

Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 Examination

Matter 13: Strengthening Communities

Note for the Inspector Regarding Site HU10 Hinchingbrooke Country Park Extension, Huntingdon

Huntingdonshire District Council
05 October 2018

1. At the Matter 13 hearing session (held on 26 September 2018) objections were raised with regards to site HU10 Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Extension and the inclusion of land owned by G.B Sewell & Partners within the boundary of the allocation. As a result of this objection the Council was asked to reconsider the boundary of the site and also the effectiveness of the policy if this land were to be removed.
2. The Council has considered the removal of land owned by G.B Sewell & Partners and considers that the objectives of the allocation can still be achieved.
3. This extension to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park is an important part of the overall strategy to provide strategic green infrastructure along side development. The Country Park currently covers some 70ha and the revised extension would add a further 27.5ha to this. This would increase the size of the Country Park by 40% and enhance a strategic scale area of publicly accessible natural green space serving the Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area.
4. The objectives of the proposed allocation are to provide additional publically accessible natural green space and to provide additional areas for nature conservation and biodiversity enhancement.
5. The extension will help guard against adverse impacts on designated sites in the area that might come about as a result of planned development, by providing increased access to the south of the Country Park and through expansion of the ecological and recreational offer available in this area. In particular the proposed allocation will help to mitigate potential impacts on Portholme SAC & SSSI from developments in Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area by providing expanded and alternative recreational facilities and in particular, alternative dog walking routes in close proximity which was of concern to Natural England.
6. Public access to Portholme is currently limited to three public footpaths providing a triangular route around the meadow connecting the three access points to the site and restricting its value for public recreation. The addition of more visible signage and an improved southern access to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park from Huntingdon Road Brampton accompanied by a new car park provides the opportunity to divert potential trips away from Portholme. This is expected to be particularly attractive to residents from new developments in Brampton as the new car park and entrance would be just 1km from allocations HU13 and HU14 compared to a 5.2km drive to reach the nearest access point to Portholme.
7. As noted in the HELAA (HOUS/02, page 211) the Country Park extension is easily accessible by public transport and cycling. The removal of land to the east of the allocation does not limit the provision of additional pedestrian paths. Public footpath access is currently provided to the south of the site (east of 27 Huntingdon Road, Brampton) and heads north towards Hinchingsbrooke Country Park; a circular walk can also be completed around the eastern lake (already included in the Country Park). See Appendix 1, for further detail.

8. Further pedestrian access is envisaged around the western lake within the revised allocation. To accommodate the revised land area a boardwalk lake crossing utilising the eastern extent of the island as a mid-point is proposed. This would both facilitate access and increase the recreational value of the Country Park.
9. The revised allocation does not prevent the implementation of interpretation boards, way marking signs and bird hides, the location of which will be based around new publically accessible footpaths.
10. The inclusion of the Country Park extension still presents opportunities to provide a net gain in biodiversity enhancement under paragraph 109 of the Framework by establishing a coherent ecological network that spans from the existing Country Park to the north, through to the southern boundary extent by Huntingdon Road.
11. The revised allocation area still contains areas of land and water appropriate for enhancement management for nature conservation and biodiversity enhancements to meet this aspect of the proposed allocation's objectives. These requirements are set out in the criteria of allocation HU10 and remain largely unchanged.
12. Management of the Country Park would be undertaken by the Council's Operations Division who successfully manages Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, providing a diverse range of habitats and ecological networks such as wetland, woodland, grassland and meadowland (see Appendix 1). This management would be carried forward to the Country Park extension improving the sites value for biodiversity. Works to improve the area would be achieved through the support of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, with guidance from the Council's Countryside Service.
13. The allocation will still enable the Council to meet paragraph 114 of the NPPF planning positively to enhance and manage biodiversity and green infrastructure. The site will also provide additional recreational and amenity value for Huntingdon residents as required by paragraph 73 of the NPPF, providing access to high quality open space and contributing to the health and well-being of community.
14. As part of the integration of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park extension into the existing site a new car park would be required. The Council acknowledges that there is a significant demand for car parking during events at the existing Country Park. A car park located along Huntingdon Road, within the eastern portion of the site, would cater for increased visitor numbers and avoid the need for all visitors arriving by car via Hinchingsbrooke Park Road. This would not only improve accessibility to the park, but also decrease recreational pressure on Portholme SAC & SSSI.
15. As part of the Country Park extension the Councils Operations Division would look to lease or purchase land for car parking within the revised boundary. Funding for the car park and boardwalk could be achieved through the Council, potentially utilising Community

Infrastructure Levy receipts. Discussions have been undertaken with Councillors as to the progress and timing of delivery on this site.

16. Suggested modifications to the allocation have been provided overleaf.

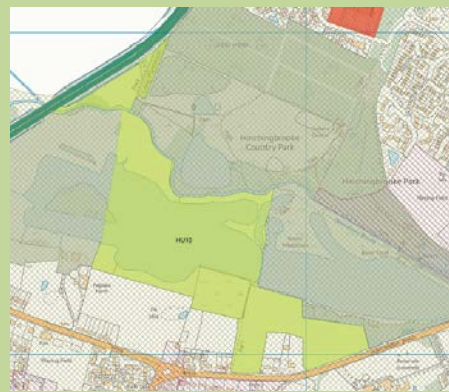
Hinchingbrooke Country Park Extension, Huntingdon

HU 10

Hinchingbrooke Country Park Extension, Huntingdon

44 27.5 ha of land adjacent to Hinchingbrooke Country Park is allocated for green infrastructure. Successful delivery of the site will require:

- provision of additional pedestrian paths, including a north to south route via the eastern edge of the island.
- provision of interpretation boards, way-marking signs and bird watching hides
- management to improve the site's value for biodiversity
- an appropriately detailed flood risk assessment considering relevant forms of flood risk and the intended use followed by a management strategy including appropriate practices to ensure that the public is not exposed to unacceptable risk
- a new car park off Huntingdon Road



Development Guidance

- 9.91** This extension to Hinchingbrooke Country Park is an important part of the overall strategy to provide strategic green infrastructure along side development. This extension would increase the size of the Country Park considerably and provide a strategic scale area of publicly accessible natural green space capable of serving a significant population in and around the Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area. This extension will specifically help guard against adverse impacts on designated sites in the area that might come about as a result of planned development in the area.
- 9.92** The existing route around the eastern lake provides a loop that would ideally be replicated by paths around the western part crossing from north to south via the eastern edge of the island using boardwalks, providing both access and additional recreational value. This could be achieved in stages with initial paths leading to bird hides giving opportunities for people to observe wildlife in an unobtrusive manner. ~~Country Park management of the island within the western lake would help improve its value for biodiversity.~~
- 9.93** The allocated land ~~is currently farmed and~~ is largely within the floodplain. ~~This and~~ is also an area that is at risk from surface water flooding. An appropriately detailed flood risk assessment should be completed. The assessment should include consideration of ways to alleviate surface water flooding in the area including of the B1514, adjacent to the southern

boundary. A flood management strategy will be needed to implement necessary practices including closure of the affected parts of the park during flood events to ensure that the public are not put at unnecessary risk.

- 9.94** A suitably designed safe access or accesses onto existing highway will be required. There is a significant demand for car parking during events at the Country Park and a new car park accessed from Huntingdon Road would cater for increased visitor numbers and avoid the need for all visitors arriving by car to use Hinchingsbrooke Park Road. Adequate parking and preventative highway measures should be provided so that the surrounding highway network is not adversely affected. The Council will look to lease or purchase this land when funds are available.

Appendix 1

Countryside Services

PLEASE REMEMBER

- ❖ To take your litter home or use the bins provided
- ❖ To use the dog waste bins
- ❖ To keep your dog under control
- ❖ The 5mph speed limit within the park
- ❖ The lakes are deep and the water cold, even in the summer. Swimming and ice skating are not allowed
- ❖ Fishing is co-ordinated by Brampton Angling Society, and permitted only from marked swims. Closed season is 15th March - 15th June inclusive.

EDUCATION



Organised group and school visits are very welcome throughout the year. Environmental activities can be planned to suit all ages and abilities. The Rangers have many ideas and resources and can help to lead topics such as mini-beasts and pond dipping, mapping skills, or biological identification.

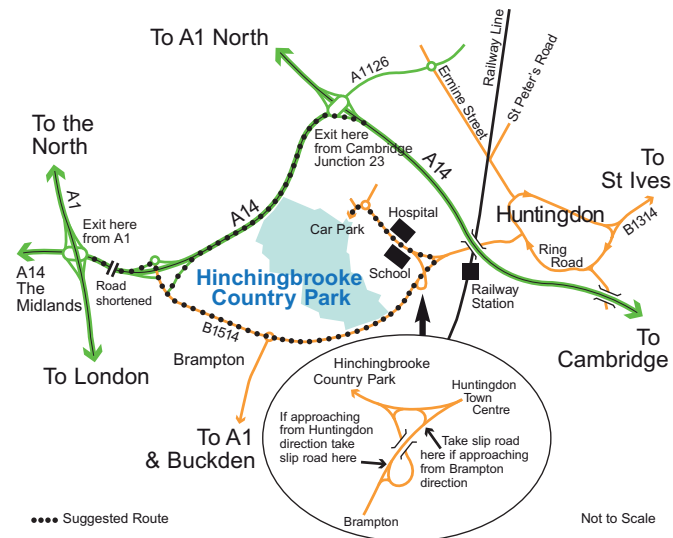
Slideshows, walks and talks can be arranged at the Country Park, or at another venue. Numerous topics can be covered. Please contact the Rangers for booking details and further information.

APIARY



We have a number of beehives on site in a purpose built apiary cared for by Huntingdon Beekeepers Association (HBKA). The hives are used for teaching our visitors, local school children and trainee beekeepers about bees, how they live and how to look after them. The glass fronted viewing shed gives everyone a chance to see the bees from close quarters without having to wear special protection. Volunteers from HBKA open the hives regularly in the summer, please see on-site posters for further information.

Hinchingsbrooke Country Park lies 2km west of Huntingdon, 1km from Brampton and just 2km off the A14. A frequent bus service to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital operates from Huntingdon town centre.



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Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park (FHCP) is a charity set up to enhance facilities provided by the park and to assist in conservation and recreational activities. Membership details are available in the visitors' centre or from the Rangers on (01480) 388666.

Hinchingsbrooke Country Park
Brampton Road, Huntingdon Cambs PE29 6DB

Phone: **01480 388666** Fax: **01480 451568**

e-mail: hinchingsbrookecountrypark@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
 Website: www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/hinchingsbrookecountrypark

Hinchingsbrooke Country Park is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council and managed by: Countryside Services, Directorate of Environmental & Community Services, Huntingdonshire District Council, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN

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Hinchingsbrooke Country park





Welcome to Hinchingbrooke Country Park

Open grassland, meadows, woodlands and lakes cover 180 acres with a wealth of wildlife everywhere. Whether you are walking the dog, exploring with your children or having a picnic we hope you enjoy your visit and will come again soon.



FACILITIES

The park and the main car park are open at all times with pay & display parking every day from 7am until 6pm (season tickets are available). The Visitors' Centre and café are open every day except Christmas Day. In the Visitors' Centre there are leaflets and information about local activities and the surround'

The Countryside Centre is a perfect venue for conferences, courses and meetings. It is also fantastic for family celebrations such as birthday parties, anniversaries and Christening parties. You can use the Centre as a wet weather shelter with private toilet facilities whilst enjoying the main field for barbecues, bouncy castles or a fun game of football or rounders. Booking is essential.

Disabled parking is available at the Visitors' Centre. There are battery powered wheelchairs for use by our less mobile visitors and a network of hard-surfaced paths, ideal for wheelchairs, pushchairs and all season walking. Some of our other paths become quite muddy in wet weather so wellies are essential!

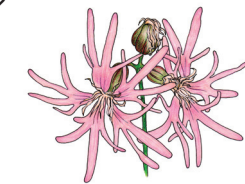
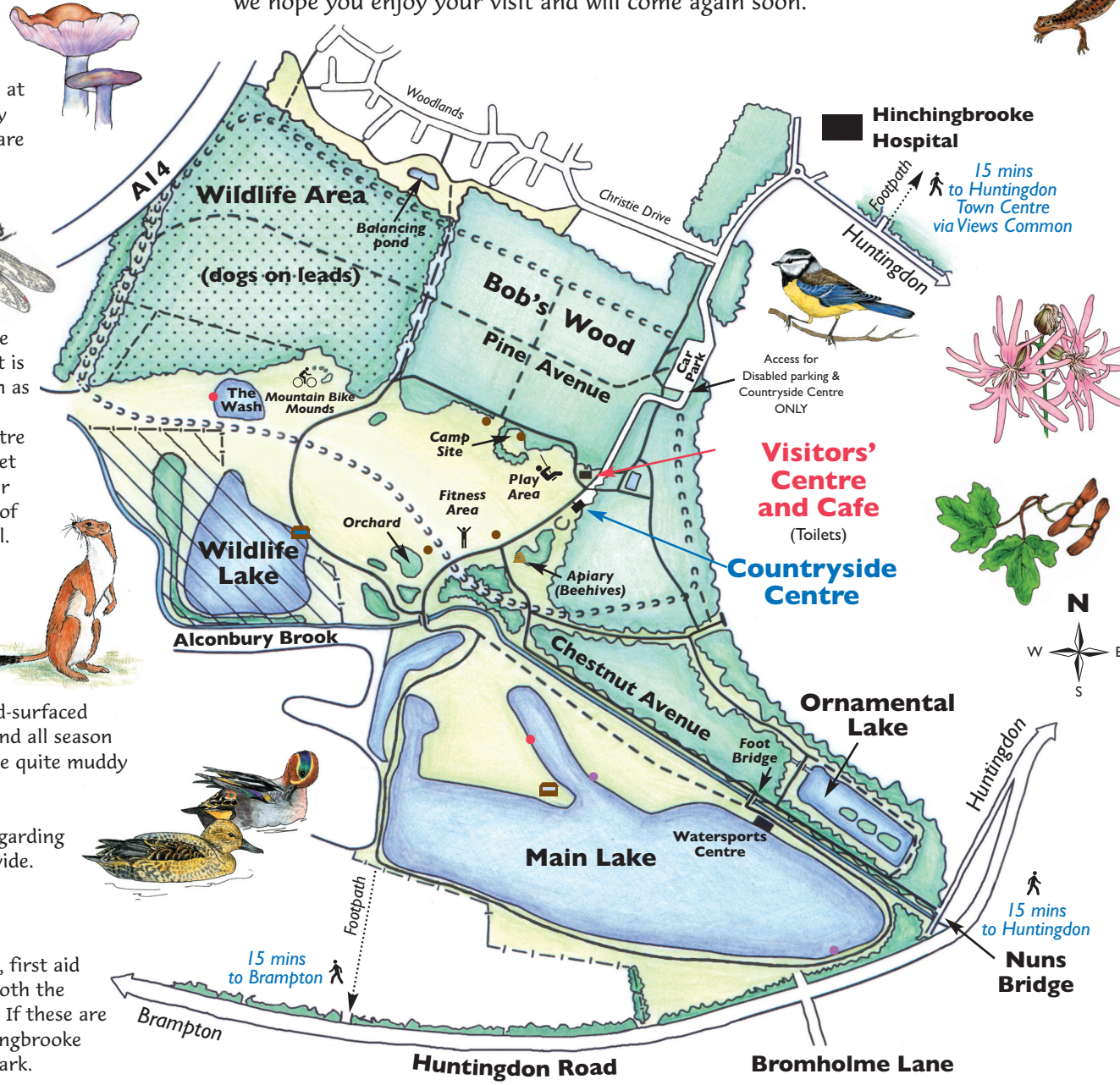
Please talk to Rangers for information regarding any of the facilities and activities we provide.

SAFETY

In the event of an accident or emergency, first aid facilities and a telephone are located in both the Visitors' Centre and Countryside Centre. If these are closed, the nearest telephone is at Hinchingbrooke Hospital near the main entrance to the park.

YOU CAN ...

- ❖ Picnic
- ❖ Bar-b-que
- ❖ Walk the dog
- ❖ Fish in the main lake
- ❖ Enjoy educational activities
- ❖ Take part in organised events
- ❖ Camp in a group by prior arrangement only
- ❖ Mountain bike on our specially designed course
- ❖ Join the Friends of Hinchingbrooke Country Park



KEY

	Surfaced paths
	Unsurfaced paths
	Bridle/Cycle way
	Lakes/Water
	Meadow
	Woodland
	Dogs on leads
	No access
	Bar-b-que stands
	Disabled persons fishing platform
	Pond dipping platform
	Bird Hide

0m 300m