uses. This is surely a correct approach. The landscape of the site never had a distinct single identity separate from its surroundings. It follows that design and management should concentrate on making the zones work to serve the individual objectives set out in the analyses.

#### 9.6 **Core facilities**

- 9.6.1 The site falls short of the core facilities expected in a public park: accessible toilets; adequate refreshments; and safe, clean accessible play areas. The indoor bowls centre contains a cafe, but is not open to park users. A limited range of hot and cold drinks and snacks are available at a servery hatch, but it is rarely open and there is no sheltered seating area. The adjacent car park is intended for park users, but is in poor condition and used primarily by commuters and bowls club members. The relationship of the children's playgrounds to the park is poor. As noted in section 2, play facilities are run-down and little-used. The building is also in poor condition and provides no real community benefit. It is routinely vandalised and broken into.
- 9.6.2 All of these problems can be tackled with the right capital investment, but there is also an opportunity to review locations. There may be new and improved sites which have historical references. For example, there was a pavilion at the north end of Jemmett Road which might be a good site for a coffee bar. The present rather bleak character of the piazza is partly due to the fact that the tensile canopy planned for it (Figure 56) was never put up.
- 9.6.3 The adventure play area is similarly underused and under-appreciated, with many of the play elements in poor condition and in need of replacement. The area is low-lying. It is quite often flooded and is wet for most of the winter. Here again a new, drier site could be considered. There is also the opportunity, subject to specialist advice, to develop adventure play across much of the site through the way that the woodland is managed, and perhaps not have a separate designated area.

#### 9.7 **Watercress Fields**

- 9.7.1 Following the abandonment of their use for organised football, the fields have not had a definite use, other than kickabout and car parking during the Create music festival. Expanding the community orchard west of the footpath and the planting of the nuttery still leave a very large under-used area. Returning the land to grazing would in many ways be the ideal solution. The council has experience of grazing tenancies on other public open spaces and grazing is currently being trialled in the Royal Parks. There is a host of problems to be overcome at a site like Watercress Fields, but it is an option that should be seriously considered.
- 9.7.2 The obvious option is to manage it as meadow with single late summer cut. The rich silty soil and the dominance of vigorous species like perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) mean that species richness would be low and on such sites the

cut grass will be too contaminated to be useable as hay, but there would nevertheless be significant wildlife benefits.

- 9.7.3 A third option would be allowing willow woodland to develop naturally, with or without lowering the ground level, but specialist advice and early consultation with the Environment Agency is obviously required.

## 9.8 Access, circulation and safety

- 9.8.1 Access within the original Victoria Park is generally reasonable. If necessary, new paths could be fitted within the existing framework without major impact. Access from and within the adventure play area is poor, partly because of the wet ground and the location and state of the bridges. If greater use of the site is to be made by people of all abilities who would enter it from the south edge, new paths around the edge and across Watercress Fields would be necessary. Given the scale of the landscape, there is unlikely to be a significant impact on its character.
- 9.8.2 There is no ranger or wardening service in the park, nor is there likely to be in the foreseeable future. The only practical measure that can be taken to reduce crime and the fear of crime is to ensure good visibility from the paths. It is not known if the light standards within the park work. It is possible that they would cause more problems than they would solve when in use and the council needs to consider a lighting and safety strategy for the park.
- 9.8.3 The only part of the site where the landform restricts compliance with the DDA is at the west edge of the original park around the Secret Garden, although even here routes along the slope could be compliant. However, there are a number of places where changes in level or hazards need to be ironed-out.

## 9.9 Nature conservation

- 9.9.1 The nature conservation value of the river has been identified. The north bank is also important, but active management is needed to sustain and enhance the interest and to maintain the tree cover. The rest of the site is of lower value, although the 1990s plantations have potential if properly managed. The obvious thing to do is to extend the wetland habitats southwards by lowering the ground level. This could be localised in areas that already flood, or over a wider area. But this can only be done if there is an increase in management resources. While volunteers can achieve a lot in such circumstances, the only way that large areas of – say – wet willow woodland can be achieved is by cyclical mechanical clearance with non-intervention between each clearance. High value and high input habitats such as osier beds can only be created on a small scale. As discussed above, establishing species-rich grassland may be difficult.
- 9.9.2 The less exciting, but perhaps more realistic, option is to develop small copses with rough grass edges across the site. These can be managed by mechanical coppicing.

## 9.10 Landscape management

- 9.10.1 In its inter-war heyday Victoria Park was managed by five full-time staff and two part-time, and Watercress Fields was permanent pasture. The changes made in the 1990s made some excellent contributions to the park, but also created new work such as the management of the plantations. The resources available for management and the approach adopted to their use affect all aspects of the site, including public perception and use. The best way forward is to develop low or no-input management which brings wildlife benefits for most of the park. However there are key areas such as those around the fountain and the buildings

where high standards have to be maintained. It is essential that this is developed as a positive approach rather than being seen to 'let the place go'.

## 9.11 **Interpretation and education**

- 9.11.1 Some of the richest topics, such as wartime history and the links to the cattle market, are related principally to features outside the site. Similarly, someone wanting to understand the Edwardian park would learn a lot more in Ashford Library than on site. The approach to education and interpretation therefore needs to take account of a very wide range of resources and venues with the park sometimes seeming incidental to them.
- 9.11.2 There is particularly good potential for studying wildlife on the site, but this needs a considered approach. For example, a new offline pond might be safer and more manageable for use by children than direct access to the river.

## 10. Vision and policies

### 10.1 Vision

10.1.1 Working with Ashford's growing community to make Victoria Park a high quality, well-loved destination; where people feel safe, can enjoy well managed facilities, celebrate its rich heritage, and regularly engage with a diverse range of activities, habitats and social opportunities.

### 10.2 Policies

#### 10.2.1 Policy 1 Knowledge gaps

*To fill the knowledge gaps identified in this plan, including the history of tree planting and a full understanding of the nature conservation value and potential of the site.*

**Reason.** The information will inform design and interpretation.

#### **Actions**

Knowledge gaps divide into:

1. those that should be filled to help implement the plan;
2. things that are good to know but are not required for the plan;
3. information about the land adjacent to the park which adds to understanding of Ashford and its setting and can inform activity and interpretation plans.

Category 1 gaps probably need to be filled by professionals, because of the limited time available. But most of the projects arising from this policy can be carried out by volunteers. The council's heritage officer may have the time to set up training and guidance, which could also involve the British Association for Local History etc. The objective should be to establish volunteer research /survey groups on a similar basis to volunteer work parties.

**1.** The three main items in the first category are:

- a) what trees were planted in the original Victoria Park?
- b) what is the nature conservation value of the park away from the river corridor, and how can it be enhanced?
- c) is there any buried archaeology on the site that will be a constraint on development?

**a.** No detailed planting plans for any stage of the park's development have been found. Historical photographs allow the species of some trees to be identified. There are photographs of the 1987 storm damage showing identifiable trees large enough to have been part of the original planting. On the other hand, no information has been found on whether the extensive planting after 1987 was intended to be like-for-like replacement or a new scheme. The way forward is:

- to track down council staff who may be able to recall what the trees were like before 1987;
- to get the comments of the landscape architect who drew-up the post 1987 scheme;
- to ask residents for their recollections of the pre-1987 park via local newspapers and radio.

**b.** The existing ecological information deals principally with protected species. The site away from the river corridor has some features of interest such as fragments of fen vegetation and hedgerow ground flora, and it has significant potential. Although there is enough information to enable the landscape design and management and maintenance plan to be prepared, a better understanding of higher plants, birds and invertebrates will allow the details of planting and management to be refined. This information can then be the basis for monitoring by a voluntary group/ groups after construction, with the results being fed back into management prescriptions and the project website.

The sequence of events would be:

- ecological surveys using simple, easily-repeatable methods during 2019 by a professional ecologist, involving volunteers where possible;
- evaluation of results, definition of monitoring and volunteer training by early 2020;
- monitoring from spring 2020 onwards at a frequency to be defined in step 2.

A desktop report by a Chartered Archaeologist will probably be required to support the planning application for development of the park. Subsurface archaeology will be dealt with in this. Assuming that the discussion of Fortress Ashford in this plan is correct, one of the issues will be that there may have been outlying defensive features within the park.

2. There are many possible topics here. The following three are suggested because they are opportunities for training and developing long-term interests for volunteers.

- The council minutes between 1954 and 1974 are uncatalogued drafts. Cataloguing them and extracting information about the park would be a good opportunity for training in research and archiving. The Kent History and Library Centre should be able to provide this.
- The post-war evidence found for the park is poor. Although there is some material on internet sites, the way forward is an oral history project with in-depth interviews of people who knew the park well. It can be conducted by trained volunteers. Training could be provided by the Oral History Society or Christ Church Canterbury University. Such a project could be carried out in parallel with a systematic review of local newspapers and one of the themes could be: 'how did the park acquire a bad name and is it justified?'
- A less controversial topic would be the pre-park uses of Watercress Fields and the cattle market. It seems likely that the fields were used for holding livestock for the market. The records of the market itself and local newspapers, especially adverts, would be a good place to start.

3. Fortress Ashford is the obvious topic here, and it is rather surprising that it has not already been considered by the Defence of Kent project. There are several individuals and organisations that could provide training, advice and guidance including Kent County Council, Victor Smith and the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. The museum would be a good base for the project.

#### 10.2.2 Policy 2 Historical links

*To maintain and interpret historical links with the town and the surrounding landscape.*

**Reason** They are an essential part of the history of Ashford.

**Actions**

The alignments of the Jemmett Road/cattle market lane and Beaver Lane routes are clear, and Jemmett Road is the main pedestrian route into the park from the south. Further study might identify whether there was an earlier bridge or ford across the river near the present main crossing point.

Beaver Lane is now largely absorbed within post-war development but most of the route could waymarked by simple signs. The ford remains a distinctive feature and, apart from its historical interest, gives easy and safe access to the river channel. It is not on council land, but subject to the owner's agreement, it could be developed as an informal 'paddling pool' through localised repair of the concrete. It is a good point to provide interpretation of the historic route and the fords of Ashford generally.

There is very little separation between Jemmett Road and the east edge of the park. The road is the main pedestrian access from South Ashford to the town centre. Greater visual separation would help enhance the character of the park, but reinstating the pre-war fencing would be expensive and would hamper the

present pattern of movement. Moreover, it would only make sense in heritage terms if it was part of a general replacement of the pre-war fences. However, a row of boundary trees at fairly wide spacing, retaining the best of those already present, would provide the separation required and define the historic route.

### 10.2.3 **Policy 3 Entrances and bridges at the park**

*To improve the design and information at entrances to the park and crossing points within it.*

**Reason** Some entrances into the park are unclear and ill-defined. Others are rather run down. Allied to the poor condition of bridges, this creates a bad impression and lack of poor orientation for users.

#### **Actions**

Because of the way that it developed, the park has only one traditional metal entrance gate opposite Christchurch Road and long, open boundaries. There are several places where paths extend into the park without a defined entrance. While standard visitor information will be required at each location, improvements to these access points should respond to their landscape context, rather than using a standard design.

Taking the entrances in turn anti-clockwise from the northeast corner, the first is clearly related to the fountain, the more formal corner of the park and the links along the river. It is effectively the introduction to the site. The Gas Works Lane bridge and entrance was originally the main entrance but this is now less well used and there is little need for change. On the other hand, the new bridge from the development on the north bank into the site is an opportunity to bring a twenty-first century touch to the park. The ford entrance has already been discussed.

Along the south edge of Watercress Fields there is unrestricted access from between the flats into the park. However, the path at the end of Ford Way is at a key location next to the community orchard. It is an ideal point for orientation and interpretation.

At the Hillbrow entrance, the relationship between public and private spaces needs to be clarified.

In the southeast corner, the entrance to the car park looks very much like an entrance to a private bowls club rather than a public park. This is not least because the style of the planting is at odds with that in the rest of the park.

The present state of the bridges within the park contributes to the poor integration of the original park and Watercress Fields. All that is required is robust low-key structures with the vegetation on the approaches designed and managed to allow good visibility.

### 10.2.4 **Policy 4 Historical survival**

*To ensure that significant historical features are properly conserved within a modern park.*

**Reason** There are not many significant surviving features, but those that are still present must be properly safeguarded.

#### **Actions**

The fountain is discussed below. Other than this, the only significant features that survive from the pre-war park are the boundary oaks, the outer path loop, the north-south link across it, and the two Jemmett Road entrances. All of these can be incorporated in the redevelopment of the park. In particular, there is the opportunity to clear around the boundary oaks, making them a more distinct feature, and to reinstate the original alignment of the northwest edge of the outer loop where it has been modified as part of the Secret Garden.

### 10.2.5 **Policy 5 Conservation of the fountain**

*To repair the fountain to the highest conservation standards and to improve its setting.*

**Reason** This is a rare feature of high significance.

#### **Actions**

Repairs to the fountain and long-term maintenance requirements are identified in the reports summarised above. The work described should be carried out by appropriate specialist contractors.

### 10.2.6 **Policy 6 The setting of the fountain**

*To reconsider the setting of the fountain in any proposals for the piazza area.*

**Reason** The Edwardian setting was removed in the 1990s, so the present setting should not be a constraint on reconsidering the design of this area.

#### **Actions**

The pre-1990s setting of the fountain was on a quite intimate scale, with a narrower and shorter flight of steps than at present. It was flanked by curving balustrades and had flowerbeds much nearer the west edge. The 1990s changes created a large piazza. This has had occasional use for public events, but is generally underused and bleak.

The best way forward to improve the setting and create spaces that will be more attractive to visitors would be to:

- restore the soft setting by returning the piazza to grass;
- concentrate sitting areas around the fountain;
- improve paved links to the surrounding area in all directions;
- have well-sited high-quality planting replacing the present rather ragged effect.

### 10.2.7 **Policy 7 Character areas as a basis for land use and landscape design**

*To base site planning and design on the key characteristics and potential of the character areas shown on Figure 2.*

**Reason** The site has distinct character areas which relate more to each other and adjacent features than an overall 'public park' appearance.

#### **Actions**

The character areas are shown on Figure 2. They broadly correspond with the zones shown by Lloydborne in 2015 and by Allen Scott in the Round 1 application. In summary, the major proposed uses and improvements are:

*A. Jemmett Road and cattle market lane*

Upgrading the route as the major access from the town centre

*B. Gasworks Lane*

No change

*C. Piazza and Entrance Lawn and D. Central Park*

A heritage zone with emphasis on conserving the fountain, improving its setting and enhancing the avenues.

*E. MUGA and Nursery*

Upgrading the nursery, toilets, car park and café. Improved play facilities.

Volunteer base

*F. Indoor Bowls Pavilion and Grounds*

No change

*G. Secret Garden*

Low maintenance woodland garden

*H. Woodland and Activity Area*

Seasonal wetland for wildlife study. Improved adventure play. Improved tree and woodland management

*I. River Corridor*

Habitat management and educational use

*J. West River Corridor*

Habitat management and educational use

*K. Watercress Fields*

Amenity grassland and meadow. Orchard and nuttery. Woodland. Hedged south boundary

#### 10.2.8 **Policy 8 Toilets, refreshments, play and shelter**

*To ensure that the park has proper facilities for public use.*

**Reason** These are essential for any public park.

**Actions**

The existing nursery complex will be refurbished to provide improved nursery, toilet, play and café facilities. It may also be possible to provide seasonal mobile catering.

#### 10.2.9 **Policy 9 Watercress Fields**

*To find a long-term sustainable use for Watercress Fields*

**Reason** This is a large area which is a maintenance liability at present.

**Actions**

The key issue is the management of the large area of grass that will still cover most of the site after new features have been constructed. The Environment Agency will not accept any change to the flood capacity. The existing mowing regime can remain in some locations and the best option for the rest is some form of meadow. There is a limited range of vigorous grass species present, few broadleaved plants and a fertile soil. Establishing a conventional wildflower-rich floodplain meadow would be an expensive, long-term exercise. A more realistic approach would be to accept the low plant species richness and have a mosaic of cutting regimes from once a year to once every three years. This should substantially increase invertebrate species richness, although it will only succeed if the arisings are removed at each cut.

At the north edge of the area the woodland is due for thinning soon and can be managed as conventional amenity woodland.

#### 10.2.9 **Policy 10 River Corridor**

*To safeguard the landscape and wildlife of the river corridor and to maintain a vegetation screen along the north bank*

**Reason** The river corridor is of significant wildlife and landscape value and the trees on the north bank screen the industrial estate from the park.

**Actions**

There are three elements to the river corridor. Each needs a separate treatment. In the realigned east section the corridor is very narrow. It requires careful siting of vegetation to control access to the edge, while maintaining views and preventing the new development on the north bank from becoming overbearing. Because of the narrowness of the corridor and the form of the channel, the opportunities for enhancement for wildlife are limited.

In contrast, the corridor upstream is wide and the river follows a natural meandering alignment. It is essential that management of the river works with the natural processes of erosion and siltation and that habitats for protected species are maintained and enhanced. The current ecological survey identifies protected species in the river corridor generally but surveys are required to ensure exact information and to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement. Armed with this information, changes such as the construction of riffles and gravel banks can be discussed with the Environment Agency. There is up to 35m width of undisturbed bank between the river channel and the footpath/cycleway. This allows the creation of backwaters and ponds as new habitats and for educational use. Mowing and strimming will enable areas of rough grassland and meadow to be maintained, but the nettles and brambles are also a management tool that can prevent access to vulnerable areas.

On the north bank, many of the poplars and willows have been planted to screen the industrial estate, but there is also natural regeneration. The objective for this area must surely be to maintain and manage the screen. It does not need mature trees as such, just a vegetation screen of the right height. All of the species present will regrow freely after cutting. The first step in the preparation of a

management plan would be to work out the height required for the screen, given that the 1990s planting south of the footpath cycleway is already an effective barrier. This would in turn define a cycle for coppicing small areas each year to maintain a more or less continuous screen. For example, if the screen needs to be 6m high, assuming a conservative figure of 450mm annual extension growth, a 13-year cycle would be needed.

#### 10.2.11 **Policy 11 Access and circulation**

*To ensure good access and circulation across the entire site, which should be DDA compliant wherever practicable.*

**Reason** Good access and circulation are basic requirements of a public park. At present the links between the original park through the Secret Garden and adventure play area to Watercress Fields are poor, as is the provision of surfaced paths within Watercress Fields.

##### **Actions**

The Secret Garden needs redesign to give it a distinctive character, and to make it easily maintainable and more accessible. As part of this work, the path system can be improved and better-defined links provided across the watercourse at the bottom of the slope, although the gradients will prevent the new paths from being DDA compliant.

The adventure play area needs to be upgraded. There is the opportunity to move the main features onto slightly higher, drier ground and to take a new look at circulation within the playground, together with better links to the footpath cycleway that loops around it.

Within Watercress Fields a new all-weather path around the south edge would provide greatly improved circulation.

#### 10.2.12 **Policy 12 Nature conservation**

*To develop sustainable wildlife habitats across the whole of the park*

**Reason.** The site has high potential. Management for wildlife should not be confined to the river corridor.

##### **Actions**

Management of the County Wildlife Site along the river can follow the guidance of the Kent Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency.

Proposals elsewhere can follow good practice such as the planting of mainly native species of local provenance, creating horizontal and vertical variety of structure in woodland and copses, maximising warm, south-facing edges, establishing tussock grassland etc. But this needs to be informed by site specific information. For example, willows support a wide range of invertebrates. But are there populations of species of conservation importance on the site that can be enhanced by particular coppicing or pollarding regimes?

Successful implementation of this policy therefore depends on implementing policy 1.

#### 10.2.13 **Policy 13 Landscape management**

*To work with Aspire and volunteers in developing realistic and sustainable management of the site.*

**Reason.** The site has great potential, but it is essential that the approach to management is based on the resources available.

##### **Actions**

The work that will be undertaken by Aspire is set out in the Management and Maintenance Plan.

Volunteers can make a significant contribution to the quality of management, but it takes a long time and much effort by a project officer to build-up a committed, trained group. It is essential that volunteer work begins with one or two well-defined, realistic projects such as the community orchard or the management of a revamped Secret Garden and moves on gradually to cover a wider scope.

#### 10.2.14 Policy 14 Interpretation and education

*To develop interpretation of the site targeted at local residents, together with information and activities for a wider audience.*

**Reason** There is very high potential and a large amount of accessible illustrative material.

**Actions**

There are separate interpretation and activity plans. The main themes in this plan that can inform them are:

- the wider links, such as the historic routes and Fortress Ashford, between the park and the town;
- the development of a distinct identity of Victoria Park in the Edwardian period and its persistence despite the many changes and losses;
- the nature conservation value of the site.

## 11. References

### **Ashford Borough Council**

Committee minutes 1974 onwards

### **Ashford Library photographs and postcards collection**

159,168,1070,1133, 1177, 1176, 1472, 1496,1572, 1581, 1752, 3332,2380, 2691,2206-10, 2787-8, 3020,4587-8, 4634-6, 4710-7, 4954-5, 5223, 5232, 5330,5370,5674,5885,7380,7516,8103-5

### **Historic England Archive**

See Appendix 3

### **Kent History and Library Centre**

#### **Ashford UDC minutes**

UD/AS/A/M/1/7 1894 - 1896  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/8 1896 - 1898  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/9 1898 - 1900  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/10 1900 - 1902  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/11 1902 - 1904  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/12 1904 - 1906  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/13 1906 - 1909  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/14 1909 - 1911  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/15 1911 - 1914  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/16 1914 - 1916  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/17 1916 - 1919  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/18 1919 - 1921  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/19 1921 - 1923  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/20 1923 - 1924  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/21 1924 - 1925  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/26 1929 - 1932  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/27 1932 - 1935  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/28 1935 - 1937  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/29 1937 - 1940  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/30 1940 - 1946  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/32 1947 - 1948  
 UD/AS/A/M/1/33 1948 - 1949

#### **Other Ashford UDC documents**

UD/AS/C/1/1 1923 - 1927 Letter book  
 UD/AS/C/1/2 1926 Letter book  
 UD/AS/TR/1/1 1872 - 1928 Muniment Book

#### **Postcards**

ASH category archived at Ashford library  
 ASH/IMG/PO/1/ASH/129 The Fountain  
 ASH/IMG/PO/1/ASH/130  
 HLC-IMG/PO/1/ASH/140 ·  
 ASH/IMG/PO/1/ASH/113 ·  
 ASH/IMG/PO/1/ASH/26 The Fountain, Victoria Park, Ashford  
 KHLC-IMG/PO/1/ASH/142 Baker Collection 1966  
 KHLC-IMG/PO/1/ASH/141 1921 ·  
 KHLC-IMG/PO/1/ASH/28 1923  
 ASH/IMG/PO/1/ASH/131 Hardy shelter  
 KHLC-IMG/PO/1/ASH/85 c. 1915

### **The National Archives**

WO166/6852 1May 1941-January 1943

### **Newspapers and magazines**

*Gardeners' Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette*, 16 August, 1862

*Gardener's Chronicle* 8 November, 1884

*Illustrated London News* 7 June 1862 'Bronze Fountain in the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens Designed by Lienard, Modelled by Moreau, Cast by Barbezat, Fitted and Erected by Hubert' Kentish Express and Ashford News

9.7.1898 OLD ASHFORD FROM THE BEAVER FIELDS

7.10.99 The recreation ground was upon the recommendation of the Committee designated 'Victoria Park'

8.11.04 'Opening of a new shelter at Ashford'

27.7.12 'Gift to Ashford Presentation of Noted Fountain'

16.12.11 'Unique Offer to Ashford Wanted a generous person'

South Eastern Gazette 30.7.12

### Books, reports and articles

J Adamson, 'Ashford in 19th Century'. Ashford Local History Group p, 1981

Allen Scott, 'Victoria Park and Watercress Fields Parks for People, Round 1 Application Masterplan and Background Information' February 2017

J Ashby, *Ashford in Photographs* (Ashford 2007)

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R. Filmer, *Old Ashford* (Gloucester, 1983)

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Donald Insall Associates, 'Hubert Fountain Victoria Park Ashford Kent' Historical research report, December 1997

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J. S. Kerr, *The Conservation Plan: A Guide to the Preparation of Conservation Plans for Places of European Cultural Significance* 6th Edition (2004)

Headley's Guide to Ashford and District illustrated (1950)

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H R Pratt Borman, *Ashford's Progress* (1977)

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SR Salter, *Remembering Ashford* (Stroud, 2009)

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<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2013/06/03/3773483.htm>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ashfordkentrememberingthewayitoncewas>

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<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/the-environment/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy/>  
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Landscape Character Assessment | LI Technical Information Note  
08/2015[https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Landscape-Character-Assessment-TIN-08\\_15-20160216.pdf](https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Landscape-Character-Assessment-TIN-08_15-20160216.pdf)

## APPENDIX 1

Number	<b>1</b>	Name	Gasworks Lane
Location	Area B		
Date	Nineteenth century		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	200m from railway to park 10m wide at south end		
Description and history	OS 1876 show a bridge but no track. It was a condition of the sale of the park to Ashford UDC by Jemmett in 1898 that the lane was constructed, but the underpass must have been built when the railway was constructed in 1842. So the route may have been there before this date. Now cut off by the high speed rail link.		
Sources	OS 1876 and subsequent editions. Conveyance and map at ABC offices		
Condition	Fair, but no longer an effective link.		
Significance	H Medium E Low A Low/detractor C Low/medium		
Management	Outside scope		

Number	<b>2</b>	Name	River crossing
Location	Area B		
Date	1898		
Type of feature	Bridge		
Dimensions	10m wide		
Description and history	Bridge built by the UDC when the site of the park was acquired. Old abutments are brick and stone in poor condition. UDC minutes refer to a brick wall in this location. The timber bridge was in poor condition by the mid-1980s when it was replaced by the present one, which is in a similar style.		
Sources	Conveyance and map at ABC offices Photographs at Ashford Library		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Low/medium E Low/medium A Low C Low/medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements	Outside scope		

Number	<b>3</b>	Name	River realignment
Location	Area I1		
Date	Possibly sixteenth century		
Type of feature	River		
Dimensions	10m wide 300m long within site Continues outside to East Hill		
Description and history	Straightened channel linking to Lord's Cut on east side of the town. Shown on all maps from Andrews, Dury and Herbert, 1769 onwards. The Lord's Cut was made to serve the mill at the bottom of East Hill at some time before 1562 (Ruderman, p. 18)		
Sources	Ruderman and all maps from 1769 onwards		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium E Low A Low C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Outside scope		

Number	<b>4</b>	Name	Early path
Location	Area D		
Date	1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide Length as plan		

Description and history	A path from the gas works entrance to main entrance from Christchurch Road was requested in UDC mins 9.30.12.98 Not planted until after WWII
Sources	UDC minutes Air photographs as listed
Condition	Fair
Significance	H Low E Low A Low/medium C Low
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance

Number	<b>5</b>	Name	Christchurch Road entrance
Location	Area A		
Date	Gates 1899		
Type of feature	Gates , lost WWI gun and bed		
Dimensions			
Description and history	The gates were supplied at a cost of £50 by the local firm of JU Bulger and Co which had a foundry on St John's Lane just off the High St. (UDC mins 9.3.6.99; Filmer, Ashford in Old Photographs (Gloucester, 1988)) The WWI gun removed in 1938 is believed to have been here and then replaced with the 'rockery bed' shown on vol 2 Fig 43		
Sources	UDC minutes, Headey's guide , Filmer		
Condition	Gates in good condition		
Significance	H Medium E. Low A Medium C Medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Regular inspection and repainting of gates		

Number	<b>6</b>	Name	Edwardian path removed
Location	Area C		
Date	1912		
Type of feature	Earthwork		
Dimensions	Slight ridge Length as plan		
Description and history	The path here with the circular beds on the north side was part of the 1912 setting of the fountain. It and the beds were removed in the 1990s and it can be seen as a slight earthwork.		
Sources	Maps and air photographs 1912 onwards		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	None		

Number	<b>7</b>	Name	Balustrades
Location	Area C		
Date	1990s in present form but contain elements from 1912 and before		
Type of feature	Balustrades		
Dimensions	About 1.2m high Length as plan		
Description and history	 <p>The setting created for the fountain in 1912 uses the plinth and stags</p>		

	associated with the fountain when it was at Olantigh House. The arrangement is shown on Figures 59-62 The design present today dates from the mid-1990s. The design of the plinths is the same as in 1912 and the originals may have been re-used. The form of the balusters is also the same. The number of steps down from the fountain was increased in the 1990s.
Sources	UDC minutes, photographs as shown in vol 2, 1992 Victoria Park Masterplan and subsequent planning applications.
Condition	Fair
Significance	H Medium/high E Medium A Low/medium CMedium
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Regular inspection

Number	<b>8</b>	Name	Fountain See vol 1 section 7
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Number	<b>9</b>	Name	Post-war path
Location	Areas D and C		
Date	1990s		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide		
Description and history	Path constructed as part of 1990s changes		
Sources	1992 Masterplan		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>10</b>	Name	Realigned and widened path
Location	Area D		
Date	c. 1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	6m		
Description and history	This was part of the original path layout first shown on OS 1907. It was widened and slightly realigned with the creation of the footpath/ cycleway in the early 1990s		
Sources	OS 1907 Aerial photo 1987 onwards		
Condition	Good		
Significance	H Medium E Low A Medium/low C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>11</b>	Name	Modern pond
Location	Area G		
Date	1990s		
Type of feature	Pond		
Dimensions	10m x 5m		
Description and history	Created as part of the 1990s Secret Garden. Good range of common native aquatics		
Sources	None		
Condition	Fair		

Significance	Low heritage significance, but potentially high nature conservation significance of it contains protected species.
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Rotational clearance of aquatic vegetation

Number	<b>12</b>	Name	Original path
Location	Area D		
Date	c 1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide length as plan		
Description and history	The paths may not have been laid out at the same time as the first planting in 1899 but they were complete and gravelled by 1901. UDC mins 7.9.01		
Sources	OS 1907 UDC mins		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium/low E Low A Medium/low C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>13</b>	Name	Site of inter-war shelter
Location	Area D		
Date	1937		
Type of feature	Shelter		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	A new shelter for old people was sponsored by the Ashford Cooperative Society in 1937 (UDC mins 29 16.12.37). The cost of the shelter was £84.5.0 On 20.10.38 the shelter was formally handed over. A shelter in this location is first shown on the 1941 aerial photograph.		
Sources	UDC mins. Aerial photographs		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	H Medium/low Others low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>14</b>	Name	Boundary with oaks
Location	Area H1		
Date	c.1898		
Type of feature	Watercourse		
Dimensions	Channel 2m wide		
Description and history	Ditch is shown on OS 1876 and 1898 conveyance. Trees diameters are compatible with late nineteenth-century planting. A small section of railings survives		

	
Sources	OS maps Tree survey
Condition	Moderate. Chanel overgrown and stagnant. Trees good
Significance	H Medium E Low A Medium C Medium
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Tree inspection Open-up watercourse

Number	<b>15</b>	Name	Gate piers
Location	Area C At entrance to park		
Date	1898-1914		
Type of feature	Gateposts		
Dimensions	1.2 x .75 x.75		
Description and history	Assumed to be gateposts from the original fence but no direct evidence and no pintles on them		
Sources	None		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium E Low A Low/medium C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Inspect regularly		

Number	<b>16</b>	Name	Site of 1904 shelter?
Location	Edge of park within area C		
Date	1904		
Type of feature	Shelter		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	See Figure 42 which was a shelter presented to the council in 1904 by the Allied Joint Stock Bread and Flower Co <i>KEAN</i> 8.11.04 'Opening of a new shelter at Ashford'. This was described as being near the Beaver path entrance and having two glass panels separate the upper portions of the partitions and seating for 20 people. The sites of the Hardy shelter and the 2 shelters of 1902 are known and to the south a shelter appears in this position on the 1929 aerial photograph ( Figure 46)		
Sources	As above		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and	N/a		

Management Requirements.	
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Number	<b>17</b>	Name	Original path
Location	Area A and edge of park		
Date	c 1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide length as plan		
Description and history	The paths may not have been laid out at the same time as the first planting in 1899, but they were complete and gravelled by 1901. UDC mins 7.9.01		
Sources	OS 1907 UDC mins		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium/low E Low A Medium/low C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>18</b>	Name	Cattle market lane bridge
Location	Area A		
Date	Twentieth-century in present form. River crossing her by at least mid-nineteenth century		
Type of feature	Bridge		
Dimensions	Chanel 10m wide		
Description and history	This appears to have been one of the main accesses the original town centre market so that there must have been a bridge or ford here from an early date. A bridge with cattle gate is shown on Figure 33. The present bridge appears to date from the 1980s/90s improvements		
Sources	All maps from OS 1876 onwards		
Condition	Modern bridge fair		
Significance	H Medium E Medium A Low C Low/medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Bridge maintained by highway authority		

Number	<b>19</b>	Name	Cattle market lane
Location	Area A		
Date	Unknown		
Type of feature	Lane		
Dimensions	As plan		
Description and history	See above for the river bridge and early link. The railway was crossed on a narrow bridge with steep steps and by the 1940s (Figure 47) there was a closely-planted avenue between the two bridges. The present ramps date from the late 1990s, but parts of the avenue had been removed before thi.s		
Sources	Aerial photographs Historic England Archive and Google Earth		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium E Low/medium A Low C Low/medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Outside scope		

Number	<b>20</b>	Name	Site of circular beds
Location	Area C		
Date	c. 1912		
Type of feature	Park beds		
Dimensions	Approx 10m		
Description and history	Circular beds for seasonal bedding, probably contemporary with installation of fountain. Present until at least late 1980s		
Sources	OS and Ashford Library photos		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>21</b>	Name	Original path
Location	Area D		
Date	c 1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide length as plan		
Description and history	The paths may not have been laid out at the same time as the first planting in 1899 but they were complete and gravelled by 1901 (UDC mins 7.9.01). Lined with semi-mature common lime. The line of the path continues into the Secret Garden as 24, also with limes		
Sources	OS 1907 UDC mins		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium/low E Low A Medium/low C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>22</b>	Name	Bridge
Location	H1		
Date	Twentieth century		
Type of feature	Bridge		
Dimensions	10m x 3m		
Description and history	Timber bridge dating from construction of the adventure play area in 1980s/90s. But 1941 aerial photograph shows another structure on the site		
Sources	Aerial photographs		
Condition	Moderate		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Needs inspection and repair		

Number	<b>23</b>	Name	Site of sandpit
Location	Area G		
Date	Present by 1929 (Figure 46)		
Type of feature	Play		
Dimensions	Uncertain		
Description and history	Appears on air photographs and OS		
Sources	As above		

Condition	N/a
Significance	Low
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a

Number	<b>24</b>	Name	Original path
Location	Area G		
Date	c 1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide length as plan		
Description and history	The paths may not have been laid out at the same time as the first planting in 1899, but they were complete and gravelled by 1901 (UDC mins 7.9.01). This section lies within the Secret Garden with semi-mature limes alongside. The surfaced path has been realigned at 25		
Sources	OS 1907 UDC mins		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Medium/low E Low A Medium/low C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>25</b>	Name	Realigned path
Location	Area D		
Date	1990s		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide		
Description and history	Realigned path to enable construction of Secret Garden		
Sources	None		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Low E Low A Low/medium C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>26</b>	Name	Realigned path to Hillyfields
Location	Area F		
Date	Twentieth century		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	2m		
Description and history	Access from Hillyfields was a contentious issue between the wars. The 1929 aerial photograph shows several trampled paths. A surfaced path was constructed at some time after the war.		
Sources	Aerial photographs UDC minutes		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance		

Number	<b>27</b>	Name	Site of structures
Location	Area G		

Date	Twentieth century
Type of feature	Small rectangular buildings
Dimensions	Unknown
Description and history	4 small rectangles appear on the 1941 air photograph and had gone by the 1960s They were near the paddling pool and may have been shelters or changing cubicles
Sources	Aerial photographs
Condition	N/a
Significance	Low
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a

Number	<b>28</b>	Name	Site of paddling pool
Location	Area G		
Date	1930s		
Type of feature	Play		
Dimensions	20m x 10m?		
Description and history	The paddling pool was constructed in 1937 (UDC mins 28 20.5.37). The cost was £270. It was still present, but perhaps derelict, in 1978 when it was proposed to create a skateboarding area on the site of the paddling pool, although it is not clear if this was carried out ( RA mins 6.12.77; 7.2.78)		
Sources	As above and aerial photographs		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	H Low/medium Rest low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>29</b>	Name	Site of path around paddling pool
Location	Area G		
Date	Twentieth-century		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	First appears on 1941 aerial photograph. May have been incorporated in the terraces of the Secret Garden		
Sources	Aerial photographs		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>30</b>	Name	Site of Hardy shelter
Location	Area D		
Date	Early twentieth century		
Type of feature	Shelter		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	Photograph at Ashford Museum Figure 43 is labelled ' Shelter given by Lawrence (sic) Hardy MP' Elsewhere it is dated 1911. Laurence Hardy (14 April 1854 – 21 January 1933) was a Conservative Party politician. He was a MP for Ashford from 1892 to 1918. The shelter was still present in 1967		

Sources	Ashford Museum and aerial photographs
Condition	N/a
Significance	H Low/medium Rest Low
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a

Number	<b>31</b>	Name	Site of 1902 shelter
Location	Area D		
Date	1902		
Type of feature	Shelter		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	One of two shelters donated by Mr FG Hyland and Mr Lewis placed at south end of the park (UDC mins 10. 18.6.02; 11.22.9.02). They were subsequently given brass plates to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (UDC mins 11. 22.9.02). Present until the 1960s		
Sources	UDC mins Aerial photographs 1958 OS		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	H Low/medium Rest low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>32</b>	Name	Site of bandstand and enclosure
Location	Area E		
Date	1900/05		
Type of feature	Structure		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	In June 1900 the chairman of the Baths and Recreation Committee, Mr Hancock, offered to provide a permanent bandstand (UDC mins 11.6. 00) which was soon under construction and came into use in April 1901 (Figures 40, 41 UDC mins 9. 25.8.00). It was lit by a centre light and six columns erected outside the stand (UDC mins 10. 20.4.01) Band concerts were one of the major features of the park from then until after the Second World War. In 1905 a 100ft-diameter enclosure (Figure 41) was placed around the bandstand. Additional lighting was provided (UDC mins 12. 15.4.05; 27.5.05; 12.6.05)		
Sources	UDC mins Photographs Ashford Library and Museum		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	H Low/medium Rest Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>33</b>	Name	Original path
Location	Area G		
Date	c 1898		
Type of feature	Path		
Dimensions	3m wide length as plan		
Description and history	The paths may not have been laid out at the same time as the first planting in 1899, but they were complete and gravelled by 1901 (UDC mins 7.9.01).		
Sources	OS 1907 UDC mins		
Condition	Fair		

Significance	H Medium/low E Low A Medium/low C Low
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance

Number	<b>34</b>	Name	Site of 1902 shelter
Location	Area D		
Date	1902		
Type of feature	Shelter		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	One of two shelters donated by Mr FG Hyland and Mr Lewis placed at south end of the park (UDC mins 10. 18.6.02; 11.22.9.02). They were subsequently given brass plates to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (UDC mins 11. 22.9.02). Present until the 1960s		
Sources	UDC mins Aerial photographs 1958 OS		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	H Low/medium Rest low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.			

Number	<b>35</b>	Name	Site of post-war shelter
Location	Area D		
Date	Twentieth century		
Type of feature	Structure		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	Shown on 1958 OS and air photographs. Possibly of the type shown in the background on Figure 52		
Sources	OS and aerial photographs		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>36</b>	Name	Site of tennis courts /play area
Location	Area F		
Date	Early twentieth century		
Type of feature	Sport		
Dimensions	Up to 6 standard tennis courts		
Description and history	There was tennis in the park as soon as it opened and the 1941 aerial photographs show courts in this area. By the 1970s there was a play area here .		
Sources	Aerial photographs		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

Number	<b>37</b>	Name	Aerial photograph features
Location	Area F		
Date	Twentieth century		

Type of feature	Unknown
Dimensions	Unknown
Description and history	Post-war aerial photographs show a small circular feature and a small square structure, perhaps a shed.
Sources	Aerial photographs
Condition	N/a
Significance	Low
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a

Number	<b>38</b>	Name	Second World War wires
Location	I2		
Date	1941		
Type of feature	Military		
Dimensions	Pimples 3ft high 3ft 6ins base. Angle iron in top 5ft high Line approx. 500 yds		
Description and history	 <p>Line of standard concrete anti-tank pimples with angle irons set in top with holes for wires. Transcription of war diaries refers to 4 miles of wire around fortress Ashford</p>		
Sources	H R Pratt Boorman, Ashford's Progress ( 1977) has what appears to be a partial precis of the war diary for Ashford TNA WO166/6852 1May 1941- January 1943		
Condition	Poor Overgrown and collapsing into river		
Significance	H Medium E Medium/high A Low C Medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Record fully before they are lost		

Number	<b>39</b>	Name	Ford
Location	Area J		
Date	Unknown		
Type of feature	Route		

Dimensions	Concrete 8m wide
Description and history	Shown on Andrews Dury and Herbert 1769 and all subsequent maps. Probably concreted in WWII
Sources	As above
Condition	Fair
Significance	H Medium E Medium/ high A Low/medium C Low/medium
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Outside scope

Number	<b>40</b>	Name	Site of greenhouses
Location	Area F		
Date	First evidence 1929		
Type of feature	Structure		
Dimensions	Unknown		
Description and history	Shown on aerial photographs from 1929 onwards and probably removed in 1970s		
Sources	Aerial photographs UDC minutes		
Condition	N/a		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	N/a		

<b>Number</b>	<b>41</b>	Name	MUGA
Location	Area E		
Date	1990s in present form		
Type of feature	Sports		
Dimensions	40 x 30m		
Description and history	There was a bowling green on this site by 1958. Replaced by the MUGA in the 1990s Screened by high prominent hedge		
Sources	OS		
Condition	Good		
Significance	Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard sports maintenance		

Number	<b>42</b>	Name	Nursery building
Location	Area E		
Date	1982		
Type of feature	Structure		
Dimensions	As plan		
Description and history	Recreation and Amenities committee approved construction 25.3.82		
Sources	ABC minutes and files		
Condition	In need of refurbishment		
Significance	H Low E Low A Detractor C Medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard property maintenance		

Number	<b>43</b>	Name	Play area
Location	Area E		
Date	1990s		
Type of feature	Play		
Dimensions	As plan		
Description and history	Play area adjacent to pavilion		
Sources	ABC planning applications		
Condition	Moderate		
Significance	H Low E Low A Detractor C Medium		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	In need of refurbishment		

Number	<b>44</b>	Name	Car park
Location	Area E		
Date	1970s and subsequent enlargements		
Type of feature	Car park		
Dimensions	As plan		
Description and history	Car park with unmetalled surfacing Grass mounding. Uniform planting of silver birch		
Sources	ABC files and planning applications		
Condition	Moderate		
Significance	H Low E Low A Detractor C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	In need of refurbishment		

Number	<b>45</b>	Name	Bowls Pavilion
Location	Area F		
Date	2003		
Type of feature	Structure		
Dimensions	As plan		
Description and history	Indoor bowls pavilion that dominates the south end of the park		
Sources	ABC planning applications		
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Low E Low A Detractor C Low		
Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard building maintenance		

Number	<b>46</b>	Name	Play area
Location	Area F		
Date	2003		
Type of feature	Play		
Dimensions	As plan		
Description and history	Toddler age play area with palms and cordylines		
Sources			
Condition	Fair		
Significance	H Low E Low A Detractor C Medium/low		

Maintenance and Management Requirements.	Standard maintenance
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## APPENDIX 2

## RATCLIFFE CRITERIA

<b>CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE</b>	
<b>Size</b>	In lowland Britain, semi-natural habitats tend to be highly fragmented and the value of a site usually increases with its size.
<b>Diversity</b>	The variety in number of both communities and species depends largely on the diversity of habitat. Diversity is also related to area and the number of both plant and animal species shows a marked tendency to increase with the size of the area.
<b>Naturalness</b>	Truly natural habitats, unmodified by man, are rare in Britain, and nature conservation deals largely with semi-natural habitats. Semi-natural habitats must nevertheless exhibit a level of quality marked by a lack of features which indicate gross or recent human modification. This criterion has to take into account the fact that some habitats, (e.g. grasslands, heathlands) are anthropogenic in origin.
<b>Rarity</b>	One of the most important purposes of nature conservation is to protect rare or local species and communities. The general principle is that the rarer the species or community, the greater the value for nature conservation. Rarity is related to the frequency of occurrence at national or county level.
<b>Fragility</b>	Fragility reflects the degree of sensitivity of habitats, communities and species to environmental change and involves a consideration of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.
<b>Typicalness</b>	It is necessary to represent the typical and commonplace within a field of ecological variation as well as the best examples of particular ecosystems.
<b>Recorded History</b>	The extent to which a site has been used for scientific study and research is a factor of some importance.
<b>Position in an ecological/geographical unit</b>	The relationship of a site to adjacent areas of nature conservation value. It is important to recognise the important and characteristic formations, communities and species of a district.
<b>Potential Value</b>	Certain sites could, through appropriate management or natural change, develop a greater nature conservation interest.
<b>Intrinsic Appeal</b>	The knowledge of the distribution and numbers of popular groups of species, such as birds, is greater than for obscure groups. Similarly, colourful wild flowers and rare orchids arouse more enthusiasm than liverworts. It is pragmatic to give more weight to some groups than to others.
Criteria are based on Ratcliffe, D.A. (1977) <i>A Nature Conservation Review</i> , Cambridge University Press	

## APPENDIX 3

Full single listing - Verticals, Standard order  
Customer enquiry reference: 111138

Sortie number	Library number	Camera position	Frame number	Held	Centre point	Run	Date	Sortie quality	Scale 1:	Focal length (in inches)	Film details (in inches)	Film held
RAF/106G/UK/1449	339	RS	4180	P	TR 007 422	17	01 MAY 1946	A	10500	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/106G/UK/1449	339	RS	4181	P	TR 000 422	17	01 MAY 1946	A	10500	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/106G/UK/1443	354	RP	3294	P	TQ 997 424	5	30 APR 1946	AB	10750	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/106G/UK/1443	354	RP	3295	P	TR 004 424	5	30 APR 1946	AB	10750	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/106G/UK/1724	451	RS	4114	P	TQ 998 430	17	10 SEP 1946	AB	10250	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/106G/UK/1724	451	RS	4115	P	TR 007 427	17	10 SEP 1946	AB	10250	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/1752	475	RP	3147	P	TR 009 427	23	21 SEP 1946	A	9840	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/1752	475	RP	3148	P	TR 001 427	23	21 SEP 1946	A	9840	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/1752	475	RP	3149	P	TQ 994 428	23	21 SEP 1946	A	9840	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/1829	505	RS	4105	P	TR 004 417	12	05 NOV 1946	AB	10551	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/1829	505	RS	4106	P	TQ 998 417	12	05 NOV 1946	AB	10551	20	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5228	P	TR 005 420	18	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5229	P	TR 002 420	18	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5230	P	TQ 999 420	18	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5231	P	TQ 996 420	18	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5280	P	TQ 997 430	26	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5281	P	TR 000 429	26	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2303	722	V	5282	P	TR 004 429	26	10 SEP 1947	AB	5500	14	Black and White 8.2 x 7.0	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2358	733	V	5103	P	TR 006 422	4	15 OCT 1947	A	4800	14	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2358	733	V	5104	P	TR 003 422	4	15 OCT 1947	A	4800	14	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2358	733	V	5105	P	TR 001 422	4	15 OCT 1947	A	4800	14	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2358	733	V	5106	P	TQ 998 422	4	15 OCT 1947	A	4800	14	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/CPE/UK/2358	733	V	5107	P	TQ 995 422	4	15 OCT 1947	A	4800	14	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/82/1006	1520	F61	42	P	TQ 991 428	20	31 AUG 1954	AB	15000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/82/1006	1520	F61	43	P	TR 001 434	20	31 AUG 1954	AB	15000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/82/1006	1520	F63	24	P	TR 010 420	37	31 AUG 1954	AB	15000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2859	1919	F42	84	N	TR 007 424	14	13 MAY 1959	A	11000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2859	1919	F42	85	N	TR 000 426	14	13 MAY 1959	A	11000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2859	1919	F42	86	N	TQ 993 428	14	13 MAY 1959	A	11000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2938	1923	F43	318	P	TR 000 418	9	15 JUN 1959	A	10666	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2938	1923	F43	319	P	TR 006 420	9	15 JUN 1959	A	10666	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2942	1925	F44	233	N	TQ 998 433	14	16 JUN 1959	AC	11000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2948	1927	F44	55	P	TR 007 412	11	17 JUN 1959	A	10600	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR

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RAF/58/2948	1927	F44	56	P	TR 001 412	11	17 JUN 1959	A	10600	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
HSL/UK/61082	2104G	RV	6341	P	TR 003 430	1	25 JUN 1961	A	10560	6	Black and White 9 x 9	HES
RAF/58/2778	2315	F44	296	P	TR 004 430	25	01 MAY 1959	A	11569	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/2778	2315	F44	297	P	TQ 998 430	25	01 MAY 1959	A	11569	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	NMR
RAF/58/T/3966	2325	F21	1	P	TR 005 414	3	02 DEC 1960	AC	13000	24	Black and White 9 x 9	FNH
RAF/58/T/3966	2325	F21	46	P	TQ 999 434	1	02 DEC 1960	AC	13000	24	Black and White 9 x 9	FNH
RAF/541/T/54	2582	RS	4002	P	TR 010 423	7	12 OCT 1950	A	14000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	FDR
RAF/541/T/54	2582	RS	4003	P	TR 001 421	7	12 OCT 1950	A	14000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	FDR
RAF/541/T/54	2582	RS	4004	P	TQ 992 419	7	12 OCT 1950	A	14000	36	Black and White 8.25 x 7.5	FDR
MAL/66081	4388	V	58	P	TR 003 429	3	05 DEC 1966	A	6000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/66081	4388	V	59	P	TR 008 426	3	05 DEC 1966	A	6000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/66081	4388	V	96	P	TR 001 419	4	05 DEC 1966	A	6000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/66081	4388	V	97	P	TQ 996 423	4	05 DEC 1966	A	6000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/67037	4766	V	131	P	TQ 999 426	3	10 MAY 1967	A	11000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7171	P	TQ 996 425	2	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7172	P	TQ 999 425	2	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7173	P	TR 002 425	2	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7174	P	TR 005 424	2	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7185	P	TQ 997 418	3	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7186	P	TR 000 418	3	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7187	P	TR 002 418	3	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
RAF/26J/UK1445	6542	V	7188	P	TR 005 418	3	12 SEP 1941	A	6500	5	Black and White 5 x 5	FDM
MAL/74061	7194	V	74	P	TR 005 422	1	10 NOV 1974	A	2300	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/74061	7194	V	75	P	TR 005 424	1	10 NOV 1974	A	2300	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/74061	7194	V	82	P	TR 007 422	2	10 NOV 1974	A	2300	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/74061	7194	V	83	P	TR 007 424	2	10 NOV 1974	A	2300	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63016	9020A	V	976	N	TQ 995 422	3	18 APR 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63016	9020A	V	977	N	TQ 995 424	3	18 APR 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63015	9020B	V	1139	N	TR 008 421	1	18 APR 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63015	9020B	V	1140	N	TR 007 424	1	18 APR 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63018	9020D	V	1518	N	TR 003 422	5	19 APR 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63018	9020D	V	1519	N	TR 002 425	5	19 APR 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63026	9020E	V	2409	N	TQ 998 424	1	09 MAY 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
RCU/HSL/UK/63026	9020E	V	2410	N	TQ 999 422	1	09 MAY 1963	A	2600	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/67301	11422	V	226	P	TR 003 423	4	07 AUG 1967	A	7500	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/67301	11422	V	227	P	TQ 995 423	4	07 AUG 1967	A	7500	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/87175	13189	V	368	P	TR 005 422	1	19 OCT 1987	A	5500	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/87175	13189	V	369	P	TR 003 422	1	19 OCT 1987	A	5500	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/87175	13189	V	370	P	TR 000 422	1	19 OCT 1987	A	5500	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/87175	13189	V	371	P	TQ 998 422	1	19 OCT 1987	A	5500	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR

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OS/89025	13404	V	27	P	TQ 997 420	2	05 MAR 1989	A	4700	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/89025	13404	V	28	P	TQ 996 426	2	05 MAR 1989	A	4700	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/89056	13425	V	203	N	TQ 994 423	5	28 MAR 1989	A	8000	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/94070	14563	V	37	P	TR 013 418	2	25 APR 1994	A	7900	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/94070	14563	V	38	P	TR 013 424	2	25 APR 1994	A	7900	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/96108	15068	V	28	P	TR 005 427	1	30 MAY 1996	A	8100	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/96108	15068	V	29	P	TR 005 420	1	30 MAY 1996	A	8100	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/01016	15767	V	11	N	TR 008 421	1	02 APR 2001	A	5200	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/01016	15767	V	12	N	TR 003 421	1	02 APR 2001	A	5200	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/55T17	20300	V	100	P	TR 010 425	6	23 MAY 1955	A	5000	4.5	Black and White 7 x 7	NMR
OS/55T17	20300	V	101	P	TR 010 422	6	23 MAY 1955	A	5000	4.5	Black and White 7 x 7	NMR
OS/55T17	20300	V	115	P	TR 003 425	7	23 MAY 1955	A	5000	4.5	Black and White 7 x 7	NMR
OS/55T17	20300	V	116	P	TR 004 422	7	23 MAY 1955	A	5000	4.5	Black and White 7 x 7	NMR
OS/55T17	20300	V	130	N	TQ 997 424	8	23 MAY 1955	A	5000	4.5	Black and White 7 x 7	NMR
OS/55T17	20300	V	131	N	TQ 998 421	8	23 MAY 1955	A	5000	4.5	Black and White 7 x 7	NMR
OS/96107	20717	V	210	N	TQ 993 427	7	30 MAY 1996	A	8100	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/96107	20717	V	211	N	TQ 993 420	7	30 MAY 1996	A	8100	12	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/60449	21309	V	86126	N	TR 010 421	9	05 DEC 1960	A	6000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/60449	21309	V	86127	N	TR 010 426	9	05 DEC 1960	A	6000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/57261	21536	V	39728	N	TR 002 424	2	13 MAR 1957	A	2500	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/55215	21566	V	31745	N	TQ 994 426	1	01 SEP 1955	A	3000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/55215	21566	V	31746	N	TQ 997 426	1	01 SEP 1955	A	3000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/55215	21566	V	31747	N	TR 000 426	1	01 SEP 1955	A	3000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/55215	21566	V	31748	N	TR 003 426	1	01 SEP 1955	A	3000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/55215	21566	V	31749	N	TR 005 425	1	01 SEP 1955	A	3000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
MAL/55215	21566	V	31750	N	TR 008 425	1	01 SEP 1955	A	3000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
OS/02554	23933	V	197	N	TR 001 417	5	16 MAY 2002	A	8800	6	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/02554	23933	V	198	N	TR 001 424	5	16 MAY 2002	A	8800	6	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/02580	23952	V	102	N	TQ 997 425	3	26 JUN 2002	A	8300	12	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/02580	23952	V	103	N	TR 004 425	3	26 JUN 2002	A	8300	12	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/05989(Y)	24721	V	1941	N	TR 000 429	5	17 AUG 2005	A	10000	6	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/05989(Y)	24721	V	1952	N	TR 007 420	7	17 AUG 2005	A	10000	6	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/05989(Y)	24721	V	1953	N	TR 007 429	7	17 AUG 2005	A	10000	6	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
OS/05997	24727	V	2182	N	TR 001 429	4	29 AUG 2005	A	10000	6	Colour 9 x 9	NMR
ADA/185(Z)	26278	V	115	N	TR 002 428	4	12 APR 1984	A	10000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
ADA/204(Z)	26314	V	254	N	TR 000 428	1	27 JUN 1984	A	10000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR
ADA/204(Z)	26314	V	255	N	TR 008 426	1	27 JUN 1984	A	10000	6	Black and White 9 x 9	NMR

Total Sorties  
Total Frames

42  
110

HISTORIC ENGLAND  
Air Photographs



Customer oblique listing - Obliques, Standard Order

Customer enquiry reference number: 111138

Photo reference (NGR and Index number)	Film and frame number	Original number	Date	Film type		Map Reference (6 figure grid)	What can you order?		
							Photocopy	Laser copy	Photographic copy
TR 0042 / 2	NMR 4689 / 03		13 AUG 1990	Colour slide	70mm,120,220	TR 008423	Y	Y	Y
TR 0042 / 3	NMR 4689 / 05		13 AUG 1990	Colour slide	70mm,120,220	TR 008423	Y	Y	Y
TR 0042 / 4	NMR 4689 / 06		13 AUG 1990	Colour slide	70mm,120,220	TR 008423	Y	Y	Y
TR 0042 / 18	AFL 60568 / EPW026098		APR 1929	BW Glass Plate	5"x4"	TR 004422	N	N	Y
TR 0042 / 19	AFL 60568 / EPW026099		APR 1929	BW Glass Plate	5"x4"	TR 004426	N	N	Y
TR 0042 / 22	AFL 61608 / EAW013658		10 MAR 1948	BW Cut Roll Film	5½ "	TR 007425	N	N	Y
TR 0042 / 23	AFL 61909 / EAW026214		12 AUG 1949	BW Cut Roll Film	5½ "	TR 007424	N	N	Y
TR 0042 / 24	AFL 61909 / EAW026215		12 AUG 1949	BW Cut Roll Film	5½ "	TR 007426	N	N	Y

Total £

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HISTORIC ENGLAND  
Air Photographs



Oblique listing - Military obliques, Standard order  
Customer enquiry reference: 111138

Library and frame number	Photo reference (NGR and Index)	Original number	Date	Film type		Map Reference (6)	What can you order?		
							Photocopy	Laser copy	Photographic copy
RAF 30009 / PFFO-0131	TR 0042 / 6	CPE/UK/2362	16 OCT 1947	Black & white	8x7"	TR 006422	Y	Y	Y
RAF 30009 / SFFO-0129	TR 0042 / 7	CPE/UK/2362	16 OCT 1947	Black & white	8x7"	TR 004426	Y	Y	Y
RAF 30009 / SFFO-0130	TR 0042 / 8	CPE/UK/2362	16 OCT 1947	Black & white	8x7"	TR 006421	Y	Y	Y
RAF 30009 / SFFO-0140	TR 0042 / 13	CPE/UK/2362	16 OCT 1947	Black & white	8x7"	TR 009425	Y	Y	Y

Total 4

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01892 822994

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**Victoria Park, Ashford**

**Conservation Plan**

**Volume 2 Figures**

**Final**

**July 2018**

**acta**

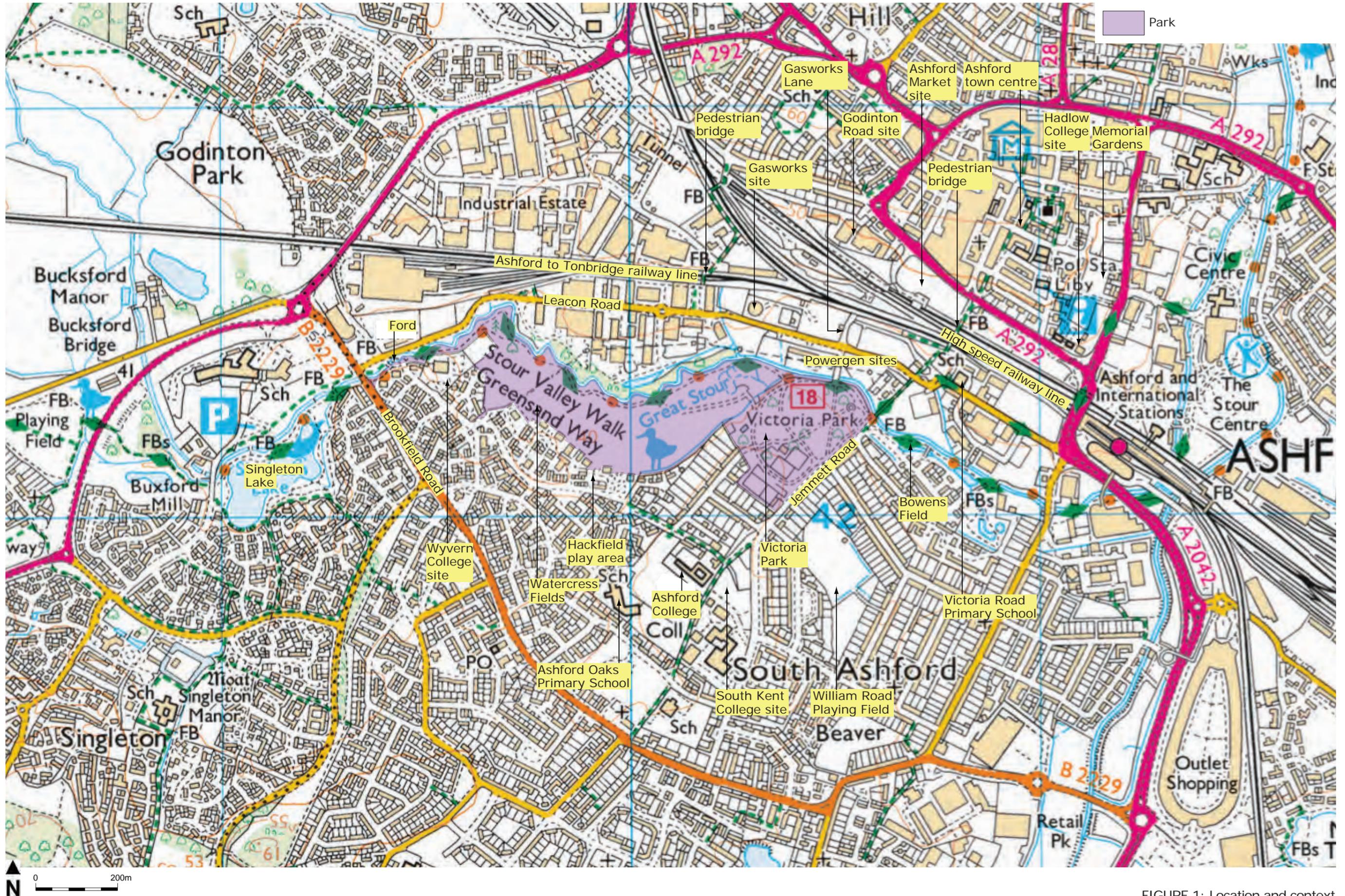


FIGURE 1: Location and context



**5** Viewpoint

- 5. Area A: looking north along Jemmett Road
- 6. Area A: looking south to the river crossing
- 7. Area B: looking south over the river crossing
- 8. Area C: the area from the northeast
- 9. Area C: looking north from the south edge
- 10. Area D: looking south to area E
- 11. Area E: the courts and building
- 12. Area E: the car park
- 13. Area E: the play area
- 14. Area F: the building and play area
- 15. Area F: the view from the north corner
- 16. Area G: terraces, boulders and paths
- 17. Area G: the pond and old boundary
- 18. Area H: the old boundary and oaks
- 19. Area H: the adventure play area
- 20. Area H: looking west along the south path
- 21. Area I: the river north of Victoria Park
- 22. Area I: the north bank
- 23. Area I: the path and riverbank
- 24. Area J: the ford and river
- 25. Area K: the plantations from the south
- 26. Area K: looking south to the flats
- 27. Area K: the southwest edge

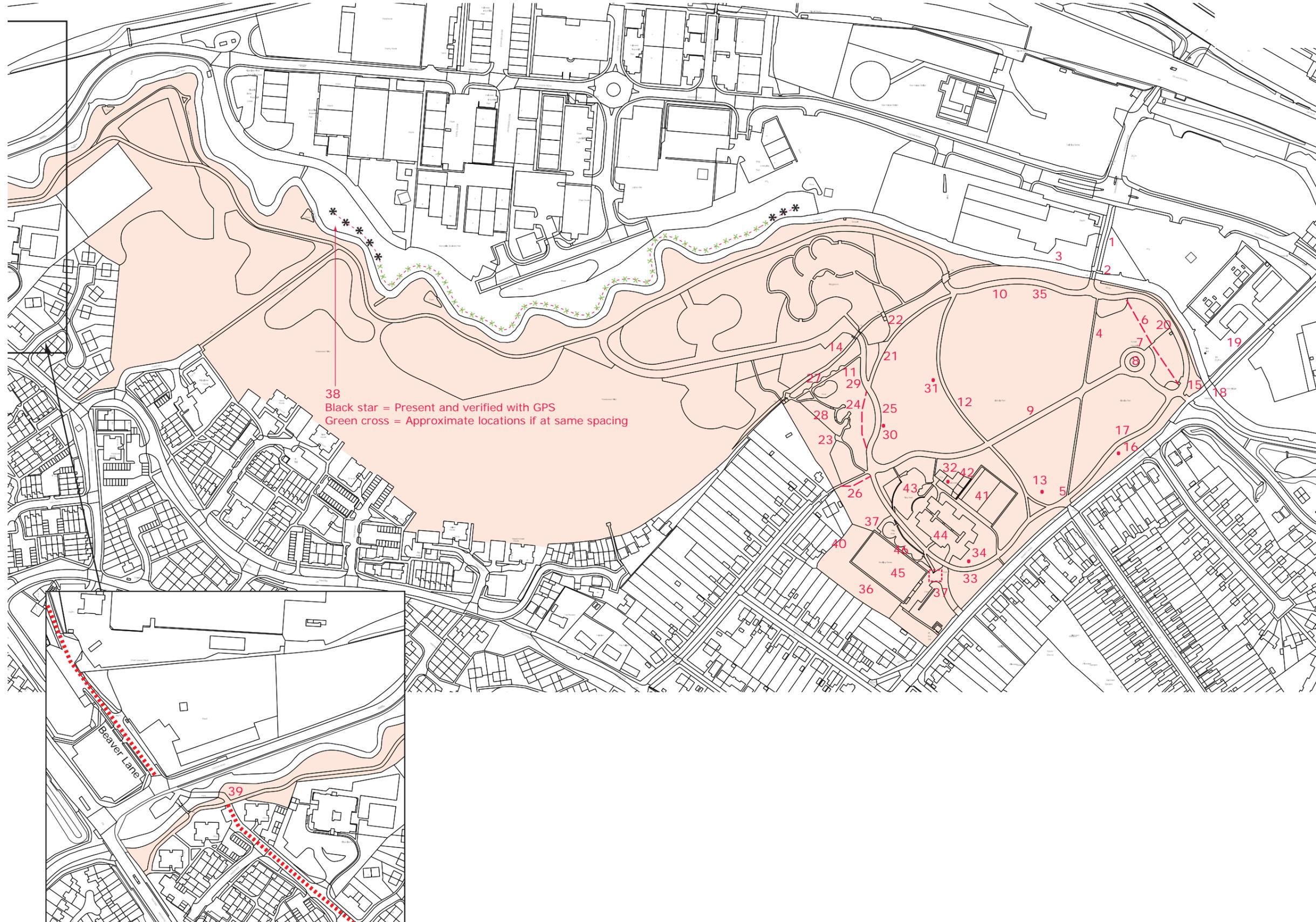
**A** Character area

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Jemmett Road and cattle market lane for xxx</li> <li>B. Gasworks Lane</li> <li>C. Piazza and Entrance Lawn</li> <li>D. Central Park</li> <li>E. MUGA and Nursery</li> <li>F. Pavilion and Grounds</li> <li>G. Secret Garden</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H. Woodland and Activity Area</li> <li>H1. Old Boundary</li> <li>H2. Willow Wood</li> <li>H3. Adventure Play Area</li> <li>H4. Edge Woodland</li> <li>H5. New Plantation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. River Corridor</li> <li>I1. Parkside</li> <li>I2. River and North Bank</li> <li>I3. Wooded Path</li> <li>J. West River Corridor</li> <li>K. Watercress Fields</li> <li>K1. Plantations</li> <li>K2. Fields</li> <li>K3. Southeast edge</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|



FIGURE 2: Principal features and character areas





38  
 Black star = Present and verified with GPS  
 Green cross = Approximate locations if at same spacing

19 Gazetteer site

1. Gasworks Lane
2. River crossing
3. River realignment
4. Early path
5. Christchurch Road entrance
6. Edwardian path removed
7. Balustrades
8. Fountain
9. Post-war path
10. Realigned and widened path
11. Modern pond
12. Original path
13. Site of inter-war shelter
14. Boundary with oaks
15. Gate piers
16. Site of 1904 shelter?
17. Original path
18. 'cattle market lane' bridge
19. 'cattle market lane'
20. Site of circular beds
21. Original path
22. Bridge
23. Site of sandpit
24. Original path
25. Realigned path
26. Realigned path to Hillyfields
27. Site of structures
28. Site of paddling pool
29. Site of path around paddling pool
30. Site of Hardy shelter
31. Site of 1902 shelter
32. Site of bandstand and enclosure
33. Original path
34. Site of 1902 shelter
35. Site of post-war shelter
36. Site of tennis courts/play area
37. Aerial photo features
38. Second World War wires
39. Ford
40. Site of greenhouses
41. MUGA
42. Nursery building
43. Play area
44. Car park
45. Bowls pavilion
46. Play area



FIGURE 4: Gazetteer sites



5. Character area A Jemmett Road and cattle market lane: looking north along Jemmett Road



6. Character area A Jemmett Road and cattle market lane: looking south to the river crossing



7. Character area B Gasworks Lane: looking south over the river crossing



8. Character area C Piazza and Entrance Lawn: the area from the northeast



9. Character area C Piazza and Entrance Lawn: looking north from the south edge



10. Character area D Central Park: looking south to area E



11. Character area E MUGA and Nursery: the courts and building



12. Character area E MUGA and Nursery: the car park



13. Character area E MUGA and Nursery: the play area



14. Character area F Pavilion and Grounds: the building and play area



15. Character area F Pavilion and Grounds: the view from the north corner



16. Character area G Secret Garden: terraces, boulders and paths



17. Character area G Secret Garden: the pond and old boundary





18. Character area H Woodland and Activity Area: the old boundary and oaks



19. Character area H Woodland and Activity Area: the adventure play area



20. Character area H Woodland and Activity Area: looking west along the south path



21. Character area I River Corridor: the river north of Victoria Park



22. Character area I River Corridor: the north bank



23. Character area I River Corridor: the path and riverbank



24. Character area J West River Corridor: the ford and river



25. Character area K Watercress Fields: the plantations from the south



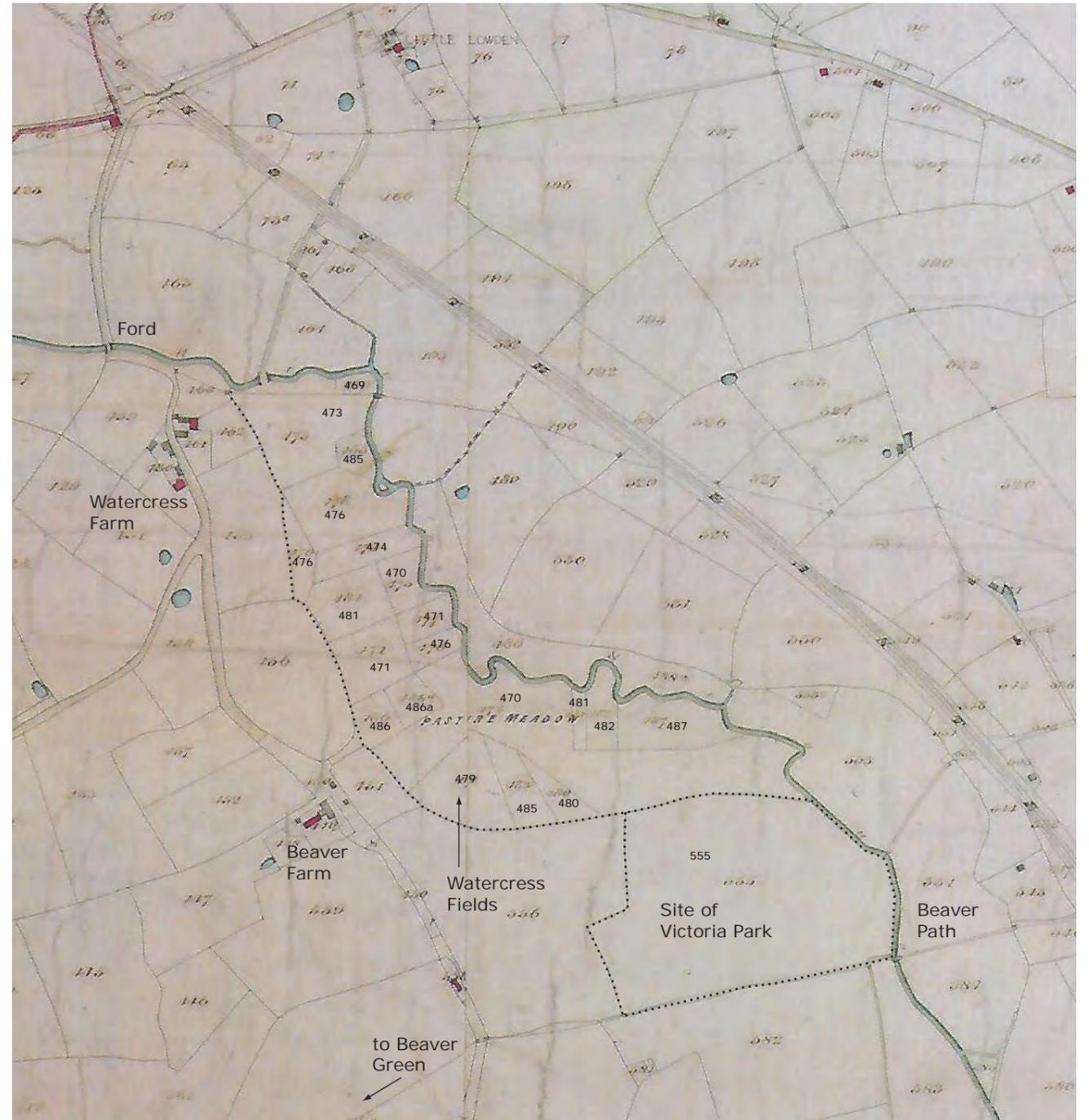
26. Character area K Watercress Fields: looking south to the flats



27. Character area K Watercress Fields: the southwest edge



28. Beaver Fields 1850-60



469	Bleach Ground	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
470	Bleach Ground	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
471	Bleach Ground	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
472	Bleach Ground	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
474	Pasture meadow cut	Chart Sutton vicar	held by Adnett Garrett
475	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
476	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
477	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
479	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
480	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
481	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
482	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
483	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
484	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
485	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
486	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
486a	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
487	Pasture meadow cut	Earl of Thanet	held by Stephen Odden
555	Pasture Banky Ground	George Elwick Jemmett	held by John Lewis

TNA IR29-30/17/12

29. Tithe map of Ashford, 1843





32. Early undated photograph said to be of the site of Victoria Park



33. Early undated photograph at Beaver Path looking towards the town



34. Ordnance Survey third edition 25-inch map, 1907

Ashford Museum



35. Photograph, after 1902, of the mature chestnut

Ashford Library 1516



37. The Christchurch Road gates and Jemmett Road 1916?

Ashford Library

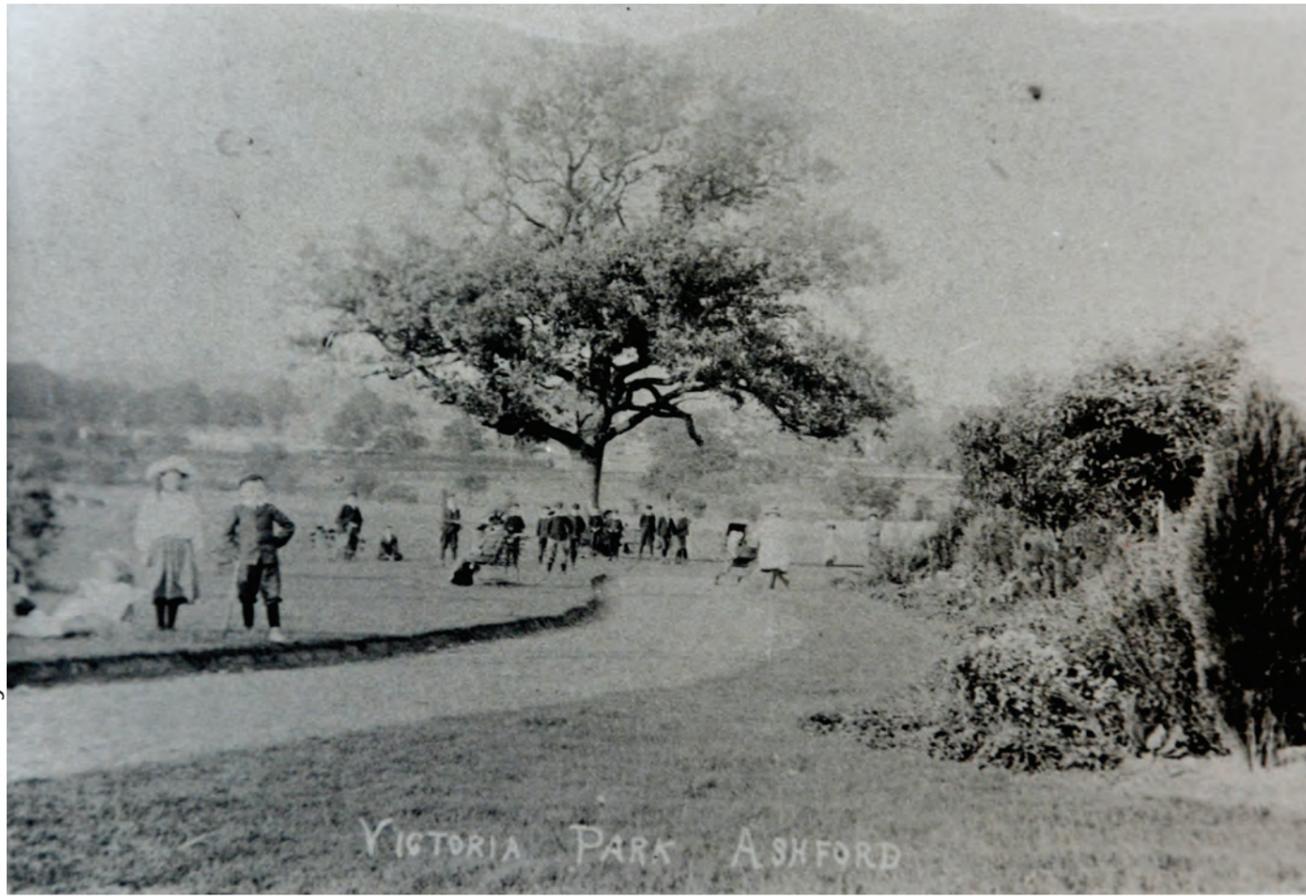


36. The Christchurch Road gates and seats within the park 1900s

Ashford Library 5223



38. Looking towards the town from the northeast end of the park, before 1912



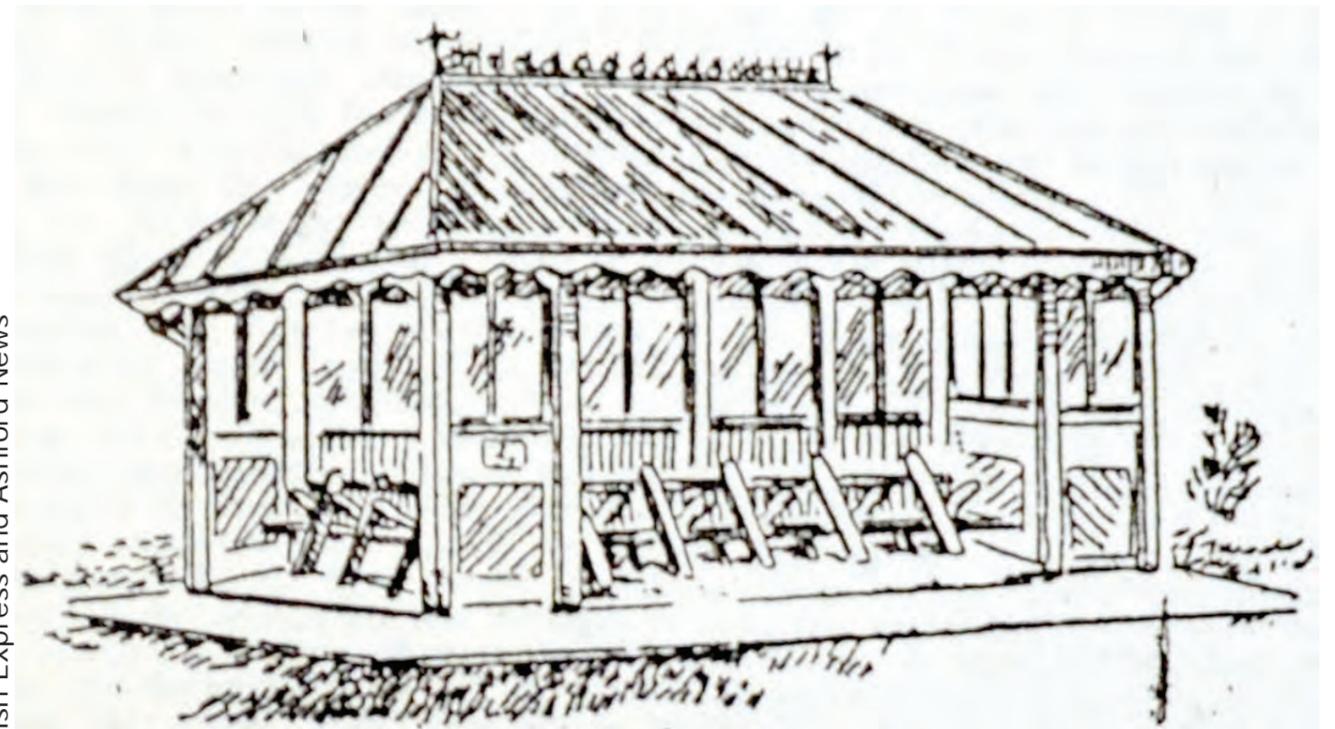
39. Looking north from the east path near the site of the present tennis courts



41. The bandstand and enclosure, after 1905



40. The bandstand, 1903



42. The Ashford Co-operative shelter, 1904



43. The Laurence Hardy shelter 1911?



45. The chestnut and rockery bed at the Christchurch entrance



44 The fountain shortly after installation



Britain from above EPW 0268098

46. Aerial view of the site from the north, 1929



HEA 6542 07174 12.9.41

47. Aerial photograph September 1941



48. Aerial photograph 1947



49. Ordnance Survey 6-inch 1962 with inset 1:1250 1958



50. Aerial photograph 1961



51. Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 1974/5

With permission: Janette Sullivan

With permission: John Wallage



With permission: Christina Wright



With permission: John Wallage

52. The play area and paddling pool in the 1970s and 1980s



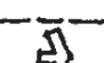
53. Aerial photograph 1987



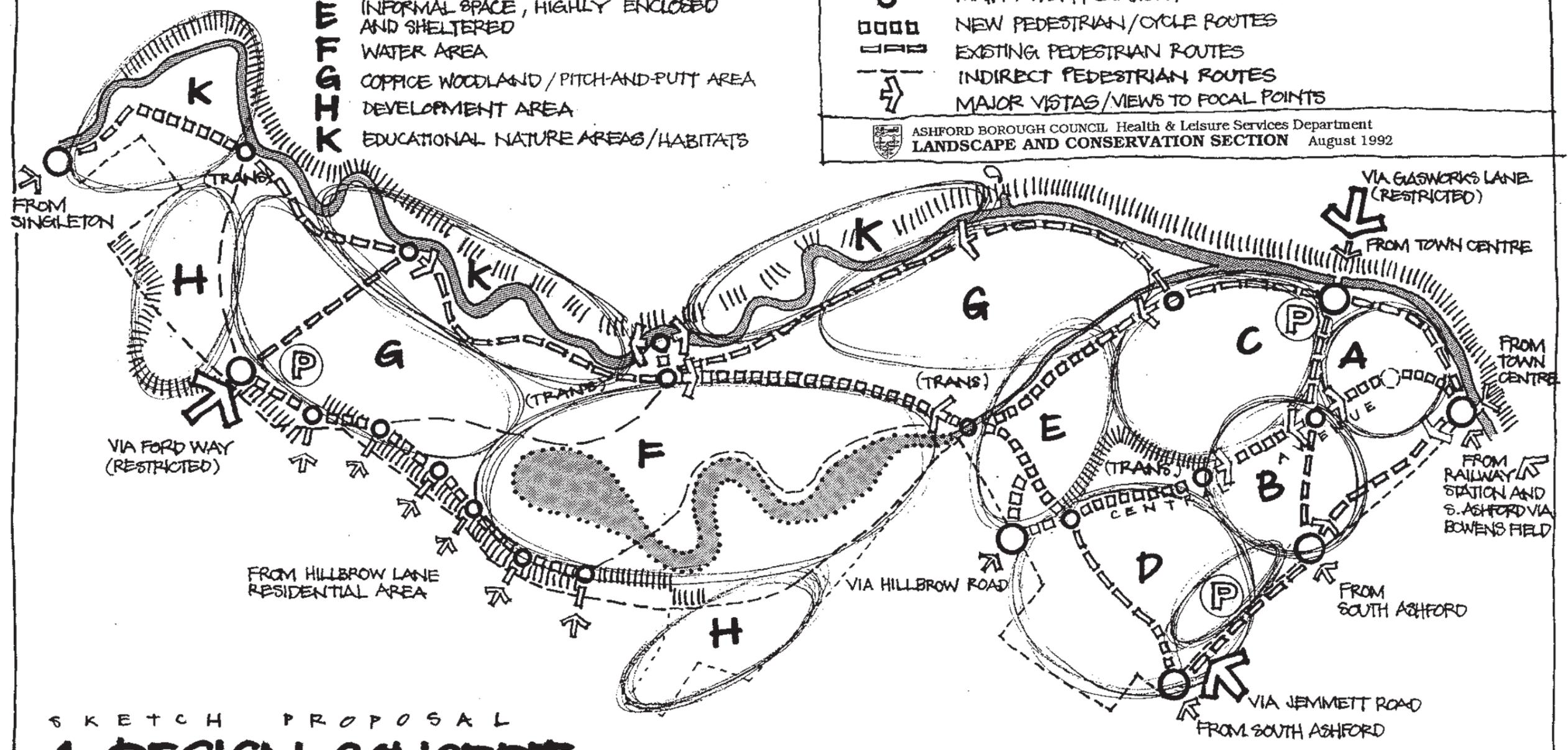
### FUNCTIONAL AREAS A+K

- A** MEETING SPACE, HARD LANDSCAPE TREATMENT, HIGHLY ENCLOSED FEEL
- B** FORMAL SPACE, HIGH LEVEL OF DETAIL DESIGN, HIGH MAINTENANCE
- C** STAGE AREA, ENCLOSED AND SHELTERED SPACE
- D** ORDERED ACTIVITY AREA - SPORTS, RECREATION, CHILDRENS PLAY
- E** INFORMAL SPACE, HIGHLY ENCLOSED AND SHELTERED
- F** WATER AREA
- G** COPPICE WOODLAND / PITCH-AND-PUTT AREA
- H** DEVELOPMENT AREA
- K** EDUCATIONAL NATURE AREAS/HABITATS

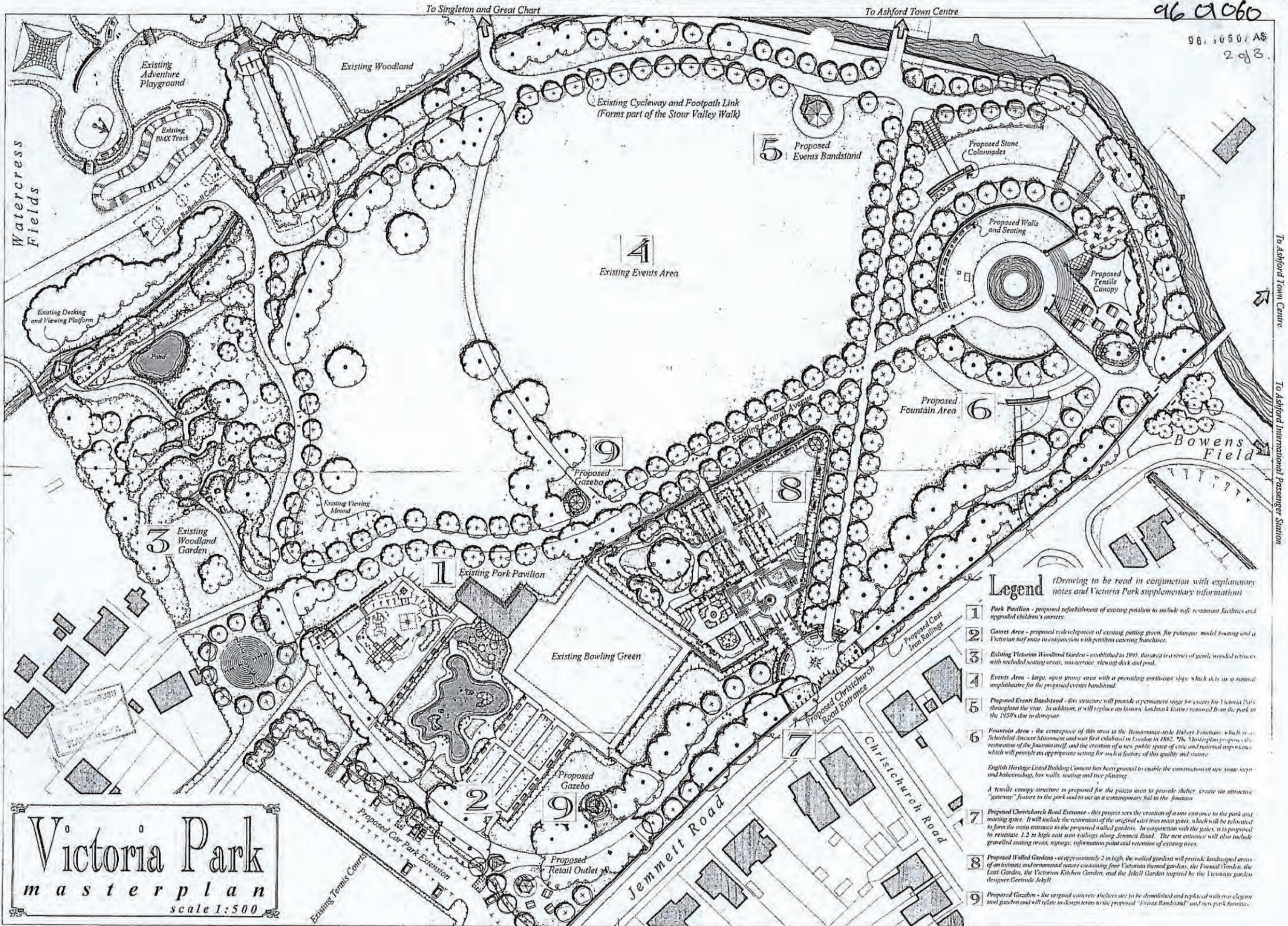
### KEY TO PROPOSALS

-  PRINCIPLE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS POINTS
-  VEHICULAR ACCESS POINTS (RESTRICTED/UNRESTRICTED)
-  SCREEN PLANTING (TOTAL BLOCK)
-  SUPPLEMENTARY SCREEN PLANTING (TOTAL BLOCK)
-  CAR PARKING PROVISION (OCCASIONAL/PERMANENT)
-  ENTRANCE STATEMENT
-  MAIN INTERPRETATION / DIRECTION POINTS
-  NEW PEDESTRIAN / CYCLE ROUTES
-  EXISTING PEDESTRIAN ROUTES
-  INDIRECT PEDESTRIAN ROUTES
-  MAJOR VISTAS / VIEWS TO FOCAL POINTS

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL Health & Leisure Services Department  
 LANDSCAPE AND CONSERVATION SECTION August 1992



## SKETCH PROPOSAL 4. DESIGN CONCEPT



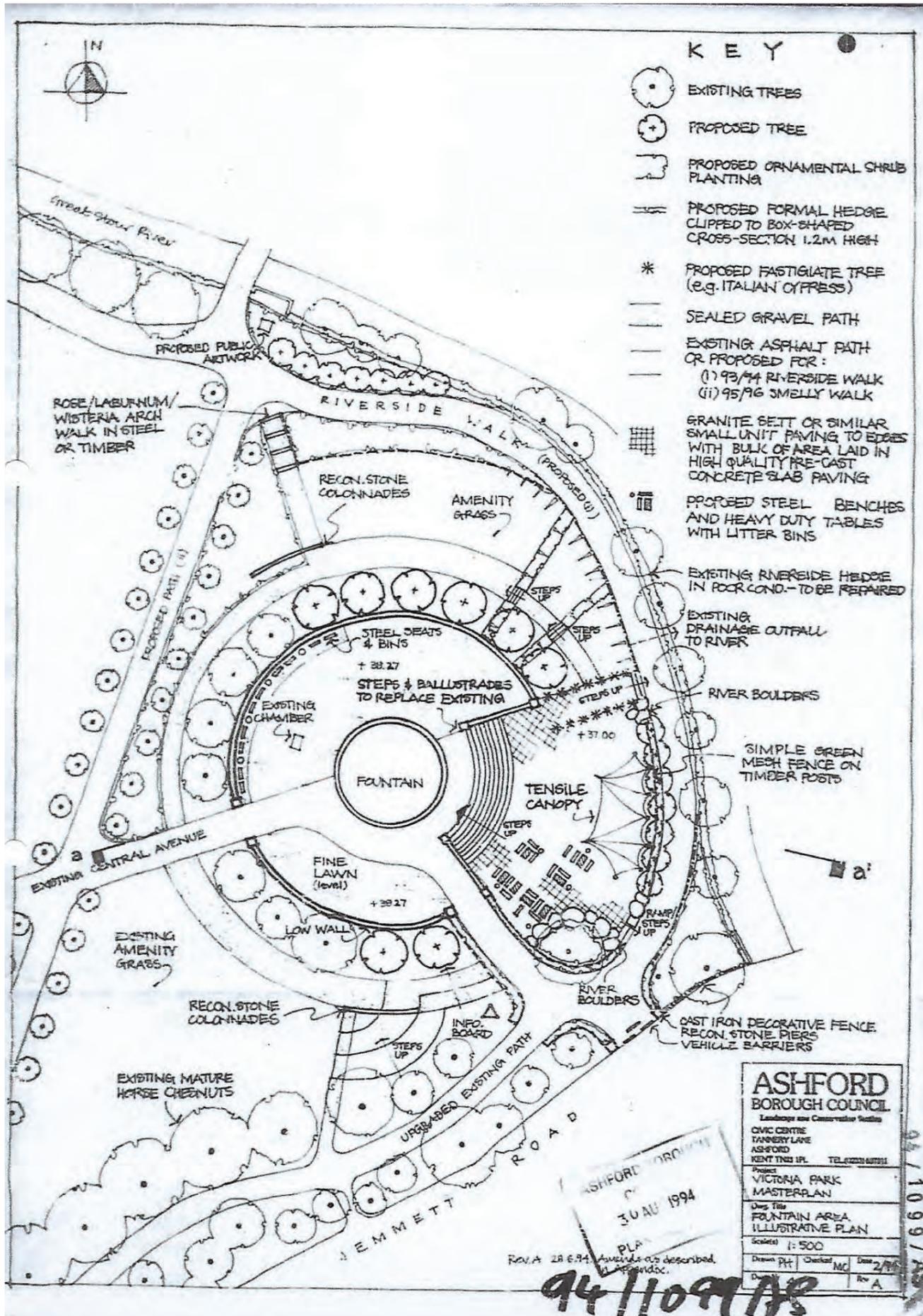
96 01060  
 96.1060/AS  
 2 of 3

**Legend** (Drawing to be read in conjunction with explanatory notes and Victoria Park supplementary information)

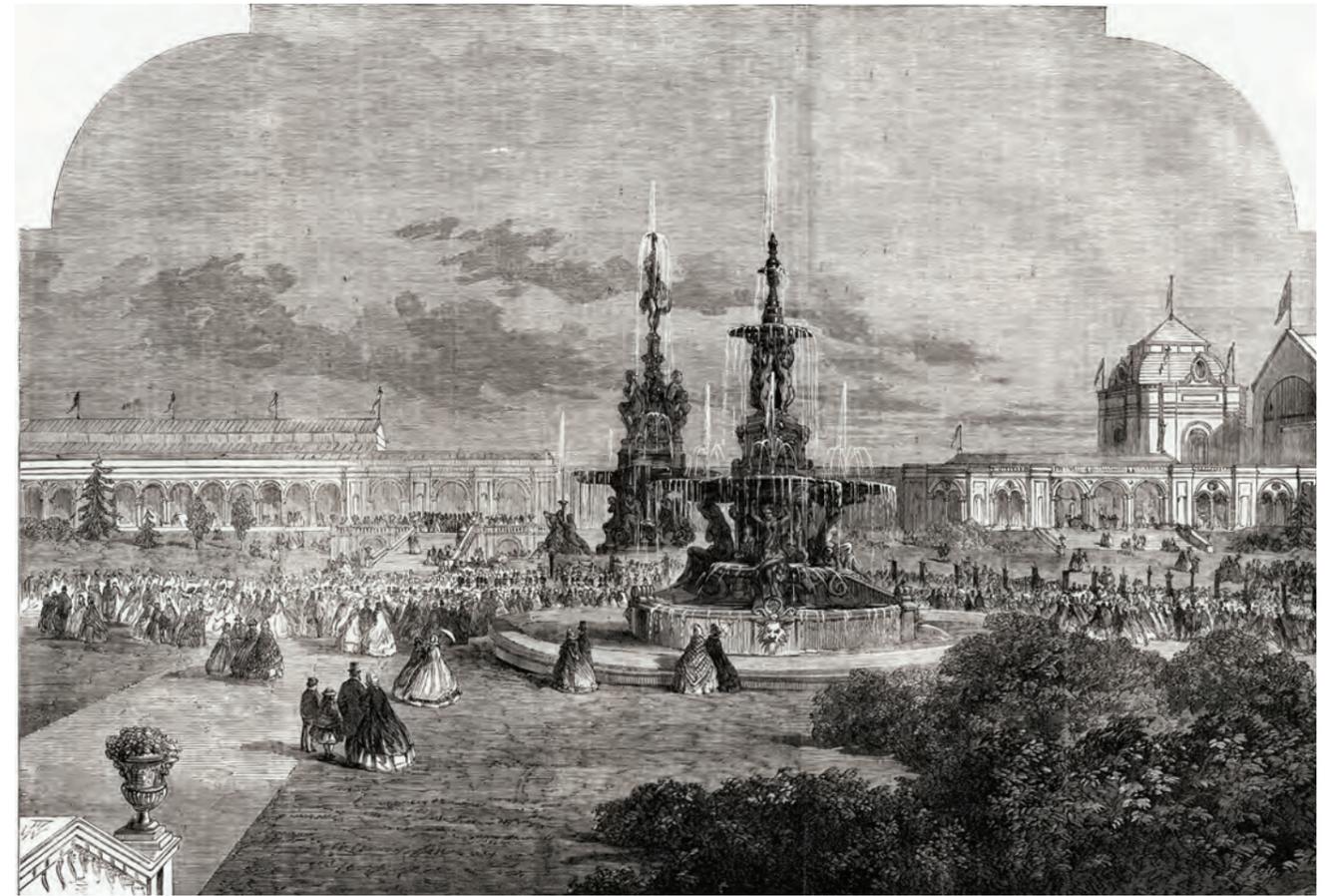
- 1 Park Pavilion - proposed refurbishment of existing pavilion to include cafe, restaurant facilities and upgraded children's nursery.
- 2 Games Area - proposed redevelopment of existing putting green, for petanque, model boat and a Victorian turf maze in conjunction with pavilion catering franchise.
- 3 Existing Victorian Woodland Garden - established in 1993, this area is a series of gently wooded terraces with secluded seating areas, sun-terrace, view deck and pool.
- 4 Events Area - large, open grassy area with a prevailing north-east slope which acts as a natural amphitheatre for the proposed events bandstand.
- 5 Proposed Events Bandstand - this structure will provide a permanent stage for Victoria Park throughout the year. In addition, it will replace an historic landmark feature removed from the park in the 1950's due to disrepair.
- 6 Fountain Area - the centrepiece of this area is the Renaissance-style Hubert Fountain, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and was first exhibited in London in 1862. The Masterplan proposes the restoration of the fountain itself, and the creation of a new public space of civic and national importance, which will provide an appropriate setting for such a feature of this quality and stature.
- English Heritage Listed Building Consent has been granted to enable the construction of new stone steps and balustrading, low walls, seating and tree planting.
- A tensile canopy structure is proposed for the piazza area to provide shelter, create an attractive "gateway" feature to the park and to act as a contemporary foil to the fountain.
- 7 Proposed Christchurch Road Entrance - this project sees the creation of a new entrance to the park and meeting space. It will include the restoration of the original cast iron main gates, which will be relocated to form the main entrance to the proposed walled gardens. In conjunction with the gates, it is proposed to restate 1.2 m high cast iron railings along Jemmett Road. The new entrance will also include gravelled seating areas, signage, information point and retention of existing trees.
- 8 Proposed Walled Gardens - at approximately 2 m high, the walled gardens will provide landscaped areas of an intimate and ornamental nature containing four Victorian themed gardens, the Formal Garden, the Lost Garden, the Victorian Kitchen Garden, and the Jekill Garden inspired by the Victorian garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll.
- 9 Proposed Gazebo - the original concrete shelters are to be demolished and replaced with two elegant steel gazebos that will relate in design terms to the proposed "Focus Bandstand" and new park furniture.

**Victoria Park**  
 masterplan  
 scale 1:500

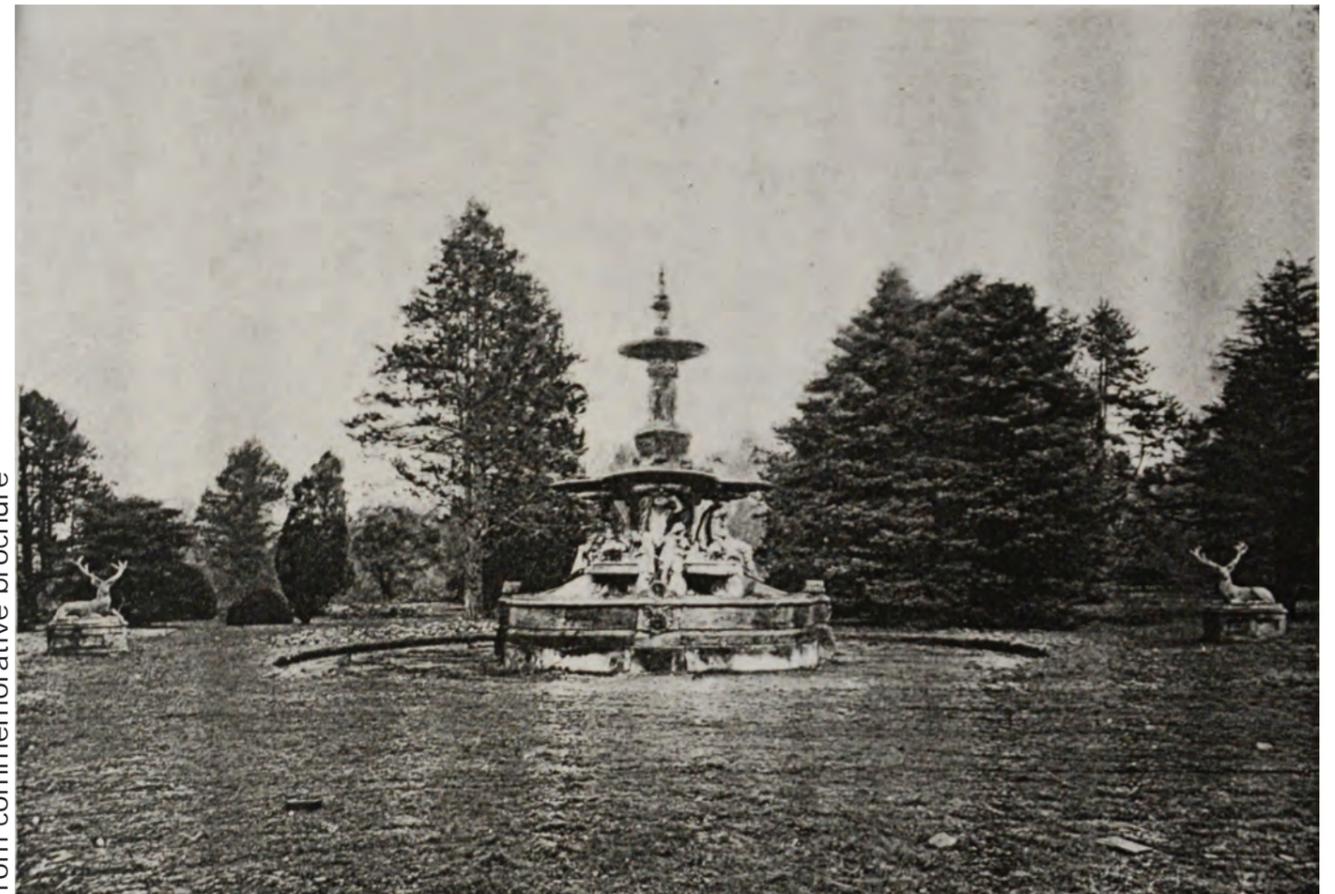
55. Proposals for Victoria Park, 1994



56. The piazza scheme, 1994



57. The Hubert and Ross Fountains at the Royal Horticultural Gardens, 1862



59. The fountain shortly after installation

from commemorative brochure

KHLC IMG/PO/1/ASH/142



60. Early photograph of the fountain showing colouring



62. The fountain in c. 1987

Ashford Library



61. The opening of the fountain in 1912



63. The fountain today