Midsummer Common, Cambridge

Management Plan 2009 – 2014

Laura Watson, Community Conservation Officer
The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough.

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INTRODUCTION

This nature conservation management plan covers the five-year period from 2009 – 2014. Current opinion of local residents is that there has been a steady decline in the management and therefore appearance of Midsummer Common in recent years. The common has the potential to support a greater diversity of species and retain its value as a public open space. It is intended that the majority of the habitat enhancement works will take place during the next five years and a less intensive routine management approach adopted for subsequent years.
This plan should be read in conjunction with the Midsummer Common Conservation Plan 2001.

1. DESCRIPTION

1.1 Location

Midsummer Common is located at grid reference TL 455 590, within the administrative district of Cambridge City. The common is enclosed by the River Cam to the north and, residential areas and Maids Causeway to the south. The east and west boundaries are delineated by Walnut Tree Avenue and Victoria Avenue respectively.

1.2 Summary Description

Midsummer Common is low-lying riverside pasture covering an area of 13.4 hectares. In the 19th century, the area was an important trade post and held the annual Midsummer Fair, from which it got its name. The common played host to the Coronation (1838) and Jubilee (1887) celebrations during Queen Victoria's reign, and the Royal Agricultural Show in 1894. The expanse of open grassland and river ferries linking to the north of the city, made the common a perfect venue for sporting events, exhibitions and trading. In 1927, the ferries were replaced with footbridges located by the Fort St George public house and Cutter Ferry Path. These routes are now well used by cyclists and walkers. The common provides a safe traffic-free corridor between residential areas and the city centre. The public house and Midsummer House restaurant attract people on to the common all year round.

The common has provided grazing since at least the 13th Century and the right to graze there is exercised today. At the time of this plan, nine Red Poll cattle were grazing the common. This traditional management of the common is supplemented by mechanical maintenance during the Summer months in order to accommodate the busy events programme.
For many years, Midsummer Common has been the venue for major events including Midsummer Fair, Strawberry Fair and the November fireworks display (see appendix one). The common is a rare example of a large open grassland suitable for open-air events that is in close proximity to the city centre. This makes the common an invaluable resource for the Cambridge community and visitors. It is a popular place for dog walkers, cyclists and people picnicking. Residents of the nearby boats also enjoy the large common area adjacent to the river.

The grassland can be described as species-poor, semi-improved riverside pasture. The easternmost end of the common (Target Note 1, appendix four) is not used during events so has a greater sward height (approximately

25cm). It is slightly more species-rich with white campion (*Silene latifolia*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), cut-leaved crane's-bill (*Geranium dissectum*) and rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) present. In the past, the grassland was likely treated with herbicides and fertilisers which have reduced the species diversity, though this may also have been the result of excessive and regular mowing or the spreading of river dredgings. The grassland is dominated by perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and daisies (*Bellis perennis*). The ceasing of chemical use on Midsummer Common has contributed to an improvement in the grassland species composition. The introduction of the grazing cattle has been a positive addition to the management regime and continued grazing at the right levels will bring further benefits. Some small areas are showing signs of improvement and there is the potential for this to spread across the common. One such area (Target Note 2, appendix four) has a finer sward with a dominance of red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*).

There are a number of patches of thistles and nettles within the central area of the common - probably established following ground disturbance. The banks by the Auckland Street access point are dominated by tall ruderal species including nettles, thistles and bindweed (Target Note 3, appendix four). Due to the gradient, these banks are not mown or grazed regularly and consequently more aggressive weed species have established. At the top of this slope is an area known as The Pound (Target Note 4, appendix four). This is separated from the main common by stock-proof railings but does allow pedestrian access to Maids Causeway and Auckland Street. The area is under-used and under-managed and as a result nettles and thistles are well established. The allotments are located to the east of The Pound, to which easy access must be maintained.

The tree planting on the common is restricted to the perimeter and one small avenue. The southernmost corner of the common, known as Butt Green, is subject to a slightly denser tree planting scheme. This is to conceal the surrounding urban development.

The horse chestnut tree (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) avenue along Victoria Avenue was planted in approximately 1890 with some trees being replaced in the years since. These large trees create an impressive boundary to the common whilst allowing people to see underneath them and across Jesus Green.

The trees along the river are predominantly white willow (*Salix alba*) of various ages and condition. They are part of the important Hayling Way willow habitat extending from Waterbeach to Cambridge. A number of willows have been pollarded but many of the pollards have lapsed and require careful management to bring them back in to a pollard cycle. London planes (*Platanus x hispanica*) have also been planted along the river and are now impressive specimens at approximately 80 years old. In recent years, some trees along the river have been removed for safety reasons and replacements have included white willows and hybrid or continental black poplars. Elsewhere on the common, the Friends of Midsummer Common have raised funds to enable the replacement of other mature trees.

Along the southern boundary, a mixture of limes (*Tilia spp*) and horse chestnuts account for most of the more mature trees, alongside silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and walnut (*Juglans regia*).

The habitat diversity on Midsummer Common is very limited. There is a distinct lack of scrub or hedgerows for birds to utilise for feeding and nesting. There is a privet hedge alongside the path from Walnut Tree Avenue however this does not provide food for animals and has a limited structure. There is a small area of scrub species adjacent to the Fort St George footbridge (Target Note 5). This includes hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)*, dog rose *(Rosa canina)* and guelder rose *(Viburnum opulus)* which all provide nesting sites and food sources. There are few opportunities for creating scrub habitat on the common and therefore this small area holds great significance for the species present.

The species list of the 2008 botanical survey can be found in Appendix two. Appendix three is a map of the trees and Appendix four is a map of the key habitat types.

1.3 Legal Status

Midsummer Common is registered common land and falls within Conservation Area 1 (central).

A series of Definitive Footpaths cross the site and are Rights of Way maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council.

1.4 Land Tenure

Midsummer Common is managed by Cambridge City Council.

2. SITE EVALUATION

2.1 Size

Midsummer Common covers an area of 13.4 hectares. Prior to the creation of Victoria Avenue in 1890, the common also covered the area now known as Jesus Green. The two areas are now managed separately. The size of the common makes it suitable for traditional cattle grazing and as a venue for open-air events.

2.2 Diversity

The uses of the common have restricted the habitat diversity and as such the majority of the common is improved grassland. There are however some areas that are not so heavily used and do support a greater diversity of species. The mature trees along the riverside are an important ecological feature as they provide roosting sites for bats and are home to a wealth of invertebrates. There are two areas of hedge/scrub habitat that do not fulfil their potential for wildlife.

The common was grazed for hundreds of years which would have encouraged the growth of meadow species. During the 1980's the common was not grazed but was regularly mown instead. This approach restricts the plant growth and flowering opportunities and it is likely that a number of species would have been lost during this time. The current grazing regime does allow more species to flower and set seed and there has been an obvious improvement in the species-richness of the grassland since the cows were reintroduced. Historical use of fertilisers on the common or the spreading of silt from river dredging has lead to a nutrient rich soil which has assisted the establishment of nettles and thistles. In contrast, wild flowers prefer to grow in nutrient poor conditions.

2.3 Naturalness

Due to the heavy use of Midsummer Common, it is managed to achieve a relatively short grass sward.

The schemes and placement of the trees are not natural; however they do hold great aesthetic value for the common. These trees are planted with the aim of them reaching maturity and developing the habit typical for that species. Because of the intensive use of the common, the trees are managed to minimise the risks associated with dead wood and comply with Heath and Safety regulations. This creates an unnaturally healthy environment.

Where possible, native tree species have been planted in order to re-create the historical look and feel of the common. In some cases non-native species have been selected as they are more tolerant of our current climate or have a resistance to disease.

The trees around the perimeter play an important role in creating a natural feel to the common. They act as a screen to the surrounding buildings and roads whilst maintaining the long distance views of the spire of All Saint's Church, the tower of St John's College chapel and the Museum of

Technology. Where footpaths connect to the common, the trees are sparse to maximise the views across the grassland.

Midsummer Common is relatively flat and consequently any furniture or infrastructure installations must be carefully planned to ensure they do not detract from the common itself. The many footpaths that cross the common are surfaced with asphalt to achieve a subtle hard wearing surface. Although these are suitable for cyclists and pedestrians they do not cope with vehicular use and the edges tend to crack and break down. This gives the common a neglected look and requires sympathetic repair work.

The railings and gateways are essential for the common to be grazed. The current design consists of a self-closing gate for pedestrians and a small cattle grid for cyclists and users of disability vehicles. These meet the requirements of the grazier and are not too obtrusive.

In accordance with retaining the natural feel of the common, lighting is kept to a minimum. There are lights along the river side and at main intersections of the footpaths. Any more than this would create a false sense of security for pedestrians and would urbanise the common.

2.4 Rarity

Midsummer Common is a rare example of a large area of grazed common land in an urban environment. It supports a number of potentially veteran trees and a considerable section of the Hayling Way willow corridor. The decline in demand for willow products has led to willows becoming neglected and pollarding regimes lapsing. The pollards on this stretch of river are an important habitat combining dead and new wood on the same tree.

An evening bat survey confirmed that noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and daubenton's bats (*Myotis daubentonii*) use the common and its surroundings for foraging and potentially roosting. Daubenton's bats have a preference for foraging for insects over water and were observed over the River Cam. Although this is not part of Midsummer Common, their presence must still be considered with any changes in habitat management. Common pipistrelle and noctule bats feed in a variety of habitats including woodland edge, hedgerows and suburban gardens. These species were seen foraging over the eastern end of the grassland where the trees and taller ground vegetation provide a suitable habitat for prey insects. All of these species are known to roost in trees and buildings. Bats require a surprisingly small crevice in which to roost and the males often roost alone. Although the trees on Midsummer Common offer few opportunities for roosting bats (i.e. no dead wood, few cracks) it is likely that individuals utilise nearby buildings and bridges for roosting.

2.5 Fragility

Midsummer Common is a flood plain adjacent to the River Cam. Once in the last five years the river reached two-thirds of the way across the common. This inundation will have consequences for the soil composition and the growth of plants but flood plains are necessary to control the movement of water within the river system.
The main threat to the nature of the common is the number of visitors, especially during the events (see Appendix one). All events require heavy vehicles to be driven across the grass and pathways and this causes disturbance to the grass (often leaving ruts) and damage to the paths. Where insufficient clear zones have been left around trees, the parking of vehicles has caused soil compaction in the rooting zone. Over time this will hinder the growth of the tree and impact on its health.

There are a series of underground service lines running across the common. Access to these is sometimes required however, in the past, inadequate measures have been taken to minimise the disruption and make good the ground afterwards.

With the presence of the chestnut leaf miner moth and Dutch elm disease on common trees, it is likely that a number of mature trees will have to be removed in the near future. This will result in a temporary loss in habitat value until the replacement trees mature.

2.6 Typicalness

The appearance of Midsummer Common today is very similar to that seen in early maps and drawings. The tree avenues, open grassland and footpaths are managed so as to keep this reflection of its historical characteristics. The grassland is not typical of either a municipal park or a grazed common. Current management has created a habitat that combines the two as a compromise enforced by the needs of the users of the common.

2.7 Recorded History

The appearance and use of Midsummer Common has been well documented. Local enthusiasts are interested in preserving the common for traditional uses alongside its modern role as an events venue. The Midsummer Common Conservation Plan provides further detail of the history of the common and it's significance to people in Cambridge.

The common holds archaeological interest in the form of prehistoric, Roman and Medieval finds. In addition to these, human skeletons were found in 1952 that are thought to be plague victims.

Midsummer Common has been the subject for a number of botanical surveys conducted by The Wildlife Trust and the Cambridge Natural History Society.

2.8 Position in an Ecological Unit

Much of the common's boundary consists of roads or urban development. The exception is the northern boundary which abuts the River Cam. Midsummer Common forms part of an important wildlife corridor along the river that includes Jesus Green to the west and Stourbridge Common to the east. This green corridor aids the local movement of invertebrates, small mammals and birds. The River Cam is a County Wildlife Site in recognition of its importance for biodiversity. The common has been selected as a City Wildlife Site as a result of it being an undeveloped floodplain associated with the River Cam County Wildlife Site.

2.9 Potential Value

With careful management there is great potential to enhance the common for biodiversity and for the enjoyment of those people using it.

2.10 Intrinsic Appeal

Midsummer Common forms an important and distinctive local landmark. The houses along Brunswick Walk and North Terrace were built in approximately 1820 to overlook the common and enable people to enjoy the area from their own homes. These are now listed buildings and contribute to the historic feel of the common. The Fort St George public house was built in the 16th Century and is also a listed building.

The common caters for a variety of people whether they are using it as a short-cut to the north of the city or as somewhere for an informal game of football. It is a popular stop for riverboats and offers a pleasant riverside walk for tourists.

3 SITE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Vision Statement

To be written by Cambridge City Council

3.2 Management Objectives, Rationale & Proposed Actions

The management of Midsummer Common by volunteers is limited by the 1825 byelaws. This states that Cambridge City Council must formally approve the exceptions under the 1825 byelaws and consequently authorise volunteers to undertake habitat management work as outlined in this plan. With this authorisation, a group will be established to assist with the implementation of this and future management plans.

3.2.1 Objective 1:

To enhance the species richness of the grassland and achieve a more natural floodplain grassland habitat.

Rationale:

The grassland provides limited sources of nectar for the insect life present and lacks sward diversity. The presence of wild flowers would improve the aesthetic appeal of the grassland and enhance visitors' experience. It would also improve the biodiversity value of the common.

Proposed Actions:

Grazing

Grazing has contributed towards improving the quality of the common's grassland and should be continued indefinitely. The current grazing regime is greatly influenced by the needs of other sites in Cambridge on which the cows also graze. The grazing needs of Midsummer Common must be considered as part of a city wide grazing programme for this herd of cows. This programme would provide both the landowner and grazier with guidelines as to how many cows the site could support and for how long each year. The current grazier is keen to continue to use Midsummer Common and this should be encouraged by the City Council. The events programme does largely dictate the management of the grassland so periods when the common can be grazed must be taken advantage of.
For the safety of the cattle, litter bins must be emptied regularly and not left to overflow. When it is necessary for the common to be mown, the arisings should be removed from the site. If they are left to rot *in situ*, the nutrient level of the soil will be such that rank species such as nettles and thistles will thrive.

Meadow Creation

To improve the species diversity of the grassland, three areas of meadow will be created and the seeds allowed to spread naturally over the rest of the common. This is the most cost effective method and is feasible in terms of labour required. The areas will be in the northern corner by the Ferry House, the southern area by the public toilets and the eastern area adjacent to Walnut Tree Avenue (see map in Appendix five). The seeds will be sown in strips to minimise disturbance and integrate the meadow species in to the existing grassland. The seed used will be sourced from a nearby Cambridge flood meadow such as Skater's Meadow. If insufficient local seed is available, other British native origin seed will be sowed.

The process of creating the meadows will fit in around the events and should cause little disturbance to people using the common. The creation of the meadows is an exciting project that would lend itself to volunteer involvement. A volunteer group could be set up to assist with the creation and monitoring of the meadows. This would provide individuals with an insight in to the process involved, how the common is managed in general and its importance for biodiversity. Volunteers could be recruited through the Friends of Midsummer Common, BRUNK and contacts of Cambridge City Council.

The eastern area has different characteristics compared to the north and south areas, so will require a slightly different approach. Due to the constant use of the common, the northern and southern meadows will need to be fenced off for the first few months. This fencing could be chestnut paling which is relatively unobtrusive. The fence will not be in place whilst the cattle are on the common so it will not have to withstand their strength. An information board about this venture and relevant contact details will be installed on the fencing.

To aid the establishment of the meadows, the nettle cover could be addressed in the months prior to September 2009. Where herbicides are not to be used, nettles should be regularly mown to suppress their growth and importantly prevent them from flowering and setting seed. If herbicide is to be used, it should be done so soon after the nettles are mown. This will be most effective as the plants are taking up nutrients (and consequently the chemicals) for growth and repair.

See following pages for timetables for the creation of the meadows.

Northern and Southern Meadows (Objective 1a)

Sept 2009
Identify the meadow areas and mark out the strips to be sown.
The existing weed species (nettles and thistles) should be removed from the area either through hand pulling, weed wiping or the use of herbicide spray. Due to the small scale of the operation, the use of herbicides would not have a negative impact on the rest of the grassland.
Mow the strips to achieve a grass sward of approximately 2cm high. Remove the arisings.
Scatter a mix of meadow seeds over the prepared strips and roll so they are in contact with the soil.
Erect temporary fencing around the meadows.

Winter 2009/10
Monitor meadow and fencing for damage.

Mar – Oct 2010
Throughout the early establishment of the meadow, undesirable species (e.g. nettles and thistles) must be hand pulled.

Apr – Aug 2010
The meadows should be closely grazed or regularly mown to maintain an average sward height of 2-5cm.

Mar – Oct 2011
Hand pulling of undesirable species.

Apr – Aug 2011
The meadows should be grazed or mown to maintain an average sward height of 5-10cm. The aim is a sward height of no lower than 5cm, with at least 20% of each area at a height of 10cm.

Aug – Oct 2011
Grazed to achieve an average sward height of 5cm at the end of the growing season.

In subsequent years, the meadows will be managed as part of the common as a whole. They will be mown in April, July and September with grazing from April – September as appropriate. The sward height should be no less than 5cm. To avoid build up of nutrients in the soil, the arisings should be removed.

Eastern Meadow (Objective 1b)

Sept 2009
Identify the extent of the meadow and hand pull undesirable species. This area already supports some meadow species so spraying with herbicide would not be recommended.
Identify the strips and mow to a sward height of 2cm. Remove the arisings. Because the vegetation is much denser in this area, the strips may also need rotovating to open up the soil.
Scatter a mix of meadow seeds over the prepared strips and roll so they are in contact with the soil.

Mar – Oct 2010
Throughout the early establishment of the meadow, undesirable species (e.g. nettles and thistles) must be hand pulled.

Apr – Aug 2010
The meadow should be closely grazed or regularly mown to maintain an average sward height of 2-5cm.

Mar – Oct 2011
Hand pulling of undesirable species.

Jul 2011
Hay cut taken from whole eastern area. Arisings removed.

Sept - Oct 2011
Mown to control late Summer and Autumn grass growth and achieve a sward height of 10cm high. At least 20% of this area should have a sward height of 15cm high. Arisings removed.

In subsequent years this eastern area will receive a hay cut in July and one or two cuts in September/October as described above for 2011.

See Appendix six for the timetable of works for the meadow creation.

3.2.2 Objective 2:

To maintain and enhance the overall habitat diversity of the common.

Rationale:

Midsummer Common is an important wildlife corridor adjacent to the River Cam, however it's diversity of habitats is limited. There is little native scrub/hedge habitat to provide food and nesting sites for birds, invertebrates or mammals.

Proposed Actions:

The strip of scrub habitat adjacent to the Fort St George public house should be managed in a way to encourage species diversity. Pruning it every other year in January, would promote spring growth and establish a dense structure. This will also allow the plants to flower and fruit later in the year. It is important that the plants in this area are not heavily pruned all at the same time as this will deprive animals of shelter and food whilst the plants grow back. The exact level of pruning will need to be determined on site and may vary each time according to the rate of regrowth.

Native Shrub Planting

The banks adjacent to The Pound (see Appendix five) are currently dominated by nettles, brambles and thistles. These species can be controlled by regular cutting of the nettles and topping of the thistles. The topping should be done when the plants are in flower as at this point they have expended energy so are weaker but have not yet set seed. It may be necessary to hand pull the brambles. These species of plant thrive on nutrient rich soil so all cuttings should be removed from the area and not allowed to rot *in situ*. It may take a couple of years to reduce the cover of the weeds and for the banks to be ready for shrub planting.

The sparse planting of hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna*) on the banks will provide a much needed shrub habitat on the common. These young trees will require regular watering for two years after planting and pruning in later years to achieve a low level (1-2 metres) scrub layer.

3.2.3 Objective 3:

To maintain the trees so as to contribute to the character of the common and its value for biodiversity.

Rationale:

The trees on Midsummer Common are a dramatic feature that create important habitats for wildlife. They are not only aesthetically pleasing but also provide shade for visitors and cattle. Trees require removal due to disease or age and it is important these are replaced appropriately to maintain the habitat.

Proposed Actions:

The current tree planting scheme respects the desire to see the full length of the common and acts as an effective screen to the surrounding buildings. An important view is that across Victoria Avenue to Jesus Green. The high crowns of the horse chestnut trees provide an avenue along the road whilst allowing pedestrians to see underneath. This maintains connectivity with Jesus Green and is a reminder that it used to be part of the same common.

Any future planting should continue to follow this approach and maintain open views of the common. Replacement trees should be located as near to the previous tree's position as possible and protected from the cattle and people by timber fence guards. The areas within these guards are prone to dominance by nettles and thistles. These weeds compete with the tree for resources and have a detrimental effect on its growth. It is therefore important that the weeds are controlled through hand pulling and careful strimming. Each young tree will be fitted with a tree-gator and watered at least once a fortnight throughout the Spring and Summer. Trees will be monitored for signs of stress or dehydration. The tree-gators will stay on the tree for three years after which time it should be well enough established to draw sufficient water from the ground. Due to their size, the younger trees are prone to being vandalised, particularly during the Summer events. Experience on the common has shown that using taller stakes (approx 150cm) to support the trunk deters vandals and should be used as a standard.

The tree species on the common have been selected to have a positive visual impact and contribute to the ecology of the common. The horse chestnut trees along Victoria Avenue are approximately 100 years old and have recently been targeted by the chestnut leaf miner moth. The larvae of the moth live within the leaves and inhibit the tree's ability to photosynthesize. Consequently the tree becomes weak and more susceptible to other pathogens. The trees will require close monitoring and potentially need to be replaced in the near future. The replacement trees will need to provide the same level of impact so large-leaved limes (*Tilia platyphyllos*) would be a suitable choice. The replacement trees should be planted prior to the removal of the horse chestnuts to ensure the tree-lined avenue is maintained and loss of aesthetic impact is minimal. The choice of species for this avenue should be mirrored on Jesus Green.

Elsewhere native trees will be planted where possible however, this is not always suitable. Elm trees were once a familiar site on the landscape but Dutch elm disease has severely reduced the number of mature elms. The two large elms (*Ulmus spp.*) adjacent to Maids Causeway are believed to have the disease and may need to be removed. In anticipation of this, replacement American Princeton elms have been planted as they are proven to have a resistance to the disease.

The choice of tree species on Butt Green seems illogical and lacks the dramatic impact of the horse chestnut and willow planting schemes. When considering the replacement of any of these trees, a clear design plan should be created and followed. The planting in this area does provide shade and is valued by visitors. Any future planting should not increase the amount of shade as this will be detrimental to the ground flora. The tree line in front of North Terrace has become fragmented where trees were not replaced. This line could be reinstated with horse chestnut or elm trees to complement those already present.

The white willow trees along the river are part of an important linear willow habitat that stretches along the river from Waterbeach to Cambridge. Unfortunately they lack the necessary pollarding programme that would help prolong their life-spans and improve the quality of the habitat they provide for other species such as invertebrates. Pollarding creates a habitat of old and new wood on the same tree – a characteristic that is valuable for invertebrates but increasingly rare. An assessment of the willows is required

and a programme for pollarding should be produced. Many of the willows are lapsed pollards which will need careful tree surgery to get them back in to a pollard cycle. Initially the crown should be reduced, leaving sufficient foliage for photosynthesis but removing much of the weight of the tree. In subsequent years the tree would gradually be brought back down to a pollard. The willows will need pollarding every 5-7 years depending on growth rates and the health of the tree. This work should be staggered in order to maintain a strong willow presence and to lessen the financial demand. Where willow trees are removed, replacement trees should be planted in a similar position. White willows or black poplars would be appropriate choices. To retain the local gene pool, cuttings could be taken from existing trees and grown on as the replacement trees. If this proves labour intensive and not to be feasible, trees of local provenance should be bought.

The trees are at greatest risk of damage during the events. Vehicles frequently drive and park close to the base of the trees, causing ground compaction around the roots. Prior to any events taking place, clear boundaries for vehicles and people should be established and then enforced whilst the event is on. There are many mature trees on the common and therefore a full inspection should be carried out early each year to enable any necessary works to be completed before the busy Summer months.

Three bat species have been observed foraging over the common and River Cam and may be roosting on the site too. All British bats and their roosts are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).
In summary, an offence will be committed if someone:

1. Deliberately captures, injures or kills a bat.
2. Intentionally or recklessly disturbs a bat in its roost or deliberately disturbs a group of bats.
3. Damages or destroys a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying it at the time).
4. Possesses or advertises/sells/exchanges a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat.
5. Intentionally or recklessly obstructs access to a bat roost.

Prior to any significant work being undertaken to trees or buildings on Midsummer Common, a bat survey must be completed by a licensed bat worker. This will determine if the feature in question is used by bats and the necessary mitigation required.

The management of the trees on Midsummer Common requires careful planning and specialist knowledge of the site and the trees already present. It is clear that the level of detail needed demands an arboricultural strategy for Midsummer Common. This should be produced by Cambridge City Council in consultation with other stakeholders.

3.2.4 Objective 4:

To enhance The Pound through the creation of an orchard.

Rationale:

Although part of the common, The Pound is not utilised for grazing or events and is merely a link to Maids Causeway. This relatively small area of grassland has great potential to be the location for a more positive use such as a community orchard. This change in land use would link well to the adjacent allotments and would act as a demonstration of locally produced fruit. Fruit growing plays a significant part in the heritage of Cambridgeshire and it would be apt to reflect this on the common.

Proposed Actions:

The soil quality and depth are unknown so tests will be required before any planting commences. To determine the need/desire for an orchard, a consultation should be carried out. This could take the form of on site discussions with users of the common and the adjacent allotment site. Neighbouring residents should also be involved. This early publicity would assist in gaining support and momentum for the project.
The Pound (see Appendix five) currently supports weed species that must be controlled by regular mowing or hand pulling. The approach here will be the same as that employed to control weeds on the nearby banks. Herbicides would not be suitable in this area. Fruit trees will be sourced through the East of England Apples and Orchards Project who can advise on suitable local varieties. In the first year, four trees should be planted and closely managed. They will need protection using similar fenced enclosures as used to protect the trees on the main common. Young fruit trees require regular watering and appropriate pruning to create a good form. This management could be undertaken by volunteers from the local community who would be awarded responsibility for the orchard. Due to the habit of fruit trees any future pruning could be done safely and easily by trained volunteers. Once the orchard has established, members of the public will be encouraged to pick the fruit and enjoy this resource.

An alternative use of The Pound would be as a hazel coppice. The hazels would provide nuts for people and wildlife and the catkins would look appealing early in Spring. The coppice products could be used by the adjacent allotment holders as for example bean poles. Volunteers could be trained in coppicing and be in charge of implementing a rotation system. The area of land in question may prove to be too small for this to be viable.

3.2.5 Objective 5:

To maintain and improve the site infrastructure.

Rationale:

Midsummer Common is an important link between residential areas and the city centre. It is well used by cyclists and walkers throughout the year so footpaths must be kept open and in good condition.

Proposed Actions:

The existing footpaths are suitably placed on the major routes across the common. A series of desire-lines are evident but these are used to a lesser extent so do not require hard-surfacing. The existing paths are surfaced with which suits the common as it is hard-wearing, has some degree of flexibility and requires a shallower construction than a paved path. A top dressing of gravel chippings, as suggested in The Conservation Plan for Midsummer Common, would soften the appearance of the footpaths whilst retaining their practicality. Where paths require repairs, this should be done promptly to minimise the risk posed to the public and to avoid the common appearing neglected.

The footpath in front of Brunswick Walk and North Terrace is rather narrow and often invaded by thistles. These weeds do not complement the appearance of the buildings and restrict access along the path. The thistles can be removed either by hand pulling or well-timed topping. For maximum impact, topping should be carried out every Summer when the plants are in flower. It will take a few years to remove the thistles in this way so could be supplemented by hand pulling. The accessibility of the footpaths should be checked throughout the year. Brambles that are located adjacent to a path or bench should be cut back every Winter and monitored throughout the growing season with additional cutting as required. The trees along the riverside grow over the path and in some cases are hazardous to pedestrians. The crowns of these trees require lifting to enable the full width of the path to be used safely.

There are a number of seats and bins located on the common. These are suitably unobtrusive and positioned alongside perimeter paths so as not to compromise the layout of events. During the Summer months the bins require more regular emptying than is currently undertaken as over-flowing bins are both unsightly and hazardous. A review of the current number of bins and their location is advised to ensure they are sufficient for the common's level of use.

The gates and railings on the common are an important feature in the transition between urban and natural surroundings. The provision of cattle grids, cycle access and pedestrian gates ensures all visitors can access the common safely. The recent installation of gates to comply with Disability Discrimination Act requirements has further enhanced access to the common. The railings and gates are painted black which achieves a subtle appearance. This should be maintained to prevent the railings looking dilapidated. The perimeter railings are important for securing the cattle on the common. There are two vehicular access points from Victoria Avenue which should be kept closed when not in use. This will prevent unauthorised vehicles on to the common and will maintain a safe environment for visitors and the cattle. The Public House and Restaurant will require access for deliveries and this must be allowed when required.

3.2.6 Objective 6:

To enhance the visitor experience.

Rationale:

Midsummer Common is valued amongst the Cambridge community so it is important to promote the enhancements to it and any changes in management. For visitors to Cambridge, it would make their visit to the common more enjoyable if they understood the aims of the work and for example, were able to identify some of the wildflowers present.

Proposed Actions:

Websites are increasingly valuable sources of information and would be an ideal means of promoting Midsummer Common. Information regarding the habitat creation work could be displayed on the Cambridge City Council and Friends of Midsummer Common websites and be summarised in a poster for display in the local pubs/restaurants or on public notice boards near the common. The common itself does not require a notice board as this would detract from the informal appearance. The local press should be utilised to promote the project and encourage support. There is the potential for guided walks to be held to educate people about the history and ecological value of the common. The aforementioned websites provide an opportunity to produce materials for downloading e.g. a leaflet about Midsummer Common.

3.2.7 Objective 7:

To put in place administrative arrangements to ensure the co-ordinated implementation of this management plan.

Rationale:

Management plans are working documents that co-ordinate the management of a site and provide a work programme for the near future. The production of a plan ensures that everyone involved in the management understands what is required. The establishment of a management group will facilitate communication between the various stakeholders and encourage partnership working. For this management plan to be implemented successfully, the partners must address issues and share successes together. Ongoing monitoring of the plan and the effects it has is required.
This management plan will need to be reviewed in 2014, this will involve key stakeholders planning the work for the following five years. Ongoing dialogue and regular management plan meetings between these parties will make the review process easier and more effective.

Proposed Actions:

Establish a Midsummer Common Management Group with representatives from the key stakeholder groups and Cambridge City Council departments. The group should meet quarterly to monitor the implementation of the management plan and address any issues as they arise. The Group should assign responsibilities, monitor resources and provide support to the volunteers involved in the management of Midsummer Common.

Acknowledgements:

The following were extremely helpful and provided a range of specialist advice during the preparation of this plan:

Sarah Tovell, Active Communities, Cambridge City Council
Guy Belcher, Nature Conservation Projects Officer, Cambridge City Council
Kenny McGregor, Tree Officer, Cambridge City Council
Angelika von Heimendahl, Cam Cattle
Dick Baxter, Friends of Midsummer Common
Geoffrey King
SOS Cambridge
BRUNK

Appendix One: Annual Events Programme
Dates approximate depending on the calendar

1 - 5 May	May Fair
1 June	Race for Life
7 June	Strawberry Fair
18 – 23 June	Midsummer Fair
6 July	Race for Life
27 July	London – Cambridge Bike Race
28 Sept	Cambridge – London Bike Race
5 Nov	Bonfire Night Celebrations

Appendix Two: Botanical Survey Species List, 2008

Scientific name	Common name
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore (seedlings)
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow
Aegopodium podagraria	Ground-elder
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent
Alopecurus pratensis	Meadow Foxtail
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley
Arctium minus	Lesser Burdock
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass
Artemisia vulgaris	Mugwort
Ballota nigra	Black Horehound
Bellis perennis	Daisy
Betula pendula	Silver Birch
Bryonia dioica	White Bryony
Calystegia silvaticum	Large Bindweed
Capsella bursa-pastoris	Shepherd's-purse
Chamerion angustifolium	Rosebay Willowherb
Chelidonium majus	Greater Celandine
Chenopodium album sens.str.	Fat-hen
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle
Cirsium vulgare	Spear Thistle
Convolvulus arvensis	Field Bindweed
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn
Crepis capillaris	Smooth Hawk's-beard
Crepis vesicaria	Beaked Hawk's-beard
Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot
Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willowherb
Epilobium parviflorum	Hoary Willowherb
Elytrigia repens	Common Couch
Festuca rubra agg.	Red Fescue
Geranium dissectum	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
Geranium molle	Dove's-foot Crane's-bill
Geum urbanum	Wood Avens
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire Fog
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed
Hordeum murinum	Wall Barley
Labium alba	White Dead-nettle
Lactuca serriola	Prickly Lettuce
Lapsana communis	Nipplewort
Lepidium draba	Hoary Cress
Lolium perenne	Perennial Rye-grass
Lycopus europaeus	Gypsywort
Malva neglecta	Dwarf Mallow
Malva sylvestris	Common Mallow
Matricaria discoidea	Pineappleweed
Medicago lupulina	Black Medick
Pentaglottis sempervirens	Green Alkanet
Parietaria judaica	Pellitory-of-the-Wall

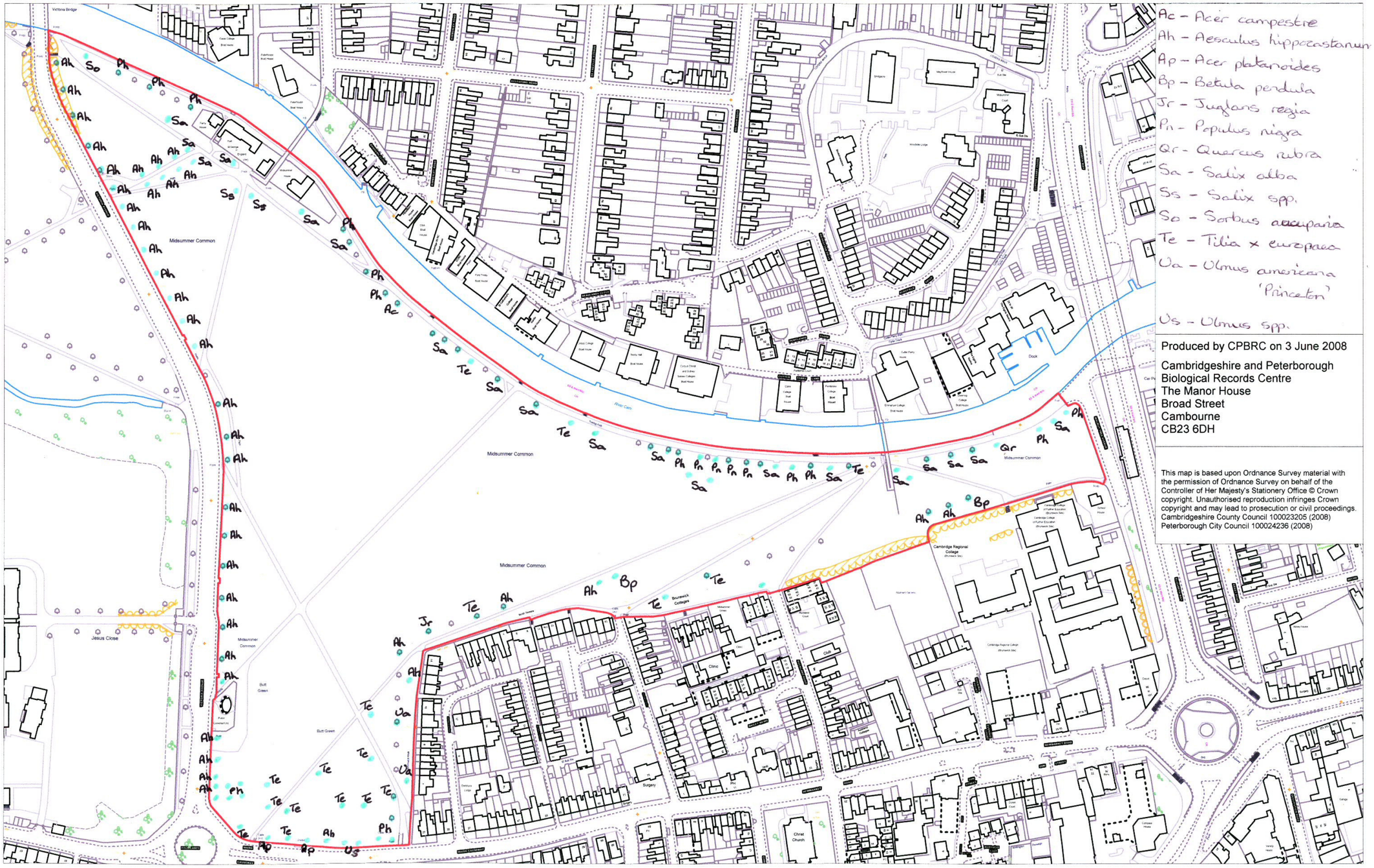
Appendix Two: Botanical Survey Species List, 2008 Continued

Scientific Name	Common Name
Persicaria maculosa	Redshank
Phleum bertolonii	Smaller Cat's-tail
Phleum pratense	Timothy
Picris echioides	Bristly Oxtongue
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain
Plantago major	Greater Plantain
Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass
Polygonum aviculare agg.	Knotgrass
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble
Rumex crispus	Curled Dock
Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock
Rumex pulcher	Fiddle Dock
Sambucus nigra	Elder
Senecio jacobaea	Common Ragwort
Senecio vulgaris	Grounsel
Sisymbrium officinale	Hedge Mustard
Solanum nigrum	Black Nightshade
Sonchus arvensis	Perennial Sow-thistle
Sonchus asper	Prickly Sow-thistle
Sonchus oleraceus	Smooth Sow-thistle
Stellaria media agg.	Chickweed
Taraxacum officinale agg.	Dandelion
Trifolium repens	White Clover
Tripleurospermum inodorum	Scentless Mayweed
Urtica dioica	Common Nettle
Viburnum opulus	Guelder-rose

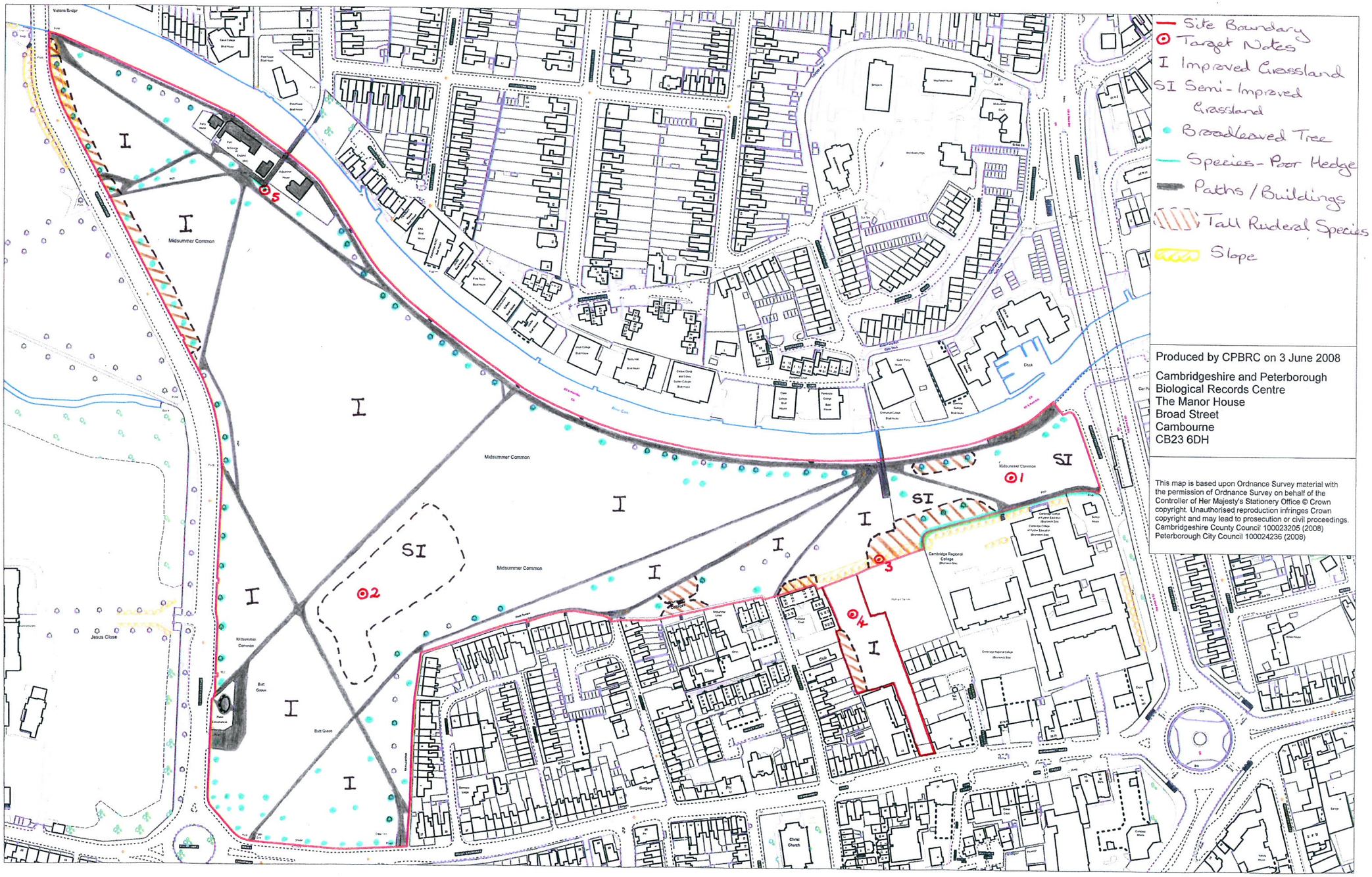
Planted/large trees

Scientific name	Common name
Acer campestre	Field Maple
Acer platanoides	Norway Maple
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse-chestnut
Betula pendula	Silver Birch
Juglans regia	Walnut
Platanus x hispanica	London Plane
Populus nigra	Black Poplar
Quercus rubra	Red Oak
Salix alba	White Willow
Salix spp.	A willow hybrid
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan
Tilia x europaea	Common Lime
Ulmus sp.	an elm
Ulmus americana 'Princeton'	Princeton Elm

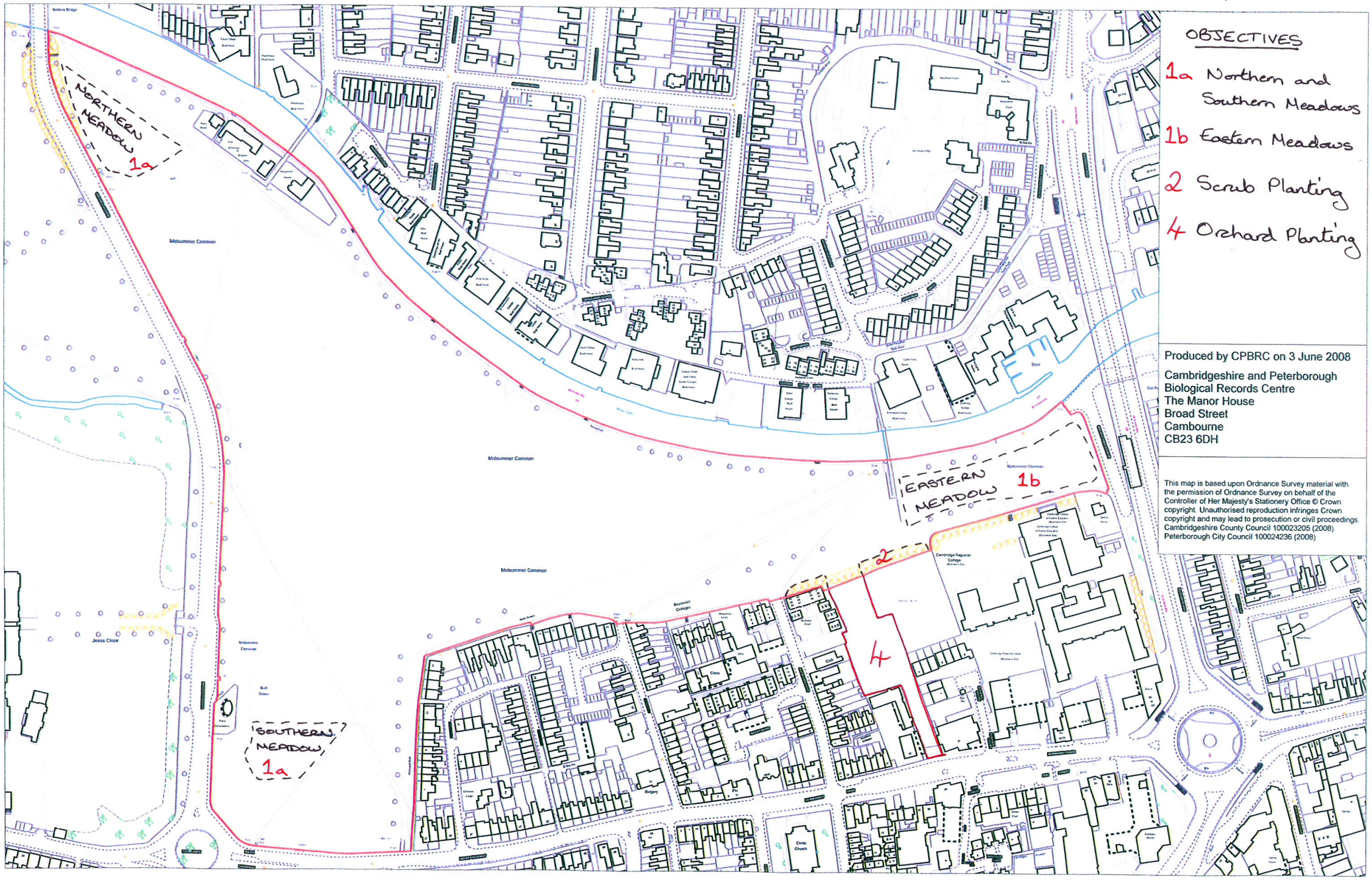
Appendix Three: Tree Species and Positions



Appendix Four: Phase One Habitats Map



Appendix Five: Habitat Enhancements Map



Appendix Six: Meadow Creation Timetable

Northern and Southern Meadows	Sept 2009	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2010	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Common grazed																
Area close mown																
Strips sprayed/weeds removed																
Seeds scattered																
Area rolled																
Temporary Fencing Up																
Mowing (2-5cm height)																
Hand pulling weeds																
Mowing (5-10cm height)																

Northern and Southern Meadows	Jan 2011	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Common grazed												
Area close mown												
Strips sprayed/weeds removed												
Seeds scattered												
Area rolled												
Temporary Fencing Up												
Mowing (2-5cm height)												
Hand pulling weeds												
Mowing (5-10cm height)												

Eastern Meadow	Sept 2009	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2010	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Area grazed																
Area close mown																
Rotovation of strips																
Seeds scattered																
Area rolled																
Mowing (2-5cm height)																
Hand pulling weeds																
Hay cut																
Mowing (10cm height)																

Eastern Meadow	Jan 2011	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Area grazed												
Area close mown												
Rotovation of strips												
Seeds scattered												
Area rolled												
Mowing (2-5cm height)												
Hand pulling weeds												
Hay cut												
Mowing (10cm height)												