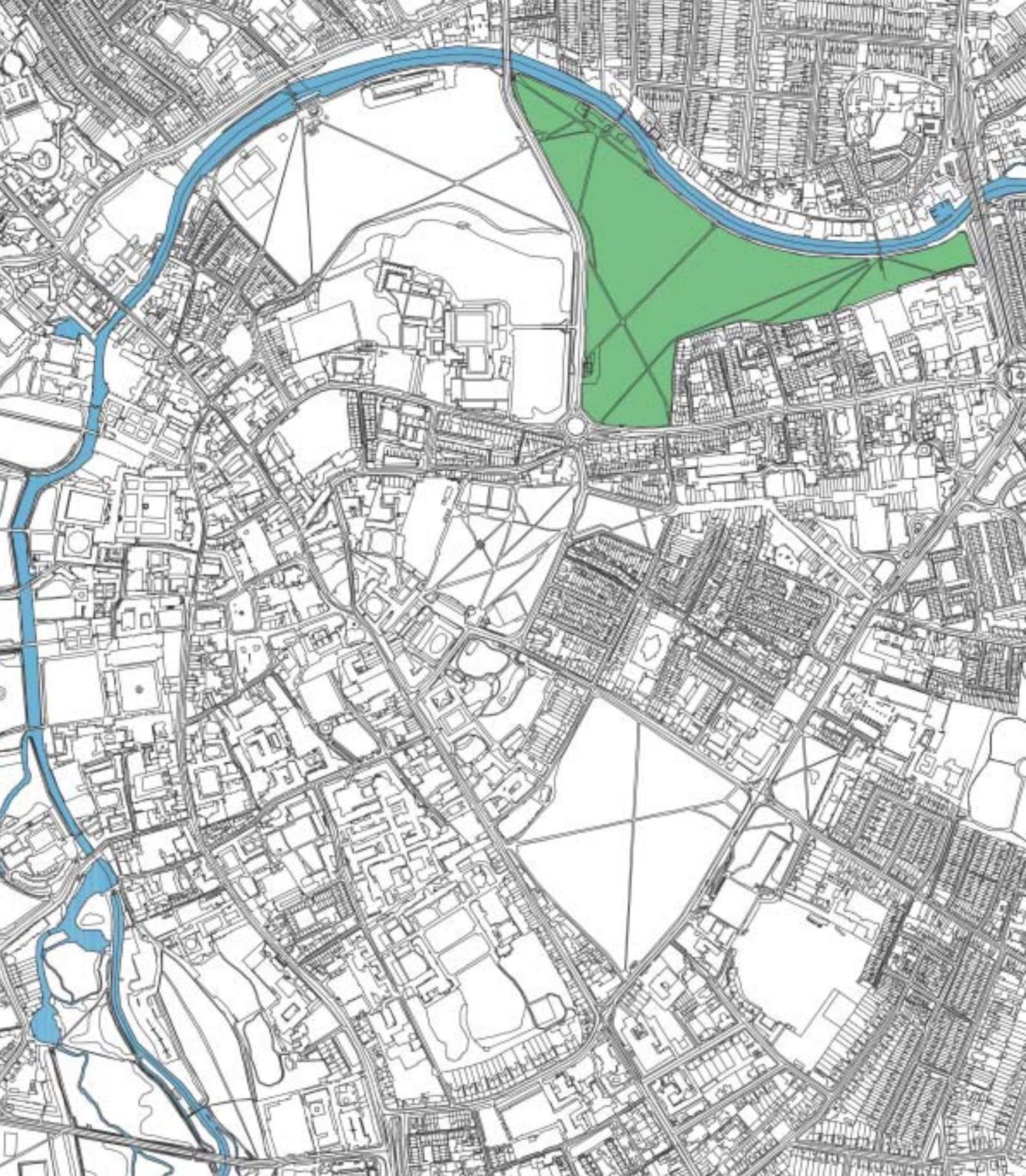


Midsummer Common Conservation Plan 2001

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BACKGROUND TO THE CONSERVATION PLANS

The municipal park was a nineteenth century creation of the British in response to the poor living conditions that resulted from the rapid population growth following the industrial revolution¹. The Select Committee for Public Walks presented a Report to Parliament in 1833, which concluded that the poorest people living in the worst conditions of overcrowding and poverty in the large cities had the greatest need for parks. The committee believed that public open space would refresh the air; would improve people's health and provide places for exercise; would be an alternative form of recreation to the tavern; and would provide beneficial contact with nature, so elevating the spirit. Since all members of society would use parks, social tensions would be reduced and the classes would learn from each other². This earliest use was envisaged as informal promenading but parks soon came to include sports such as cricket and football, and then children's play.

The first parks were frequently laid out on whatever land was available, often on the outskirts of towns and cities. However by 1880 it was realised that parks needed to be accessible and sites within the urban areas were favoured. The Town Improvements Act of 1847 allowed local authorities to provide places that could be used for 'resort or recreation'. However it was not until the Recreation Grounds Act of 1859 that provision for active recreation received separate legal acknowledgement³. The 1833 Select Committee had placed no emphasis on games or sport but by 1847 there were facilities for boating, cricket, archery, and a gymnasium in some of the newly opened parks, and bowling greens, tennis, and football pitches followed soon after. Active recreation was treated as one among a range of possible uses of public open space and the designs for parks attempted to integrate them into a horticultural setting which frequently shut out the urban surroundings by peripheral tree and shrub planting.

The idea of a park laid out primarily for sports crystallised in the sports parks of Wolverhampton (1880) and Altrincham (1881). Later the formation of the modern Olympic Games provided the impetus for the 1937 Physical Training and Recreation Act giving local authorities the extended powers to acquire land specifically for playing fields. The organizations that have formed during the twentieth century to promote the various sports have subsequently put pressure on parks to provide facilities for their particular interest group.

From 1974, following the Bains Report and the 1972 Local Government Act, the local authority Parks Departments were absorbed into Departments of Leisure and Amenity Services. This consolidated the bias towards active as opposed to passive recreation⁴. It is arguable whether this was a response to the need for reduced expenditure, or actually reflected the aspirations of most users of the majority of public parks. It is suggested that perhaps it was not so much the public interest in sports that had increased, as the effectiveness of the sporting lobby⁵.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering was introduced in the early 1990s as a means of providing the most cost effective maintenance for parks. This meant that staff were no longer a full time presence in a particular park. Under CCT mobile teams moved around various sites carrying out the maintenance work and one of the results of this has been a loss of the informal supervision that was provided and a consequent sense of vulnerability for some park users. The Best Value Review has now replaced CCT and it is assessing the needs of the different users and attempting to produce a balance between their competing requirements. The recent inquiry by the

¹ Hazel Conway 'Parks and people: the social functions', Ed Jan Woudstra and Ken Fieldhouse, *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, E and FN Spon, London, 2000.

² Hazel Conway 'Parks and people: the social functions', Ed Jan Woudstra and Ken Fieldhouse, *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, E and FN Spon, London, 2000.

³ Brent Elliot and Ken Fieldhouse, 'Play and sport', Ed Jan Woudstra and Ken Fieldhouse, *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, E and FN Spon, London, 2000.

⁴ Brent Elliot and Ken Fieldhouse, 'Play and sport', Ed Jan Woudstra and Ken Fieldhouse, *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, E and FN Spon, London, 2000.

⁵ Brent Elliot, 'From people's parks to green deserts', *Landscape Design*, no 171 (February 1988), 13-15.

Environment Sub-Committee of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons has focused political attention on the issues surrounding public parks and their significance, making recommendations about funding and their future management. The Urban White Paper (November 2000)⁶ shares the concerns expressed in this enquiry. It goes further than just supporting a halt to the decline, challenging everyone to think more imaginatively about the kind of open spaces that can make a difference to the quality of people's lives in urban settings. It sets out the government's intentions to lead and develop a shared vision for the future of our parks, play areas and open spaces; to improve information on their quality and quantity and on the way in which they are used and maintained. In addition it says the planning and design must be improved as well as the way that existing ones are managed and maintained. The Urban White paper proposed the setting up of an Urban Green Spaces Taskforce to take this process forward and it will report back in June 2002.

Local authority parks are therefore undergoing something of a reappraisal. A number of issues need to be addressed by today's park managers: the parks' special contribution to the character of an area; the value of the existing facilities; decisions on what provision is required to meet the needs of today's public; the contribution parks can make to urban regeneration and to the biodiversity of urban areas; the need to manage the aging tree stock and fabric of parks; and questions of personal security so that parks can be used by all those who would wish to. As part of this process it is important that there is an awareness of the value placed on the different facilities, features and characteristics of the open spaces by various groups and individuals. The parks' spatial, historical, environmental and ecological qualities and their connection with their surroundings and the memories attached to those places need to be properly understood if changes are to build successfully and appropriately on what has gone before.

Cambridge is fortunate in having developed as a city with large areas of public open space including commons in its centre. The highly managed Parker's Piece, Christ's Pieces and Jesus Green along with the grounds of many of the colleges contrast with the informality of the semi-natural character of Coe Fen and Sheep's Green, parts of the Backs and Midsummer and Stourbridge Commons. These open spaces, public and private, formal and informal create the setting for the urban fabric and the interrelationship between them is fundamental to the character of the city.

This document is one of a series of Conservation Plans which are being written to assess the wide range of qualities these open spaces possess which it is believed should survive into the future. By considering the ways in which these qualities may be vulnerable to change it is possible to produce conservation policies to protect them. It should be emphasised that the plans do not oppose alteration or the evolution of the parks and commons but aim to guide such change in a way that the past and current value of a site is accommodated in any new proposals⁷.

December 2003

Since this Conservation Plan received Committee approval in 2001, there has been an increased focus at the national level on open space, leading to the publication of the report of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force *Green Spaces Special Places* in 2002. In the same year Central Government's policy objectives for open space were set out in Planning Policy Guidance 17. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has been charged by Central Government to act as the nation's champion for urban space with a particular emphasis on green spaces. CABE Space has been entrusted with the task of developing good practice so that the design, management and functions of the built and natural environments of towns and cities can be considered together. Too often there has been a lack of integration of these fundamental elements that define the quality of urban environments.

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Acknowledgement

Many people have provided useful information for inclusion in these Conservation Plans and made valuable comments during the consultation process. We thank them for their material and for taking the time to read the drafts. We are particularly grateful to the Cambridge Preservation Society which has not only made a financial contribution to the production of the plans but has acted as a partner in their preparation through the efforts of Joyce Baird, Christopher Bradford, Catherine Hall and John Wilkinson. The invaluable assistance of the staff of the Cambridgeshire Collection also deserves our appreciation.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSERVATION PLAN

1.1 Purpose of the Conservation Plan

- 1.1.1 The enormous development pressure being experienced by Cambridge has led to the need for a series of strategic studies to ensure that the essential character of the city is maintained.
- 1.1.2 At the broadest level is the *Landscape Assessment of Cambridge*, which will look at the geology and topography of Cambridge's environs and define the different 'character areas' of the city. Although the *Historic Core Appraisal* is principally concerned with the city centre, it will build on the findings of the Landscape Assessment to examine how the city centre sits within its setting and how the different character areas interface with and affect the core area.
- 1.1.3 The Historic Core Appraisal will then look in detail at the city and provide the strategic framework for protecting and improving the core environment. The individual Conservation Plans for the open spaces fit beneath these umbrella documents. They will be complemented by similar plans for major buildings such as the Colleges, guidelines for the development of key sites, proposals for street enhancement and thematic studies on particular topics such as a 'Street Design Guide'. In this way a logical framework from the broad-brush to the site specific is developed to guide the future of the city.
- 1.1.4 This Conservation Plan for Midsummer Common has been prepared to provide a basis for its management to safeguard the elements that a wide range of people consider should be conserved for the future. The plan has therefore been circulated to interested parties outside the Council for their comments. The plan will also assist planning decisions if any development of the surroundings is proposed that might have an impact on this open space.
- 1.1.5 This is one of a series of Conservation Plans for the city's central open spaces and sets out what needs conserving and why. Management plans will follow which will detail how these objectives will be met. They will propose projects such as tree planting, railings provision or in some cases more major changes. Funding for these works can be sought from various bodies outside the City Council. The Heritage Lottery Fund recommends that applications for funding should follow the Conservation Plan process in order to demonstrate that the proposals being put forward do not conflict with the heritage merit of the site. Heritage merit is considered to be those qualities and features that it is desirable to pass on to future generations.

1.2 Format of the plan

- 1.2.1 After a general history of Midsummer Common which aims to give a broad understanding of the past history and present context (section 2), the Conservation Plan attempts to set down all the significant features and qualities that it is considered desirable to pass on to

future generations (section 3). There follows an examination of the issues that have threatened this significance in the past, do so at the present and may do in the future (section 4). Conservation guidance is provided so that as change inevitably takes place, this past value is accommodated in any new proposals (section 5). Finally the implementation and review of the plan are discussed (section 6).

- 1.2.2 There are a number of appendices including a summary table of the conservation guidance for each of the significant elements (appendix 4) and a gazetteer of the main structures and artefacts (appendix 5). Inevitably there is some repetition of information but this is necessary if parts of the plan are to be consulted independently as a working document.

1.3 The site

- 1.3.1 Midsummer Common measures 13,408 hectares. It lies adjacent to the river on its south side and is within the central area of the city.

1.4 The Conservation Plan

- 1.4.1 The plan has been prepared by the Environment and Planning, and Community Services Departments of Cambridge City Council in partnership with the Cambridge Preservation Society.
- 1.4.2 The plan has been prepared taking account of: *Cambridge City Council's Leisure Strategy for 1996-2000*. Relevant policies are: SR6 96; SR14 96; SR15 96; SR22 96.
- 1.4.3 *The City Wide Arboricultural Strategy 1996* pp 7-11, Cambridge City Council.
- 1.4.4 *The Cambridge Local Plan 1997* chapter 4, *The Natural Environment* and chapter 8 *Recreation and Leisure*.
- 1.4.5 *The Parks, Shelterbelts and Open Spaces Local Habitat Action Plan, and the Urban Forest Local Habitat Action Plan*.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

This section of the Conservation Plan gives a comprehensive description of the common so that those making management decisions on one aspect can have an understanding of the site as a whole.

2.1 Historical development

- 2.1.1 Jesus Green and Midsummer Common are parts of a long, originally unbroken strip of low-lying riverside pasture. In early times this was known simply as the Green or the Common. To distinguish various parts a number of descriptive names grew up. Greencroft was the name of the actual croft given to the nuns when the Benedictine Nunnery dedicated to St Radegund was founded between 1133 and 1138. The name suggests the croft may itself have been carved out of the Green by ditching and draining the land at an early date. The part of the Green adjacent to St Radegund then became known by association as Greencroft. Later when the nunnery became the site for Jesus College, Greencroft became known as Jesus Green or Jesus Common. Butt Green took the name in the later Middle Ages from its designated use for military target practice. The remaining common became known as Midsummer Common, Midsummer Green or Midsummer Fair Green from its association with the Midsummer Fair. These names were not always used in a precise way and consequently confusion has arisen. When the common was divided by Victoria Avenue the road became the convenient boundary of Jesus Green and Midsummer Common. However the Ordnance Survey still applied the name Midsummer Common across both parts until 1951.
- 2.1.2 In 1092 Sheriff Picot established his first religious house in Cambridge, attached to St Giles Church, close to his castle on Castle Hill. Later Henry I gave permission for it to be moved to a more spacious site in Barnwell. This site had pre-Christian origins and been used for semi-pagan festivities around the wellhead once a year on Midsummer Eve. The new site for the Priory lay just north-east of the present East Road/Newmarket Road roundabout⁸. Initially the new foundation prospered and developed into Barnwell Priory as a notable House of Augustinian Canons. While it was still powerful it attempted to acquire the area of common land between the priory and the river shortly before 1381 and the newly erected fences became a target during the Peasant's Revolt that year. The suppression of the revolt by the Crown left the Priory in possession of the land, which later went to secular purchasers following the Dissolution of the Monasteries. This is why housing at Riverside today separates Stourbridge and Midsummer Commons.

⁸ Peter Bryan, *Cambridge the shaping of the city*, 1999.

- 2.1.3 King John granted the Midsummer Fair to Barnwell Priory in 1211, and in 1232 Henry III allowed the fair to be held over four days from 22-25 June. The fair enabled the Priory to take advantage, financially and socially, of the long-existing midsummer celebrations, now under a respectable religious veneer. In 1235 the burgesses of the town and the Priory came to an agreement in compensation for an event from which the Priory drew profit. This showed that the fair was held on common pastureland near the Priory to the possible detriment of the common users.
- 2.1.4 The control of the fair gradually shifted from direct management by the Priory to that of the Town and a new agreement of 1506 defined the role of each. Records from 1589 indicate that goods were brought to the fair by river and unloaded on to the riverbank. In 1714 the fair included Punch, a giant, a dwarf, wild beasts, dancing dogs, three legged cats and a female rope dancer. By the late 18th century it was well known for selling pottery and popularly called the Pot Fair. Around this time it was extended from four days to a fortnight each year and became more profitable for the town than Sturbridge Fair, which was held on what is now known as Stourbridge Common. Once the railway came to Cambridge in 1845 it was no longer necessary to land goods for Midsummer Fair from the river and so the fair moved from the narrow eastern part on to the main body of the common.
- 2.1.5 By the mid nineteenth century it and all the other fairs were in decline because of the changing patterns of commerce, since by this time trade took place mainly through shops. Midsummer Fair contracted again to four days but remained an important part of the summer events in the town and gradually the entertainments took over from the trading, although buying and selling of horses was still important at the end of the 19th century. The introduction of steam to the fair in 1870 enabled the rides to become more exciting and adventurous. Freak shows, moving pictures, wrestling and boxing were all part of the amusements according to the reports of the times⁹. Today the fair attracts large numbers of people each June to its various rides, stalls and sideshows. The mayor and other members of the Council still continue the tradition of scattering pennies to the crowd at its opening. For the first time in 800 years an amendment to the Fair Act allowed Midsummer Fair to operate on Sunday 25 June 2000.
- 2.1.6 Between the years 1841 and 1876 various attempts were made to resolve the problems caused by the overuse of the Cambridge Commons by those who had no legal rights to graze them. Attempts to trace the true holders of these rights proved too difficult and various plans were put forward which would have released some land for building or allotment gardens. It was proposed in 1870 that 17 houses should be built along the road at Midsummer Common, presumably along the south side of Butt Green. However without the authority of parliament, the plans could not be taken forward and so the view on to Butt Green from Maids Causeway is preserved. Other land suitable only for pasture was to have been divided and let out for rent and the remainder was to have been retained forever as public land.

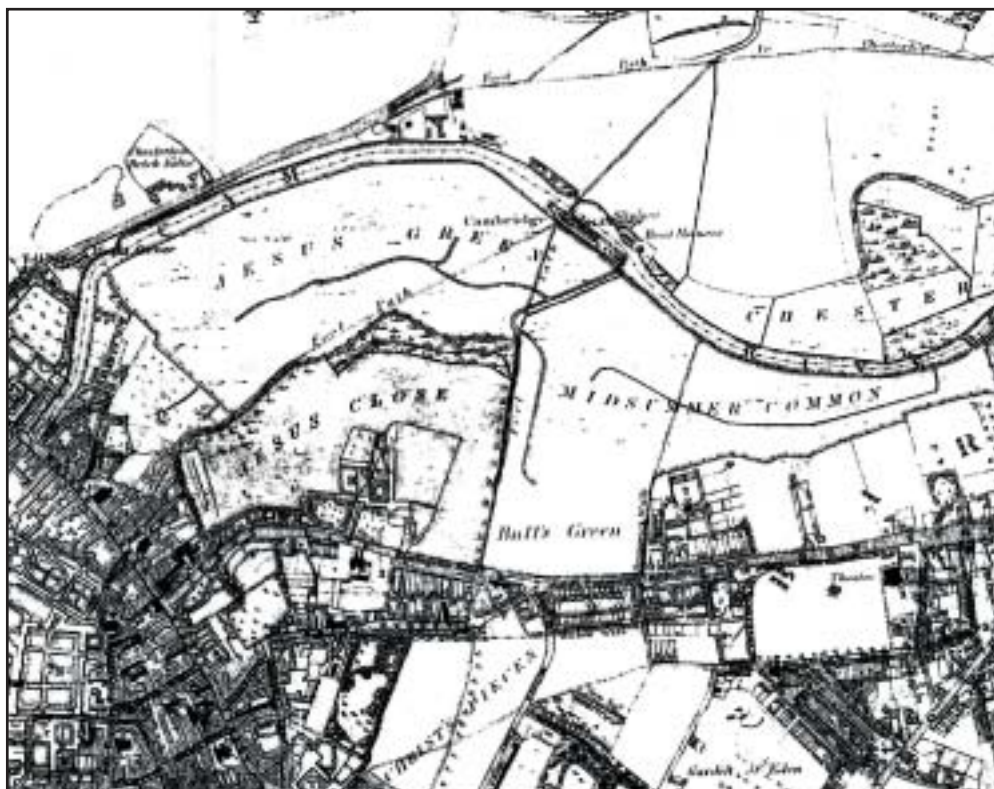
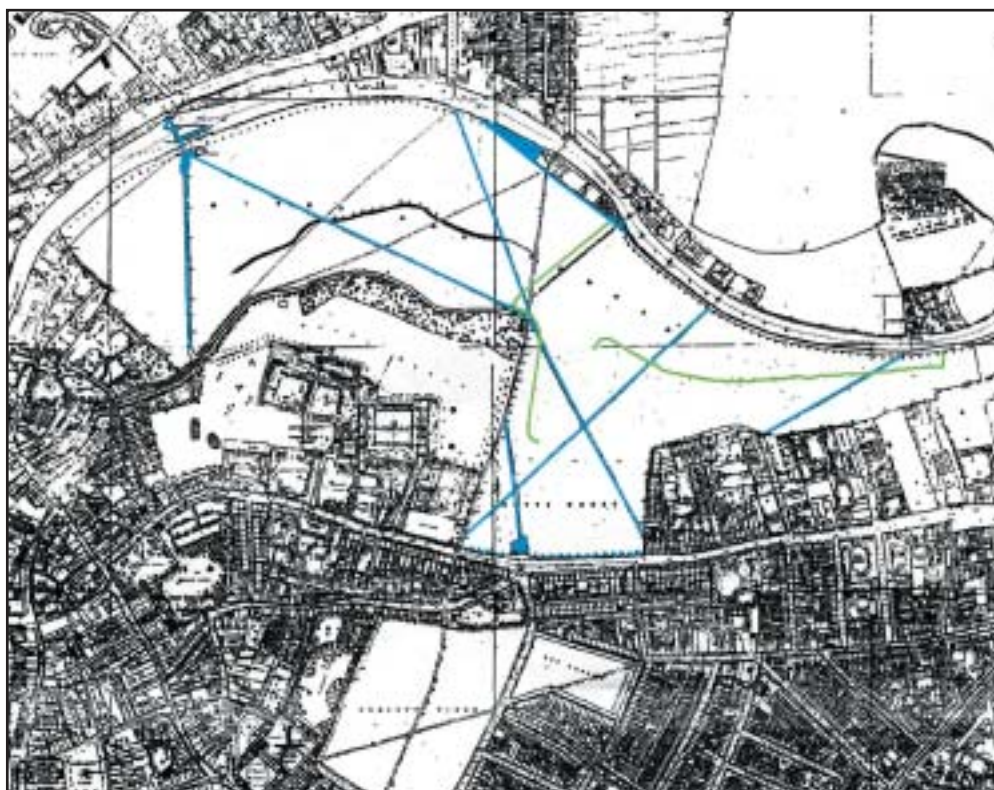
⁹A Taylor, *Cambridge the hidden history*, Tempus 1999, p115.

- 2.1.7 The public were fiercely opposed to the enclosure of the commons and little real progress was made until the 1876 Commons Act made it possible for the Council to apply to the Enclosure Commissioners for an order for the regulation of the commons, as distinct from their enclosure. This meant that new regulations could be introduced through by-laws and changes in land management brought about in this way. In due course the Commons Committee was authorised to take the necessary steps to obtain the appropriate by-laws in 1878. The Cambridge University and Corporation Act 1894 gave the Council considerable further power to make regulations affecting the commons, including the power to enclose parts of Midsummer Common and Butts Green from time to time for certain purposes.
- 2.1.8 Amongst other things the Cambridge City Council Act 1985 rationalised the powers of the Council concerning the grazing of the commons, allowing it to prescribe the procedure for the registration of commoners entitled to graze animals on the commons and to make a reasonable charge for such registration. In addition the Council is able to determine which commoners may graze animals the following grazing season and the number of animals each may graze. The Council is also permitted to charge a reasonable sum for the exercise of these grazing rights and to prohibit the grazing by other animals. The Act also recognised Jesus Green, formerly part of Midsummer Common, to be and always to have been, common land.
- 2.1.9 Midsummer Common has provided grazing since at least the 12th century; a site for trade at Midsummer celebrations since 1211 when the fair was granted and quite possibly earlier; and a space for public events and celebrations. Midsummer Common played its part along with Parker's Piece and Christ's Pieces in the major celebrations of Queen Victoria's Reign. A Rustic Sports was held in 1838 to mark the Coronation and more sports for the Jubilee in 1887. Despite the construction of the road in 1890 and the planting of 85 horse chestnut trees along its length, four years later the Royal Agricultural Show was held over both sides of the now divided Midsummer Common, the trees being temporarily removed for the event (fig 1). The common has been used for cricket, football and hockey in the past when expectations for pitch quality were more modest.



Fig 1 From the Cambridge Chronicle and University Journal, Isle of Ely Herald and Huntingdonshire Gazette. June 26 1894.

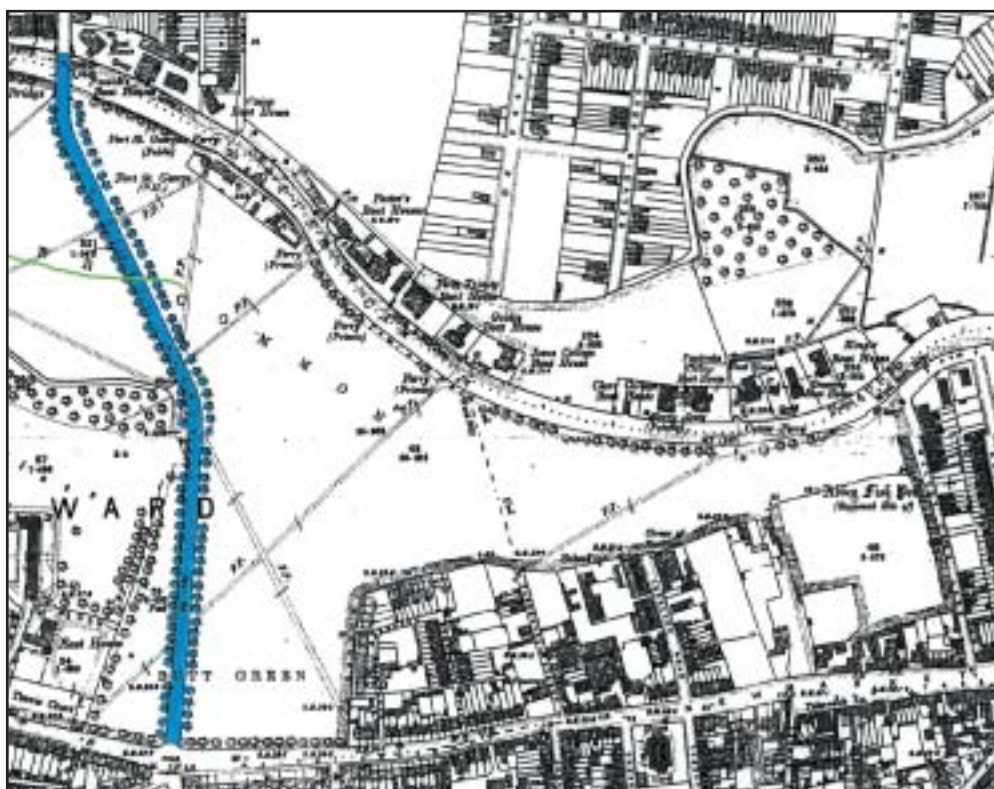
- 2.1.10 A series of maps shows the main changes which have taken place between different editions from 1830 to 2000. Midsummer Common does not appear on the early maps of Loggan and Custance but Baker represented the city more extensively in 1830. This map shows the houses of Brunswick Walk and North Terrace, which it is believed were built soon after 1820. In 1821 permission was given for a footpath to be built along the edge of the common in front of them (fig 2).
- 2.1.11 The construction of Victoria Avenue and Victoria Bridge in 1890 were the most major changes to take place on Midsummer Common since the establishment of the Barnwell Priory. The Bridge replaced the many ferry crossing points that had connected Chesterton to Cambridge. Following this division of the common their characters gradually began to diverge.
- 2.1.12 In 1927 the Fort St George and the Pye footbridges were built over the river to replace ferries. People moving between the residential areas north of the river and the city centre use these heavily today. In 1929 the western side of Butt Green that had become detached by the construction of Victoria Avenue was given to Jesus College in exchange for New Square. Sometime after this it appears from the 1967 OS map that the carriageway of Victoria Avenue was widened, whether at the expense of the footpath or the common itself is not clear. If land was taken from the common the horse chestnut trees would have suffered some check to their growth due to root damage.
- 2.1.13 The Elizabeth Way Bridge was built in 1971 at the east end of Midsummer Common to carry vehicles from the Newmarket Road to Chesterton and the north of the city. A terrace of houses in Walnut Tree Avenue was demolished and replaced by the massive superstructure of the Bridge. There were strong protests against the plan and there is no doubt that the bridge is an intrusion and damages the setting of the east end. However it is hard now to imagine movement around the city without it.
- 2.1.14 Midsummer Common ceased to be grazed from the early 1980s and was mechanically mown instead. In 1994 the cattle returned and now play a vital role in the management of the grass, despite some initial protests about cowpats. This has returned an element of informality to the common's appearance particularly in the spring. Midsummer Common continues to provide a venue for the events traditionally held there, returning each time to the familiar pastoral scene.

Fig 2 Historical development of Midsummer Common.**BAKER 1830****1886 ORDNANCE SURVEY****Significant Additions**

- Jesus Lock constructed (1832) and the river is diverted so the Fort St George public house is no longer on an island.
- New paths leading to ferries over the river.
- A line of trees, possibly wych elm, planted along Maid's Causeway.

Significant Losses

- The ditch on Midsummer Common has been infilled.



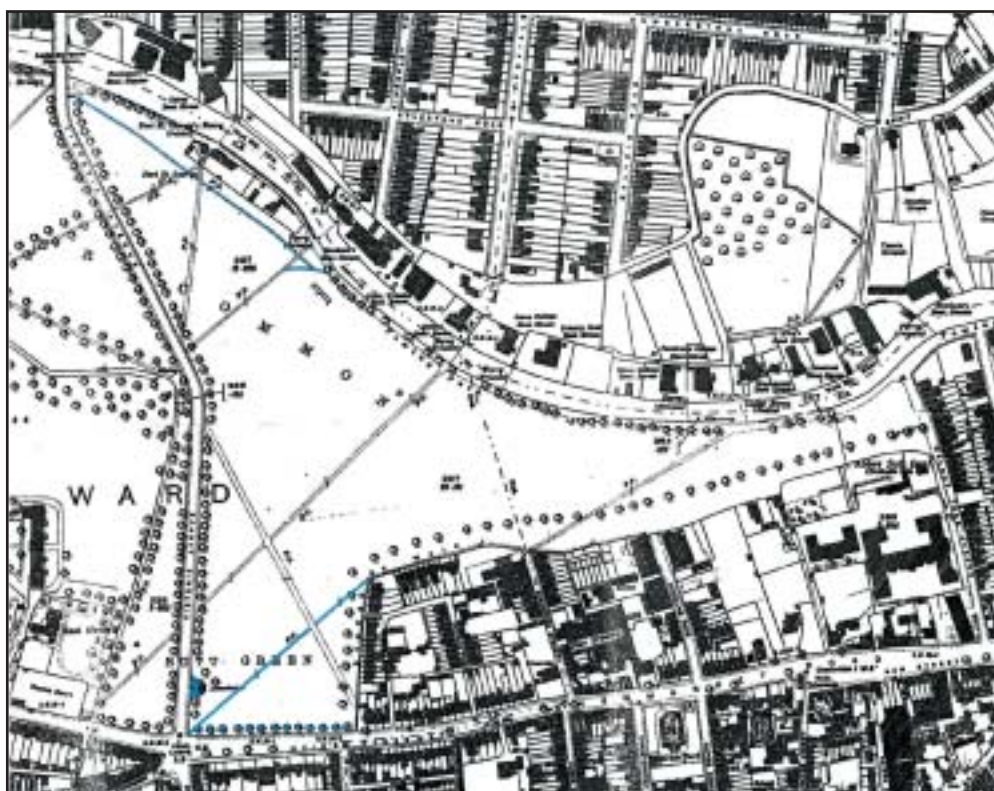
1903 ORDNANCE SURVEY

Significant Additions

- Victoria Avenue and Bridge constructed 1890.
- The horse chestnut avenue planted.

Significant Losses

- Middle ditch filled in on Jesus Green



1927 ORDNANCE SURVEY

Significant Additions

- Public lavatories constructed on Butt Green.
- New paths.

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**1951 ORDNANCE SURVEY**

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Significant Additions

- Fort St George and Pye footbridges constructed over the Cam (1927).

**1967 ORDNANCE SURVEY**

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Significant Additions

- Lay-bys created in Victoria Avenue and the road widened.
- New paths.
- Public conveniences rebuilt.
- Four Lamps roundabout constructed.

Significant Losses

- Loss of many mature trees along the south side of Butt Green.
- Western edge of Butt Green absorbed into Jesus College grounds leaving part of the chestnut avenue in the grass road verge.
- Removal and relocation of some paths.

**2000 ORDNANCE SURVEY****Significant Additions**

- Elizabeth Way Bridge constructed (1971).
- Hard surfaced vehicle entrance to the common next to the public lavatories.

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Fig 3 Summary of the Design Structure and Townscape Role of Midsummer Common and its surroundings.



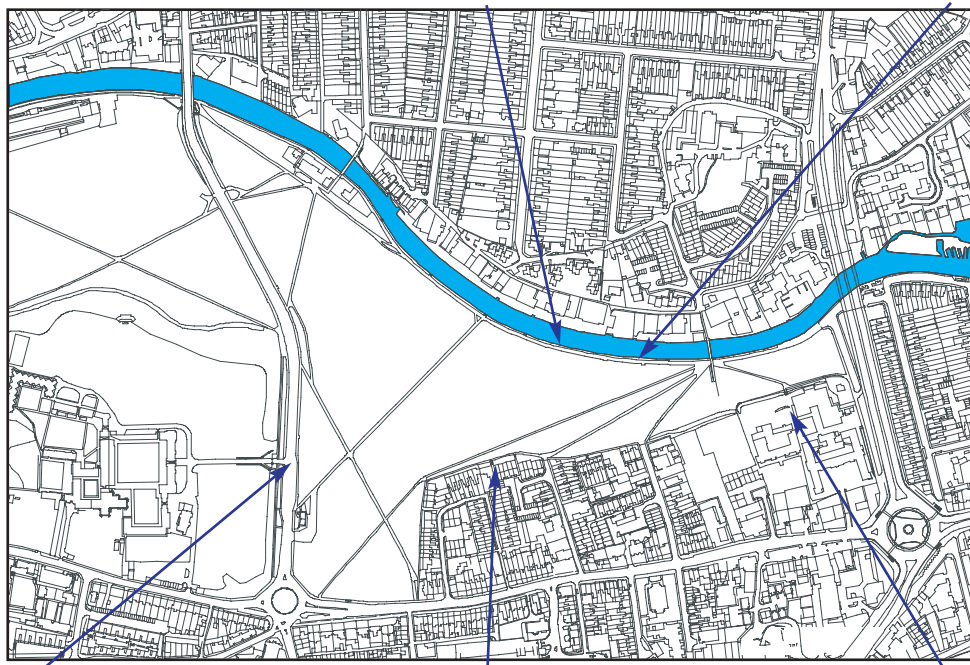
The common is an open grass area framed by sparse perimeter tree planting and its urban surroundings. Asphalt paths cross it in an unobtrusive way. Lighting is almost entirely restricted to the edges, with a few single lamp standards at path intersections.



Boathouses enclose the view on the north side of the river along with visually very important willow, poplar and plane trees. Some of these are over mature or have large wind damage wounds.



Rowing, holiday boats and angling create activity on the river and its attractive setting make the tow-path a pleasant place to sit. The common is accessible to a large area of housing north of the river via the footbridges. The footpaths are heavily used routes between there and the city centre.



The horsechestnut avenue encloses the western boundary of the common, and is reinforced by the Jesus College tree planting behind. The spire of All Saints Church Jesus Lane is a distant focal point. Important views of Jesus Green from Victoria Avenue beneath the canopies of the trees maintain the connection between the two spaces.



Sparse tree planting on the south side inadequately buffers the view between the common and the urban edge. The Listed Buildings of Brunswick Walk and North Terrace provide a high quality boundary. An important relationship exists between the common and the residential properties that overlook it. There are also valuable views of the common from the ends of the adjacent streets.



Trees growing in the Cambridge Regional College grounds are very important components of the view towards the east end of the common. The mass of the Elizabeth Way Bridge completely contains this eastern end, although there are views of the Old Pumping Station Chimney, now the Museum of Technology.

2.2 Design structure and townscape role

- 2.2.1 Midsummer Common is a large informal grass area criss-crossed with unobtrusive paths and surrounded by sparse perimeter tree planting. These trees soften but rarely exclude the urban surroundings of the common. A major stretch of the northern bank of the river is devoted to boathouses, four of which are listed (CUBC Goldie Boathouse; Clare College Boathouse; Pembroke College Boathouse; Corpus Christi and Sidney Sussex Boathouse). Despite a range of architectural styles there is a unity between them that forms a very satisfactory visual enclosure to the north side of the common in summer as well as in winter when the trees are bare. Apart from the Cambridge Regional College site the remaining buildings are residential and all face the common and river to take advantage of the view. Brunswick Walk is the earliest housing and dates from around 1820, followed by North Terrace. The rest, including that on the north side of the river were built in the 20th century. Ground level is significantly higher on the south side of the common; as a result some of the buildings appear rather dominant, particularly where there are few trees. Fig 3 shows a summary of the design structure and townscape role of Midsummer Common and its surroundings.
- 2.2.2 A number of landmarks are visible beyond the common which help to position it in its urban context. The top of the Tower of St John's College Chapel and the spire of All Saint's are visible to the west, while the tall chimney of the Museum of Technology forms a focal point to the east.
- 2.2.3 The stretch of river which lies against Midsummer Common is isolated from views of the adjacent lengths by the Victoria Bridge and the Elizabeth Way Bridge. The pedestrian bridges that have taken the places of earlier ferry crossings are simple metal structures with level footways and transparent arching superstructures. Trees grow on at least one side, helping to integrate them sympathetically into their settings. The Elizabeth Way Bridge has cut off the eastern end of the common from its former setting of the small scale residential streets that developed on the old Barnwell Priory land. This has destroyed the important relationship that still exists at the western end with Brunswick Walk and North Terrace and the neighbouring housing.
- 2.2.4 Views of the eastern end of the common benefit from the Cambridge Regional College buildings being mainly set back from the edge, leaving space for tree planting amongst them. The neighbouring allotments mean that there are no other buildings immediately on the boundary. This is particularly important since the surrounding land at this point is considerably higher than the common itself.
- 2.2.5 Midsummer Common and Jesus Green still have an important interrelationship despite the divergence in character that has developed since the construction of Victoria Avenue. The symmetry of the horse chestnut avenue and the views beneath the tree canopies from the road help to maintain the connection between the two, at the same time buffering the changes which have taken place between them.



- 2.2.6 The large size of Midsummer Common and the screening effect of the perimeter planting help to reduce the impact of the traffic along Maid's Causeway and Victoria Avenue.
- 2.2.7 There are valuable views over the common from Elizabeth Way Bridge and from the ends of Parsonage Street and Auckland Road on its south side and through Brunswick Walk. Consequently the common has a wider influence on its surroundings than would necessarily be anticipated.

2.3 Recreational facilities

- 2.3.1 Although football, cricket and hockey were played on the common in the past there are no formal recreational facilities on Midsummer Common today.
- 2.3.2 Midsummer Common is an informal recreational area. There are seats along the riverside path where people can rest in the sun or under the shade of trees and enjoy the view of the river. There is often activity on the water, with rowing to watch or ducks and swans to feed. People come to fish, to jog and to walk their dogs. Large numbers of people use the paths across the common to walk or cycle to the city centre from the adjacent housing areas north of the city, enabling them to avoid the traffic congested streets.
- 2.3.3 Midsummer Common is highly regarded by anglers as one of the better stretches of river in the country. At one time groups travelled from London to fish here, preventing local anglers from having access to the riverbank. Fishing permits were introduced through local fishing clubs restricting fishing to Cambridge people. There is some conflict between moored boats and anglers as inevitably there is less bank available for fishing.
- 2.3.4 There are five fairs held each year on Midsummer Common: May Day, Strawberry Fair, the September Fair and Guy Fawkes Fair and fireworks display in November. In addition a circus visits each year in October and the London to Cambridge bike race terminates on the common.
- 2.3.5 The Fort St George Public House and Midsummer House Restaurant bring people onto the common during the day and in the evening. The pub garden is a welcome place of refreshment on hot days. These are both in private ownership.

2.4 Structures and artefacts

- 2.4.1 There are two pedestrian bridges over the River Cam, one at Fort St George and the other at Cutter Ferry Path. They are simple black painted iron structures that are maintained by the County Council.
- 2.4.2 Replacement of the public toilet block on the south of the common near the Four Lamps Roundabout is currently under consideration.



- 2.4.3 The majority of the railings are the three rail 'Cambridge' design with cattle grids, self closing gates and pram irons to permit access to a wide range of users while still keeping the cattle safely enclosed. Along with the simple tarmac paths the railings constitute the major man made artefacts. There are a number of bins for dog waste which along with a gradual improvement in responsible dog ownership has reduced the nuisance of dogs fouling the open space.
- 2.4.4 The Grade II Listed Fort St George public house dates from the 16th century with alterations and additions in the 19th century and later. (TL 4559 15/104). It used to be on an island but the river to the south of it was diverted and the land made up so that the public house is now directly adjacent to the common.
- 2.4.5 There is a walled enclosure adjacent to Midsummer House known as the pound, where animals can be held temporarily if they need to be separated from the others for some reason. There is another larger enclosure at the eastern end of the common where the cattle can be confined for short periods when public events are held on the main part of the common.
- 2.4.6 There is only limited lighting on Midsummer Common. There are lamps along the riverside footpath; along Brunswick Walk and North Terrace; a single column on the path between Victoria Avenue and the Fort St George footbridge; and at the intersection of two of the main paths. It has been decided in the past that the lighting should not be extended, as people may be encouraged to cross the common in the hours of darkness having gained a false sense of security. In addition it is felt that further lighting would be intrusive and urbanise this semi-natural space.

2.5 Infrastructure

- 2.5.1 The paths are mainly simple unornamented tarmac paths in a range of conditions as they have to withstand the fair vehicles and some of the edges have become broken down. The resultant low spots in the adjacent grass are periodically filled with tarmac burn-off. This alleviates the problem of puddles but gives a run down air to this part of the common. The paths follow the old routes to some of the ferries that once took people over to Chesterton. Definitive footpaths are shown in appendix 1. These are Rights of Way maintained by the County Council.
- 2.5.2 There are a number of major underground services running beneath the common. Other services lie under or adjacent to the paths. The outfall from Jesus Ditch discharges into the river just east of Midsummer House. Some of these services may limit the choice of future tree planting positions.

2.6 Trees

- 2.6.1 An illustration of Midsummer Common drawn in 1838 shows an open area of grassland without any trees although there is substantial planting in adjacent areas which have subsequently been built upon (fig 4). In 2000 the central area is still open but there has been some London plane, willow and poplar planting along the riverbank, the horse chestnut avenue that frames Victoria Avenue and a mixed perimeter planting on the south side of the common. The riverside planting is largely appropriate in its species choice. The sparse planting on the south side however is an unsatisfactory mix that lacks a sense of cohesion and appears at times inappropriately ornamental. Views from Midsummer Common of the combined tree planting on Jesus Green, in Jesus College and on Victoria Avenue give the appearance of a substantial belt of trees in contrast. The mature trees on the common are unprotected, but all new and semi-mature trees are protected from cattle by timber constructed tree guards.



Fig 4 An 1838 view towards the east over Jesus Green and Midsummer Common, with Jesus Lock in the foreground and the Fort St George immediately behind.

By courtesy of the Cambridgeshire Collection. J Jes J38A 1838 3210.

2.6.2 Condition of the trees (Appendix 2)

- 2.6.2.1 With a few notable exceptions the condition of the trees on the common is generally poor. However, the two fine wych elms (*Ulmus glabra*) on the Maid's Causeway side are in excellent condition as are most of the weeping limes fronting Brunswick walk. As a group the London planes facing the Four Lamps roundabout are a pleasant amenity feature but their limb structure is weak.
- 2.6.2.2 Several of the horse chestnuts facing the east side of Victoria Avenue are in good condition but over half have serious defects and a few will need to either be heavily pruned or felled within a few years.
- 2.6.2.3 The river frontage trees are in a really poor state. They are either young and badly damaged or over mature and in need of heavy pruning to maintain safety. There are two or three reasonable quality mature London planes near the Fort St George but all have large wind damage wounds.

- 2.6.2.4 A really comprehensive planting and maintenance programme to ensure the good establishment is needed urgently since this boundary planting is clearly far more vulnerable than it appears.

2.7 Soil

- 2.7.1 The river flood plain extends over the central area of the common (appendix 3). The northern part of the common is alluvial and the southern part first terrace river gravel¹¹.

2.8 Ecological importance

- 2.8.1 Midsummer Common does not qualify for City Wildlife Status in its own right but forms part of the River Cam County Wildlife Site. The majority of the common is species-poor grassland with a variety of native and exotic broadleaved trees around the perimeter. A full list of the species recorded during the survey is available in the original document. The common has almost certainly been treated in the past with herbicides and fertilizers and since this practice has ceased the grassland appears to be gradually regaining some diversity.
- 2.8.2 The willows along the tow path are a continuation of the white willow habitat which runs along the Hayling Way between Waterbeach and Cambridge. This has provided a habitat that is classed as at least of County importance for invertebrates¹². The pollards provide wood in various states of decay in addition to live new wood. The riverside pollards of the Hayling Way have existed for probably hundreds of years and so even though individual trees may not necessarily be particularly ancient the habitat itself can be regarded as so. The close proximity of the trees means the habitat is more or less continuous allowing wildlife that is not particularly mobile to colonise adjacent suitable wood.

2.9 Archaeology

- 2.9.1 Midsummer Common Lies to the northeast of the historic core of the city. Known archaeological sites within the area include portions of a number of human skeletons found during works for the 1952 Cambridge Trades Fair and are thought to be plague victims (SMR 10174). Documentary sources confirm that plague victims were buried in the area in the early 17th century (SMR 10175). In addition finds of prehistoric, Roman and Medieval date are also known in the area (SMR 05020, 04759)¹³.

¹¹ Royal Geological Society drawn by Cambridge City Council, 1:10000, A 5081, November 1973.

¹² P Kirby, *River Cam Towpath Willows, Hayling Way Invertebrate Survey 1990-1995*. Report to the Cambridge Greenbelt Project, February 1996.

¹³ Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Office, 13 July 1999.

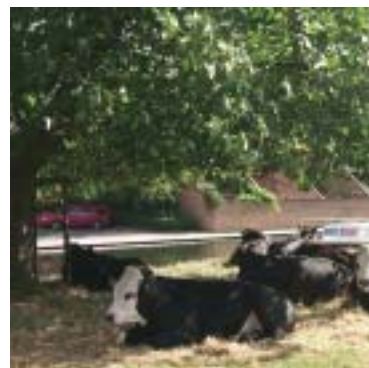
2.10 Current management practice

2.10.1 Grass and paths

The common is managed by a combination of cattle grazing and between two and four cuts per year to prepare the ground for events and to control the barley grass (*Hordeum secalinum*). The first cut is made in late May in order to prepare the common for the Strawberry Fair, the grass still being short enough for the earlier May Day Fair. The cuts and the damage caused by the events themselves leads to poor grazing since the main flush of the growth takes place early in the season. There is a risk that small pieces of rubbish may remain concealed in the grass and injure the cattle.

Public parking on the common is no longer permitted for the fairs other than Midsummer Fair because of the damage caused. Only parking associated with the collection of cycles is allowed for the London to Cambridge bike race and Council staff control this.

The fairs are sited as far from the neighbouring houses as possible when ground conditions allow. However the area adjacent to Brunswick Walk is the driest and in wet years there is no option but to use it. Inevitably this causes nuisance from generators and music. The Fire Authority is concerned that the showmens' caravans should be sited at a safe distance from each other resulting in damage to the common in wet years, as low areas cannot be avoided because of the extensive area required.



2.10.2 Management of the trees

It is apparent that the severe gale in 1987 caused significant damage to some of the horse chestnuts, planes and willows. In order to correct this damage it was necessary to almost pollard some of the trees and by 2000 this regrowth now needs careful pruning management. In recent years there has been no maintenance pruning except on the London planes by the river. Any other work has been in response to branch loss or vandalism.

2.11 Legal ownership and status

- 2.11.1 Midsummer Common is registered common land, managed by the City Council.

2.12 Statutory designations

2.12.1 Conservation Area status

Midsummer Common is in Conservation Area No 1 (Central). Any development works would require planning permission and would have to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. The trees have protection afforded to them by being located within a Conservation Area.

2.12.2 Local Plan Policies

Midsummer Common is Structurally Important Open Space. A report to Environment Committee November 2000 confirmed that Midsummer Common is important for environmental and recreational reasons. It was designated as a City Wildlife Site (F6.4) in November 2000. The River Cam is a City Wildlife Site and a Wildlife Corridor.

Midsummer Common is subject to the following Local Plan Policies:

- NE 5 Any development which adversely affects the open character of structurally important open spaces shown on the (Local Plan) Proposals Map or detracts from their relationship to the adjoining built up area will not be permitted.
- NE 6 Development will not be permitted which would result in the loss or partial loss of open spaces of environmental and/or recreational importance. These areas are identified on the (Local Plan) Proposals Map.
- NE 10 Development on the flood plain of the River Cam and the Bin Brook will only be permitted where the applicant is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the City Council that the development will not:
 - a) increase the risk of pollution;
 - b) increase the risk of flooding or be subject to flooding itself; and
 - c) have a harmful effect on the nature conservation interest of the River Cam, the Bin Brook or their flood plains.
- NE 12 The City Council will seek to conserve the nature conservation interest of the City Wildlife Sites identified on the Proposals Map, or subsequently identified in the City, by controlling the type and extent of any development where it is allowed on such sites. In considering development proposals affecting City Wildlife Sites the Council will take into account:
 - a) measures to protect the nature conservation interests;
 - b) proposals to provide replacement habitats; and
 - c) the wildlife significance of the site, in terms of both the local context and its intrinsic importance.
- NE 14 The City Council will seek to protect City Wildlife Sites by not normally giving planning permission for land reclamation, land drainage and other large scale developments either on, or likely to materially affect such sites. Where these are proposed the City Council will, where appropriate, require a full environmental assessment and will liaise with nature conservation bodies on the terms of reference of the assessment. In the event of the proposal being granted planning permission, existing features of nature conservation value will be retained during works, site restoration and development.
- NE 15 The City Council will in partnership with others, take steps to protect and enhance the nature conservation value of green spaces, wetlands, water courses and other features, including hedges and corridors. The impact of development proposals on the wildlife corridors illustrated on the Proposals Map will be an important factor to be taken into account in considering planning applications.

2.12.3 Definitive Footpaths

The definitive footpaths are as follows: No 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 97, 103 and 104. These are Council maintained footpaths that are public rights of way.

3. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This section aims to make an assessment of the value of the main components and characteristics of Midsummer Common to ensure that managers now and in the future are aware of the features they should try to conserve in their management proposals. A table summarising the significance, its vulnerability and the conservation guidance to protect it is set out in Appendix 5.

3.1 Summary of the heritage significance of Midsummer Common

- 3.1.1 Grazing was an established use for some considerable time before the 12th century. Over the years the common has provided the location for large events and celebrations, including the Fair from which it derives its name. It is today a place of passive recreation and is enjoyed daily by large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists. The grazed grassland and tree lined setting of the river creates a sense of the countryside extending into the city. The quality of the buildings surrounding the common and their relationship with it have an important influence on its character. Similarly views of the common from Victoria Avenue and the Elizabeth Way Bridge, as well as framed views at the end of adjoining streets, allow the qualities of the common to affect the area around it in a very positive way. The common is the setting for the listed boathouses, Brunswick Walk, North Terrace and the Fort St George Public House.



3.2 Archaeological potential or importance

- 3.2.1 In addition to the buried remains of human skeletons believed to be plague victims from the early 17th century found on Midsummer Common, there have been prehistoric, Roman and medieval finds in the area. Midsummer Common's close proximity to the settlements which grew up where a narrow crossing of the river was possible and important routes converged means that there may be archaeological interest dating from Roman or even earlier times.

3.3 Architectural history or design significance

- 3.3.1 Midsummer Common is not a designed space in an architectural sense, but has evolved in a practical way through its use and location. The path layout originally followed the routes to ferry points for crossing the river. Because of the street pattern that developed on the north side of the river and the bridges that replaced the ferries these desire lines are almost all valid today. A significant proportion of the common currently falls within the flood plain, suggesting that a far more extensive area might have been subject to flooding before the river was canalised. This periodic inundation has protected it from enclosure and development in the past. Engravings from the 19th century show it to have been an empty treeless area of grazing, although surrounded by a well-treed setting.

3.4 History of the open space

- 3.4.1 The tradition of an annual Midsummer Fair held on Midsummer Common has existed since 1211. The common has also been the location for other regular open-air events such as the November fireworks display and Strawberry Fair, in addition to Queen Victoria's Royal Jubilee and Coronation celebrations. Its continuous use as a grazing common until the 1980s allowed this flexibility of use.

3.5 Community, commemorative or social value

- 3.5.1 The availability of uninterrupted open space for large open air public events, on informal ground in a city centre location makes Midsummer Common a precious amenity. However the events that are linked to the common by historical agreements are limited. The City Council only allows a few to take place because although the cows can be corralled at the eastern end, if there is insufficient grazing in the limited space available they have to be taken off the common each time.

3.6 Ecological value

- 3.6.1 Midsummer Common's status as part of the River Cam City Wildlife Site rather than as a City Wildlife Site in its own right indicates scope for improvement in its wildlife value. Since grazing was reintroduced on Midsummer Common in 1994 the ecological value of the grassland has increased, but the sward still contains relatively few species.
- 3.6.2 The important willow habitat which runs along the river bank from Waterbeach can continue within the city with appropriate tree planting and management. Cuttings taken from the Hayling Way trees would provide local stock with genetic continuity. The opportunity could be taken to plant the native black poplar rather than the hybrid form.
- 3.6.3 As with the other public open spaces within the city, there is the opportunity with careful management to have long term trees which achieve a great age and therefore carry the biodiversity associated with veteran trees.
- 3.6.4 Suitable nest boxes could be fixed in the trees to provide roosting and resting opportunities for birds and bats. Some native scrub planting at the eastern end could give additional wildlife benefit as well as shelter the cattle.

3.7 Educational or public potential

- 3.7.1 There is a well documented history of Midsummer Common which is available for school projects and others. Interpretation material could be prepared to explain why the common is managed in the way it is and what the benefits are for wildlife and others.

3.8 Public or recreational value

- 3.8.1 The common has a valuable informal recreational role for residents of the local housing in addition to tourists and visitors who walk, cycle, fish or moor their boats along the riverside path. Midsummer Common is a link in the chain of open spaces leading to the city centre and consequently is very busy at certain times of day as pedestrians and cyclists make their way across it between home and the central area. Almost all the early paths have retained their significance since the bridges have replaced the ferries in the same locations.
- 3.8.2 Midsummer Common and Stourbridge Common play an important part in the flood plain, providing areas which can hold water without damage on a temporary basis to reduce the flooding risk elsewhere. Environment Agency flood protection plans for the adjacent Riverside are currently under consultation. Amongst the options is a movable folding gate under Elizabeth Way Bridge and the raising of the river bank at Riverside.

3.9 Contribution to townscape character

- 3.9.1 Midsummer Common is one of a series of open spaces that form the setting of the River Cam as it passes through the city. The common also links with Christ's Pieces and New Square, opening a further route between the river and the housing to the north of it and the city centre, through traffic free green spaces.
- 3.9.2 The common forms the setting to the boathouses along the north side of the river. Only some are listed buildings, but together they form a cohesive group of considerable merit. The common also provides the setting for the listed parts of the Fort St George Public House, the listed terraces of Brunswick Walk and North Terrace. There is a highly successful relationship between these terraced houses and the common. Views from the ends of Parsonage Street and Auckland Road over the common contrast with the tight urban form within these adjacent streets and enhance the quality of their environment.
- 3.9.3 Half of the horse chestnut avenue which is planted along Victoria Avenue grows on the western boundary of Midsummer Common. This is a very important link between Jesus Green and Midsummer Common, as well as acting as a buffer between the two characters which have developed since their separation by the construction of the road.



- 3.9.4 Views of Midsummer Common and Jesus Green from Victoria Avenue, beneath the tree canopies are important to road users and pedestrians, giving them the sense of passing through a single space.
- 3.9.5 The distant views of the spire of All Saints Church and the tower of St John's College chapel to the east; the Old Pumping Station chimney to the west; and of Christ's Church in Maids Causeway to the south are all important views from the common.
- 3.9.6 The changing activity on the common is observed by a large number of people daily. The presence of the cattle, the preparations for the events and the actual fairs and displays themselves are in their way an important part of the townscape in terms of spectacle.

3.10 Natural or aesthetic beauty

- 3.10.1 The common is managed as a semi-natural space forming part of the setting of the River Cam. It has been levelled in the past and the banks all have engineered rather than natural edges. There are some fine mature trees along the river and in places around the rest of the perimeter but some others are in a poor condition. Nevertheless there is considerable scope for enhancing the aesthetic quality of the common and its setting, particularly in relation to the tree planting which is so important to its character.



4. DEFINING ISSUES

This section identifies the issues that have affected the significance of Midsummer Common, affect it now or may do so in the future. These are the issues that may make the significant features vulnerable.

4.1 Ownership and present management

- 4.1.1 Midsummer Common is secure in its designation as Common Land. The past grounds maintenance regime of regular mowing, fertilising and possible herbicide treatment has reduced the species diversity and consequently the visual interest of the grass sward. There are substantial opportunities to continue the improvement that has taken place since the cattle returned to the common. The grass has to be cut slightly earlier than it would normally be for a spring meadow regime in order to prepare an acceptable surface for the Strawberry Fair held in early June. The Common's important recreational role in the life of the city could be in direct conflict with its status as part of the River Cam City Wildlife Site.
- 4.1.2 If the common is to be grazed in the long term a satisfactory way has to be found for retrieving cows which fall in the river. The path is close to the steep bank and so significant construction is needed to form a ramp or shallow steps to reach to the river bed. At the present time the Council has to rely on the fire brigade but with an effective ramp the cattle could be led out by Council staff or might learn to find their own way. A satisfactory drinking place might stop them jostling each other into the water in the first place.
- 4.1.3 Conflict between local anglers and parties from outside has been resolved by the introduction of the fishing permit for Cambridge residents. However long stay boats along stretches of the riverbank prevent anglers having access. Some of these boats generate rubbish around them which is investigated and dispersed by the cattle. Their presence is resented by some local residents, while at the same time others feel they bring life and colour to the river. Balancing these different interests is a role for the local authority. The Cam Conservancy can only restrict mooring where it obstructs navigation. Any further restrictions would have to be imposed by the City Council. A working group of interested parties has recently been set up and will meet to try to resolve these issues.

4.2 Use

- 4.2.1 The City Council has an historical obligation to allow the Midsummer Fair to be held each year in the last week of June. The annual fireworks display in November and the Strawberry Fair at the beginning of June are also regular fixtures. The extensive funfair that accompanies the fireworks can cause considerable damage to the ground if weather conditions are wet. There is also some wear and tear on the tarmac path surface from vehicle overrun. Parking within the rooting zone of the trees leads to soil compaction damage.



- 4.2.2 An increase in the number of events on the common would risk further damage to the paths and ground and make the cattle grazing unviable because of the number of times they would have to be removed.

4.3 Physical condition

- 4.3.1 The common is prone to become waterlogged at times of heavy rain, particularly in the area compacted by the fair vehicles. Periodically river levels rise sufficiently high to flood large areas of the common. Since there are very few other artefacts in this area, without repair the appearance of the paths damaged by heavy trucks creates a slightly derelict appearance.

- 4.3.2 The common has been levelled in the past and the lack of topographical variation, although practical for events, gives a certain monotony to the view and results in a lack of habitat variety when compared with somewhere like Sheep's Green. Because of its simplicity the subsequent choice of trees, path materials and artefacts such as railings, lights, seats and bins have a strong influence on its present character.



4.3.3 Trees

- 4.3.3.1 A change in the choice of tree species along the river would alter the character of the waterside planting. It would also weaken the white willow habitat that exists along the river from beyond the city boundary. Small-scale trees and ornamental varieties would also be inappropriate for this semi-natural space. Adequate resources for frequent inspection and remedial work are needed to extend the useful life of the most significant trees. Adequate protection for the trees must be provided during events to avoid ground compaction within the rooting zone. The exposed nature of the common makes trees vulnerable to limb damage particularly from the north east gales. The commons should not be seen as an easy option to avoid street disruption when underground services need to be laid across the city as root damage may occur or future planting positions sterilised.

4.3.4 Structures and artefacts

- 4.3.4.1 The toilets are due for demolition and replacement in 2001. This is an opportunity to design a building worthy of this important location, but care must be taken to protect the adjacent trees both in the design of the building's footprint and during its construction.
- 4.3.4.2 The state of repair, decoration and cleanliness of the pedestrian bridges has an impact on their surroundings.
- 4.3.4.3 Extending the lighting has been rejected in the past in order not to generate a false sense of security and encourage people to cross in the hours of darkness.

4.3.5 Maintenance

- 4.3.5.1 Since grass reestablishment is best left until the early autumn there may be a period after the Midsummer Fair when the common looks in need of repair. The cost of repairing the paths damaged by vehicle traffic leads to the use of cheaply available materials such as tarmac burn off to deal with this recurring problem.

4.4 Area and boundaries

- 4.4.1 The construction of the Elizabeth Way Bridge has destroyed the relationship between the eastern end of the common and its residential surroundings, demolishing the terrace in Walnut Tree Avenue which overlooked it before 1971 and cutting it off from the adjacent small scale streets.
- 4.4.2 Since Midsummer Common is essentially a large open space with some peripheral tree planting, the quality of the enclosing elements beyond the boundaries of the common is fundamental to its character. A loss of tree planting on the high ground to the south would be particularly serious. Because of the rising landform, replacement with dense building would destroy the semi-rural nature of the long view towards the east. Additional tree planting within the common would not screen buildings several stories high beyond it.
- 4.4.3 Additional lighting along the paths crossing the open areas could suburbanise the common in an undesirable way.



4.5 Resources

- 4.5.1 Adequate resources are needed to prepare a management plan for these commons. This will detail how the policies of the Conservation Plan can be implemented through the regular maintenance of the open spaces and individual projects.
- 4.5.2 When it is neither possible nor desirable for the finance derived from Section 106 Agreements to be spent on providing open space on the particular development site concerned, that funding may be used on other open space which benefits residents throughout the city. It is possible to combine smaller sums to finance large projects and Midsummer Common would be eligible for such funding.
- 4.5.3 Successful sourcing of additional funding through applications to National Lottery distribution bodies, sponsorship, grants, landfill tax rebates, and voluntary partnership trust contributions could increase the resources available to manage Midsummer Common and other city open spaces.

5. CONSERVATION POLICIES

This section provides guidance for the conservation of those features and qualities which are considered significant. These are summarised in Appendix 5.

5.1 Conserve and enhance the relationship between Midsummer Common and its surroundings

- 5.1.1 Maintain the visual links between Midsummer Common and Jesus Green by retaining views beneath the mature tree canopies along Victoria Avenue, ensuring that the common can also be enjoyed from the road and the vehicles using it. Supplement the horse chestnut avenue in a similar but not necessarily identical way to the recent planting on Jesus Green. This will improve the links with the Jesus College and Jesus Green tree planting and strengthen the sparse planting on Midsummer Common. As the existing horse chestnut trees in the avenue reach the end of their useful life they should be replaced with further horse chestnut trees to maintain the avenue effect from the road.
- 5.1.2 Avoid strictly perimeter tree planting where existing houses overlook the common. A buffering effect against the intrusion of the urban fabric can be achieved more effectively by setting trees away from the edge in an informal fashion without intruding into the open central area. This allows views over the common to still be retained. Oblique views of these dwellings will maintain the interrelationship between the common and the housing that surrounds it.
- 5.1.3 Any new development proposed within the area surrounding the common should be assessed for its visual impact on the common as a whole. Where Midsummer Common narrows towards its eastern end, new buildings should be set sufficiently far back to leave space for tree planting to reduce the impact of the elevated urban surroundings. This is particularly important as this tapering section is the focal point of the distant views from Victoria Avenue. Because its character is essentially open rough grassland it is vital the development around it is of high quality and at least partly screened by forest scale trees to avoid a slightly derelict air developing. The size and openness of the common mean that tall buildings even at some distance will still appear prominent. The effect of new development on the skyline must therefore be considered carefully.
- 5.1.4 The choice of willows and poplar trees along the river should be maintained in order to bring into the city the informal riverside character which exists downstream. This will reinforce the important white willow habitat that exists along the River Cam.



5.2 Improve Midsummer Common as a high quality space

- 5.2.1 Produce a management plan to set out the detail of how the significance identified in chapter 3 should be conserved. Include ways of avoiding deterioration of the fabric and make recommendations for any refurbishments and new works, devising programmes for their maintenance. As part of the management plan draw up an arboricultural strategy to ensure appropriate new tree planting takes place and give guidance on the management of the existing and future tree stock. Ensure that good growing conditions are achieved so that the trees can produce fine long-lived specimens.
- 5.2.2 Recognise the importance of this space as a location for large outdoor gatherings and investigate means of reducing vehicle damage to the grass and the resultant compaction effects on the trees. This may involve modern invisible grass strengthening techniques and limiting vehicle access to some areas.
- 5.2.3 Ensure that damage to the paths and grass following events is repaired adequately and promptly to show that this is a place of high status despite its informal character.
- 5.2.4 Ensure access and enjoyment of the spaces is possible for disabled people.
- 5.2.5 As a reflection of the importance of this historic space, provide adequate resources for appropriate, high quality materials and designs for artefacts such as seats, paths, and lights and their future maintenance.
- 5.2.6 Do not extend the lighting beyond that which already exists, as it would further urbanise the common and give people crossing at night a false sense of security. The fittings should be a high quality design, either modern or traditional.
- 5.2.7 Ensure that the toilets are kept in good condition and feel safe places to visit. Strive for a high quality design when the current toilet block is replaced. Recognise the importance of these toilets to passing traffic as well as to those using the common.
- 5.2.8 Ensure dog fouling is actively discouraged by the dog warden service.
- 5.2.9 Ensure the litter collection services respond to periods of high visitor usage.
- 5.2.10 Coordinate the objectives and actions of the various authorities which have responsibilities for maintaining different parts of the fabric of the common (eg lighting and definitive footpaths).
- 5.2.11 Retain and develop qualified and skilled staff so that maintenance, enhancement and change are implemented in an appropriate and coordinated way.
- 5.2.12 Because of likely tree losses over the next twenty years produce an arboricultural strategy to manage the existing tree stock and to ensure appropriate tree planting takes place in the future.
- 5.2.13 Utilise finance available from Section 106 Agreements and secure additional funding through applications to the National Lottery distribution bodies, sponsorship, grants, landfill tax rebates and voluntary partnership contributions.

5.3 Maintain the informal character of Midsummer Common

- 5.3.1 Continue to manage the grassland primarily with cattle, only using mechanised means to prepare the necessary areas of the common for events.
- 5.3.2 Resolve the conflicts between Midsummer Common's recreational role and its City Wildlife Status, applying appropriate management strategies to different areas to achieve a skilful balance in the use of the common.
- 5.3.3 Investigate the value of the existing grassland to invertebrate fauna to see whether the habitat could be improved in a way compatible with its other uses.
- 5.3.4 To emphasise the rural character ensure that all new tree planting in the main body of the common, apart from the horse chestnuts, uses native species. In the case of willows, these should preferably be of local provenance. New planting on Butt Green could include nonnative trees.
- 5.3.5 Manage and protect the trees so that some have the opportunity to reach a great age for their species and to develop the biodiversity associated with veteran trees. At the same time carry out some new planting to develop a diverse age range within the tree stock and provide additional shade for the cattle to share the pressure on the existing trees.
- 5.3.6 Keep all materials and detailing of paths simple and unobtrusive but with a high quality of finish. Continue to enclose the common with the cast iron, 'Cambridge' style three rail fence.



6. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- 6.1 The Conservation Plan will be a material consideration in determining planning applications that have an impact on these open spaces.
- 6.2 In determining a planning application consideration will be given to the impact of the development on the open space. If a development is likely to have a negative impact then it may be appropriate to see if mitigation measures are possible or if necessary to secure these through planning conditions or as planning obligations. (Section 106 Agreements.)
- 6.3 The Conservation Plan should be reviewed every five to seven years to assess whether the management objectives have changed. New conflicts may develop between significant features of the site; changes in conservation philosophy may take place; or further information may become available making this reappraisal necessary. The review should reassess the significance of the site to establish whether it is still valid. In addition it should examine the issues that have affected the significance of the sites over that period, are affecting it currently and will affect it in the future. Taking this into account the review should then confirm whether the conservation guidance is still appropriate.
- 6.4 A project team representing the main internal stakeholders responsible for the management of Midsummer Common should carry out this review. They are currently the Parks and Recreation Section of the Community Services Department and the Policy and Projects Section of the Environment and Planning Department.

7. SUMMARY

7.1 Purpose of the Conservation Plan

- 7.1.1 After a general description of Midsummer Common which aims to give a broad understanding of the past history and present context, the Conservation Plan attempts to set down all the significant features and qualities that it is considered desirable to pass on to future generations. There follows an examination of the issues that have threatened this significance in the past, do so at the present and may do in the future. Finally conservation guidance is provided so that as change inevitably takes place, this past value is accommodated in any new proposals. Applications for Heritage Lottery funding are recommended to follow this process.

7.2 The heritage merit of the site (Section 4)

- 7.2.1 Midsummer Common has been a grazing common since time immemorial. It has been the site of the nearly 800 year old Midsummer Fair and has been a valuable site for other events and celebrations over the years. It has an historic layout of routes across it developed from the links between Chesterton and Cambridge and the ferry crossing points along the river. The common is one of a chain of open spaces alongside the river and is visible from the well-used adjoining roads and bridges. The semi natural pastoral scene of grazing cows close to the urban centre makes an important contribution to forming the character of this part of the city. The common forms the setting of the listed boathouses and adjacent housing on Brunswick Walk, North Terrace and Fort St George Public House. There are some fine trees flanking Victoria Avenue, the river and the Maid's Causeway boundary.



7.3 How that merit is sensitive or vulnerable (Section 5)

- 7.3.1 The common could be transformed back into the municipal grassland of recent years if the cattle grazing regime ceased and mechanical maintenance returned. This would significantly alter its townscape role. An increase in the number of events held on the common would mean removing the cattle more frequently and this could make grazing unviable. More events could also damage the common especially in periods of wet weather. The open nature of the common led in 1987 to serious wind damage and a number of the riverside willows and horse chestnut trees along Victoria Avenue needed extensive pruning.
- 7.3.2 New development around the perimeter of the common could damage or enhance its character. The quality of such development and its effect on the potential to increase the tree cover at the eastern end of the setting of the common should be considered carefully. A planning brief should be prepared in advance of development in order to achieve a positive outcome.
- 7.3.3 Specific management strategies are needed for different areas to resolve the conflict between the important recreational role of Midsummer Common and its City Wildlife Status.

7.4 Conservation guidance (Section 6)

7.4.1 Conserve and enhance the relationship between Midsummer Common and its surroundings

Maintain the visibility below the tree canopies and extend the existing tree planting to compensate for losses expected amongst the horse chestnuts of Victoria Avenue and the trees in poor condition along the river. Plant further trees to supplement those around the perimeter but avoid creating a boundary planting which prevents the residential areas relating to the common. Instead use staggered trees to maintain views over the common from the housing while buffering the common from its urban surroundings. It is important to be aware that views of development on land surrounding the eastern end could have a harmful impact on the whole common.

7.4.2 Maintain Midsummer Common as a high quality space

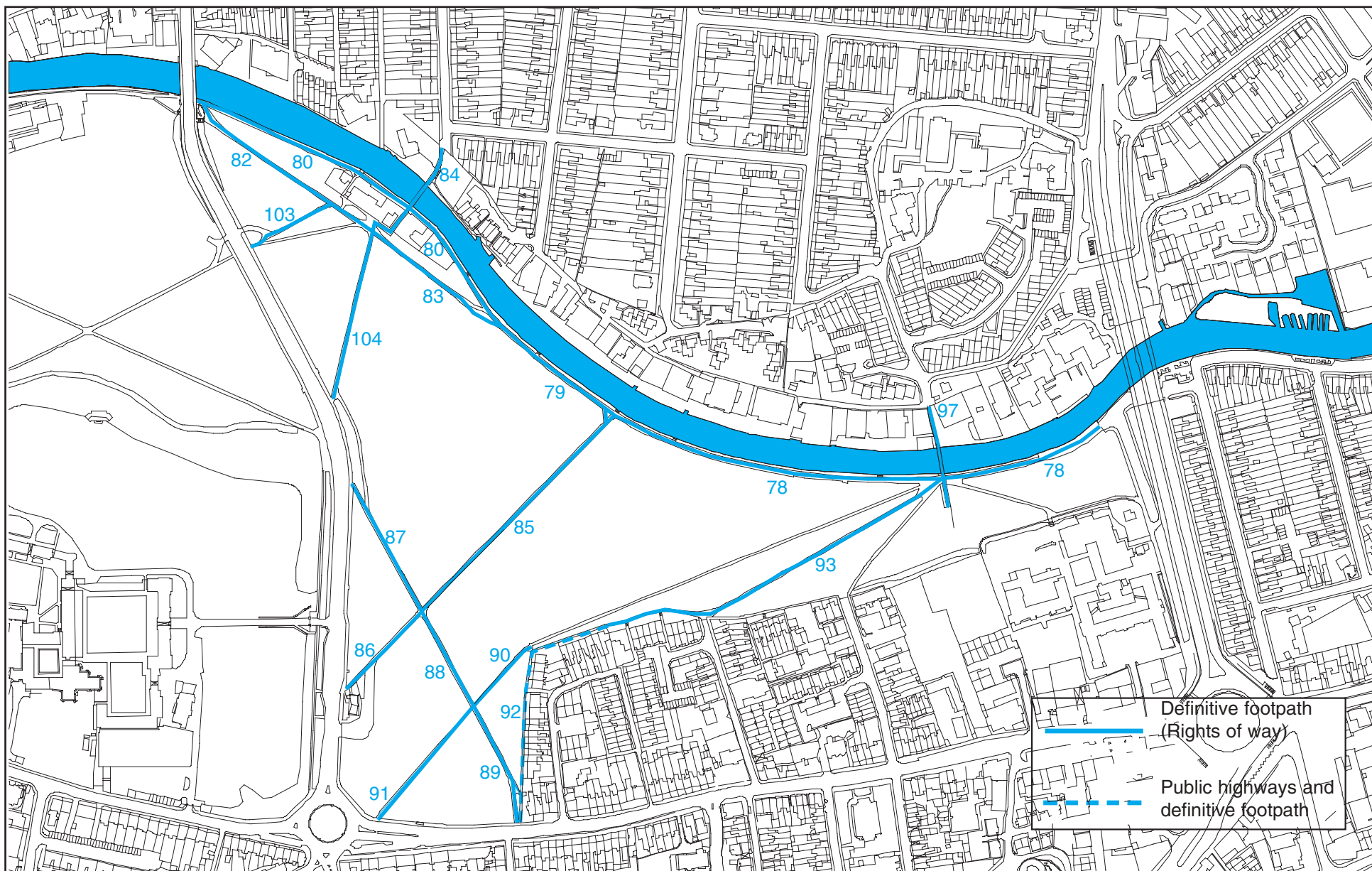
Devise a management system that sets out how the significance identified in chapter 3 will be conserved. As a location for large outdoor gatherings the common requires regular repairs to paths and grass. Lighting should not be extended beyond what already exists to avoid urbanising the common and giving a false sense of security to people crossing it at night. The fittings should be high quality and look appropriate as single columns where isolated in the open space. The toilet block should be kept in good condition and feel a safe place to use. Any future replacement should be a high quality design worthy of the location. Dog fouling should be actively discouraged by the dog warden service so that people can walk freely over the grass and litter collection should match periods of high visitor usage to avoid rubbish getting caught up in the long grass. The different authorities that have responsibilities for certain paths, lights, bridges and other parts of the fabric of the common should coordinate their objectives and actions so that these artefacts are treated appropriately. The anticipated loss of significant trees in the near future requires an arboricultural strategy for the management of the existing tree stock and to ensure suitable tree planting takes place in the future.

7.4.3 Maintain the informal character of the common

It will be necessary to continue to manage the grassland by grazing, using mechanical methods only to prepare the area for the Midsummer Fair. The value of the existing grassland for invertebrate fauna should be examined to see whether the habitat could be improved in a way that is compatible with its other uses. New tree planting in the main body of the common should avoid ornamental and exotic species to emphasise the rural character, and generally the trees should be of forest scale. The species choice should remain mainly willows and poplars along the river to continue the white willow habitat that extends from outside the city boundary. Some non-native trees would be acceptable on Butt Green. The detailing of paths, seats, enclosing railings etc should be simple and appropriately unobtrusive to be in harmony with the location.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1 Definitive Footpaths

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APPENDIX 2

The PSULE and the British Standard 5837:1991 tree assessment methods are used to determine the condition and status of the trees. The combination of the two can demonstrate the high landscape value of particular trees despite their poor structural condition. Action may then be taken to provide appropriate remedial work in addition to inspections at shorter intervals than would normally be made, in order to prolong the safe life of particularly valuable trees.

The two methods are described briefly here¹:

PSULE Assessment

PSULE is based on tree life expectancy, safety and usefulness.

A competent assessment can only be carried out by an arboriculturalist with extensive practical experience and a high level of technical knowledge. The objective of the PSULE assessment is to clarify the relative values of individual trees where there is a need to assess the future impact of different management options.

PSULE is the length of time that the arboriculturalist assesses an individual tree can be retained with an acceptable level of risk based on the information available at the time of inspection. It is a snapshot in time of the potential an individual tree has for survival in the eyes of the assessor. PSULE is not static. It is closely related to tree condition and the surrounding environment and alterations in these variables may result in changes to the PSULE assessment. Consequently the reliability of all PSULE assessments will decrease as time passes from the initial assessment because the potential for change in these variables increases.

PSULE Tree Assessment Key

Green: Predicted life expectancy of greater than 40 years

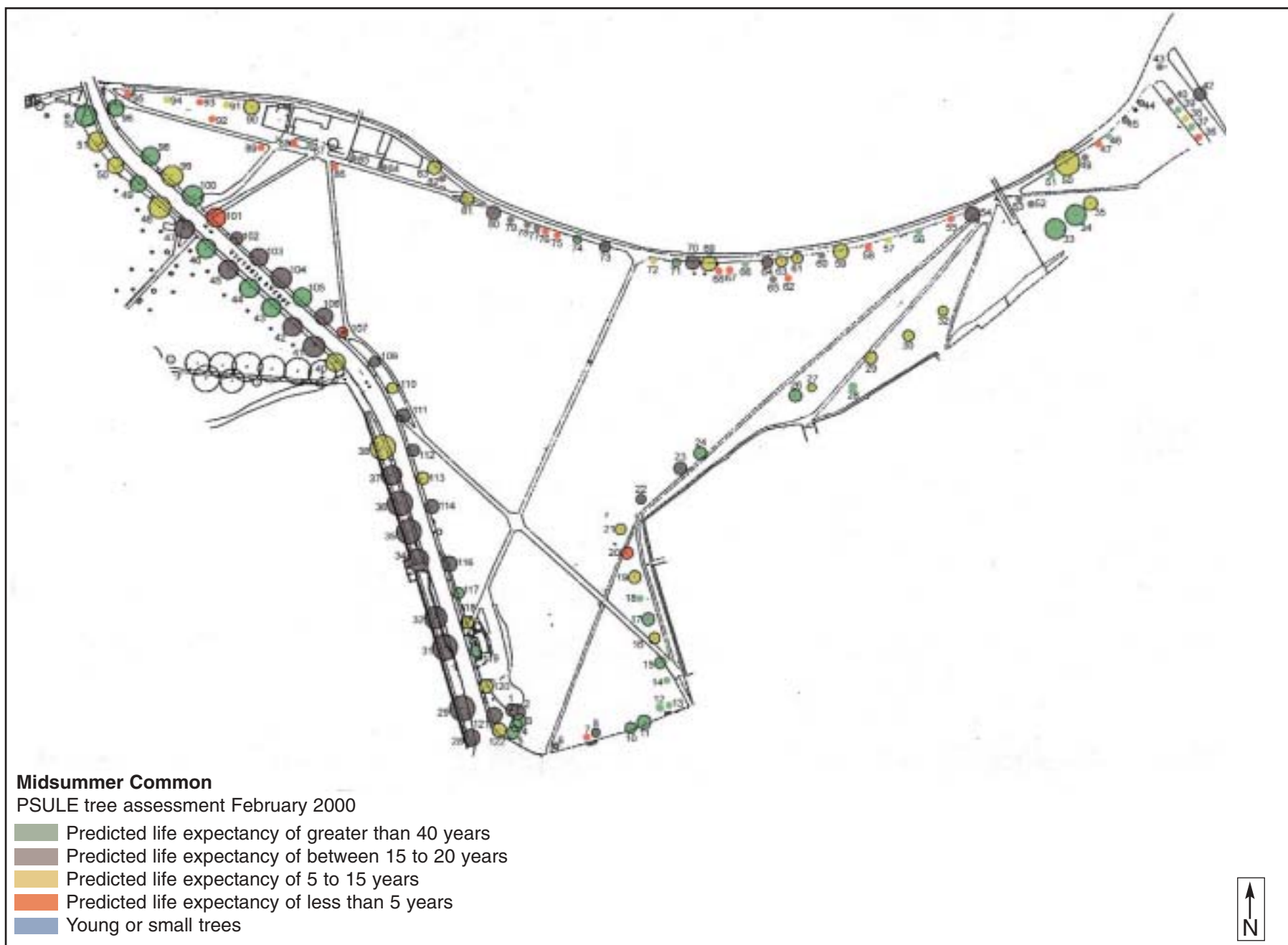
Brown: Predicted life expectancy of between 15 to 20 years

Yellow: Predicted life expectancy of 5 to 15 years

Red: Predicted life expectancy of less than 5 years

Blue: Young or small trees

¹ Jeremy Barrall, 'PSULE - The Natural Progression in Pre-development Tree Survey Methodology', Arboricultural Association, 7 February 1995.



The BS 5837:1991 Tree Survey Assessment Method

This assessment was developed primarily for use on development sites where a high degree of change is envisaged and it is necessary to establish which are the most valuable trees for retention in the new development. In making this assessment particular consideration is given to:

- a) The health, vigour and condition of each tree,
- b) Any structural defects in each tree and its life expectancy,
- c) The size and form of each tree and its suitability within the context of the proposed site development,
- d) The location of each tree relative to existing site features eg its value as a screen or as a skyline feature.

On the basis of this assessment, trees should be divided into one of the following categories:

- a) Trees whose retention is most desirable: high category (shaded *green* on plan)
 - 1. Vigorous healthy trees, of good form, potentially in harmony with proposed space and structures,
 - 2. Healthy young trees of good form and in harmony with proposed development,
 - 3. Trees for screening or softening the effect of existing structures in the near vicinity, or of particular visual importance to the locality,
 - 4. Trees of particular historical, commemorative or other value, or good specimens of rare or unusual species.
- b) Trees where retention is desirable: moderate category (*blue*)
 - 1. Trees that might be included in the high category but because of their numbers or slightly impaired condition are downgraded in favour of the best individuals,
 - 2. Immature trees with potential to develop into the high category.
- c) Trees that could be retained: low category (*brown*)
 - 1. Trees in adequate condition or which can be retained with the minimal tree surgery but are not worthy of inclusion in the high or moderate categories,
 - 2. Immature trees or trees of no particular merit.
- d) Trees for removal: fell category (*red*)
 - 1. Dead or structurally dangerous trees,
 - 2. Trees with insecure root hold,
 - 3. Trees with significant fungal decay at base or on main bole,
 - 4. Trees with a cavity or cavities of significance to safety,
 - 5. Trees that will become dangerous after removal of other trees for the reasons given in items 1 to 4.

BS 5837:1991 Tree Assessment Key

Green: Trees whose retention is most desirable (high category)

Blue: Trees whose retention is desirable (moderate category)

Brown: Trees that could be retained

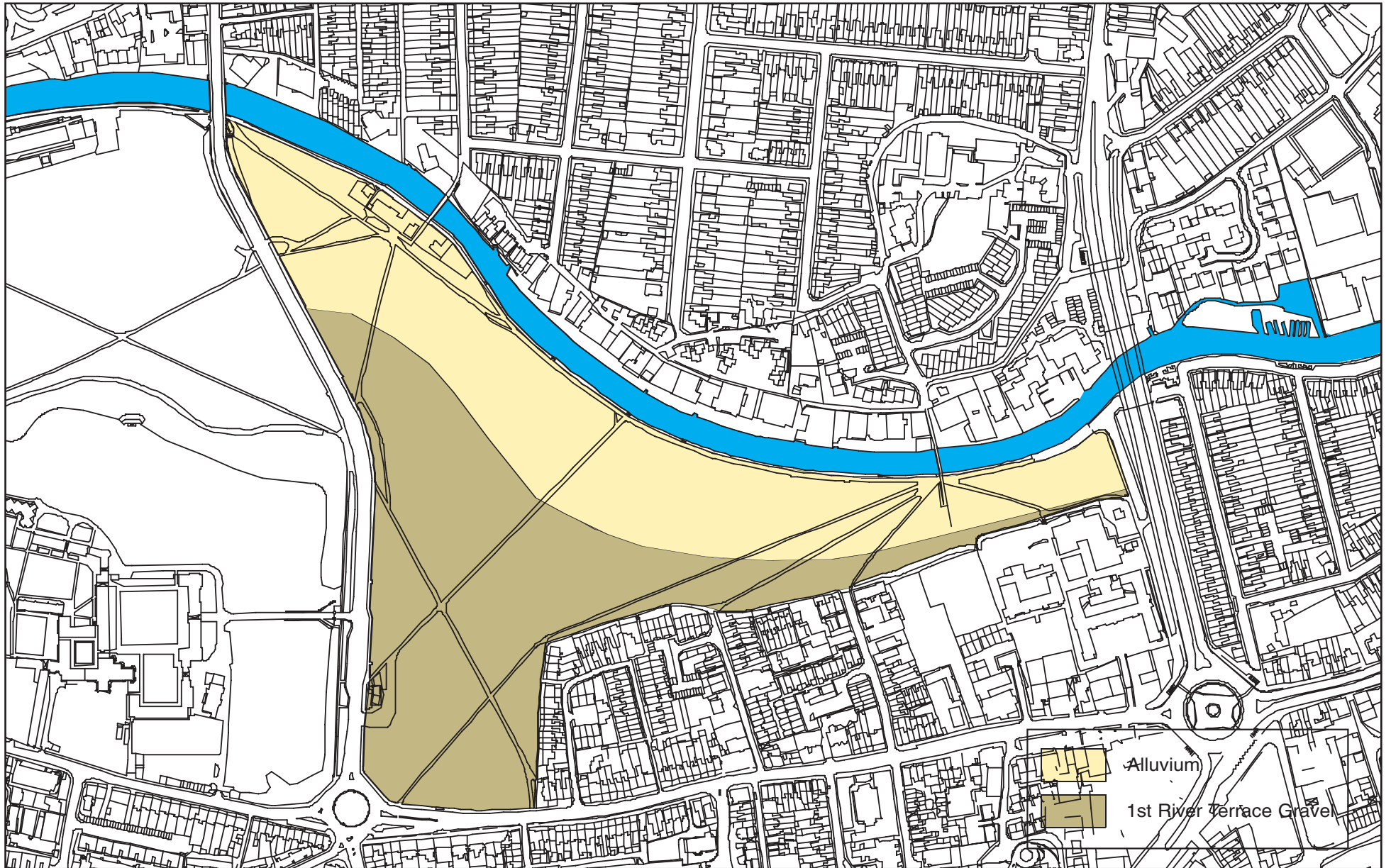
Red: Trees for removal (fell category)

Midsummer Common

BS 5837 tree assessment February 2000

-  Trees whose retention is most desirable (high category)
-  Trees whose retention is desirable (moderate category)
-  Trees that could be retained (low category)
-  Trees for removal (fell category)





APPENDIX 3 Midsummer Common Drift (Geological Boundaries)

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Significance	Vulnerability	Conservation Guidance
3.2 Archaeological Importance		
Buried remains, believed to be of 17th century plague victims have been found on MSC. There have also been prehistoric, Roman and medieval finds in the area.	Further archaeological finds from these periods might be overlooked if those making excavations are unaware of their possible presence.	The County Archaeologist should be informed if any major excavations are planned.
3.3 Architectural history or design significance		
MSC is not a designed space in an architectural sense but its frequent flooding and its use as grazing have determined its character. The path layout is a response to the street pattern that developed on the north side of the river and the ferries that connected Chesterton to Cambridge.	A return to management of the grass by machine would mean a return of the character of a municipal park rather than an historic grazing common.	The common should continue to be managed by cattle grazing.
3.4 History of the open space and its community, commemorative and social value		
The common has been the site of the Midsummer Fair since 1211, and subsequently other regular open-air events such as Strawberry Fair, the November fireworks display and Royal Jubilee and coronation celebrations.	The damage caused by these events, the need to remove the cattle for them and the nuisance caused to neighbouring residential areas may mean that their number has to be limited.	It may be possible to strengthen the grass areas that are regularly damaged by using modern, invisible grass reinforcement techniques.
The uninterrupted open space on informal ground available for large open-air public events in a city centre location, makes MSC a very precious resource.	Inappropriate tree planting could limit the open area available.	Tree planting design should respect the open nature of the common while providing an appropriate connection with the wider surroundings and providing shade for the animals.
3.6 Ecological value		
Since MSC returned to grazing in the 1994 its ecological value has increased. However earlier fertilizing and use of herbicides and reseeding has left the grass sward relatively species poor.	A return to mechanical grass maintenance would reverse this improvement.	Cattle grazing should remain the preferred method of grass management.

Significance	Vulnerability	Conservation Guidance
There is an opportunity to continue along the river at MSC the willow habitat from Waterbeach that is classed as being of at least County Importance. MSC provides the opportunity for trees to achieve a great age with appropriate management and therefore to carry the biodiversity associated with veteran trees. The grassland may provide suitable feeding grounds for birds of prey and suitable nestboxes might encourage them into the area.	A dilution with too many other unsuitable species would weaken this habitat for invertebrates that are unable to travel more than short distances between trees. Failure to protect trees from parked vehicles, a poor choice of species for the ground conditions, laying of underground services, inadequate tree maintenance in this exposed location could mean that the trees might not reach their potential life span. Lack of resources to clean them out would eventually make any nest or bat boxes unusable.	Use cuttings from willows on the Hayling Way when establishing new trees to keep the provenance local. Management of the events should provide adequate protection zones for the trees. Tree species tolerant of flooding and exposure should be used in many areas of the common. The commons should not automatically be seen as an easy option for avoiding street disruption when underground services need to be laid. The management of trees needs to include regular inspection and implementation of appropriate works. Provision for their long-term maintenance will be necessary for any bird or bat boxes to be successful.
3.7 Education or public potential		
Interpretative material could explain how the common is managed for the benefit of wildlife and other users.	Lack of resources could prevent the opportunity being taken.	The preparation of information material could make the history and details about the wildlife management more available to schools and other groups.
3.8 Public or recreational value		
MSC meets the informal recreational needs of local residents, in addition to tourists and visitors walking along the river path. Many pedestrians and cyclists use it in preference to the busy roads to get between their homes and the city centre. This stretch of the river is highly valued by anglers.	In general it may not be advisable to put some horses on the common because of their tendency to expect to be fed and consequent intimidating behaviour. Conflicts between anglers from outside the city has in the past restricted the opportunities for local fishermen. Competition between boats and anglers for the riverbank has led to conflict. Rubbish generated by long stay boats causes complaints for local residents.	Adequate resources should be made available to maintain the paths, furniture and other artefacts to a high standard worthy of the importance of this open space. There should be easy access for all users. Dog owners should feel obliged to clean up after their pets. The common should continue to be grazed by cattle. Discussions should be held within the working group of interested parties to resolve these conflicting issues.

Significance	Vulnerability	Conservation Guidance
3.9 Contribution to townscape character		
MSC is one of a series of open spaces that form the setting of the River Cam as it passes through the city. It also links with New Square and Christ's Pieces providing a route between the housing to the north of the river, through green spaces rather than via roads. The qualities of the buildings that front onto the common are very important in establishing its character. Views of the common from Parsonage Street and Auckland Road extend its influence into the housing to the south. The horse chestnut avenue along Victoria Avenue is an important link between Jesus Green and Midsummer Common, forming a natural place for the character change between the two original parts of the common. There are important views over the common from Victoria Avenue, under the canopies of the trees The high quality of the buildings surrounding the eastern edge of Butt Green is an important part of the enclosing elements of this part of the common. The common forms the setting of these listed buildings.	Change from the residential nature of much of the development around the south side would alter the character of the common. Loss of the views at the ends of the roads would remove the contrast between the common and the adjacent tight urban scale. The construction of the Elizabeth Way Bridge has detached the eastern end of the common from its former residential surroundings. Some of the trees are suffering from wind damage and decay and it is predicted that a few will need to be heavily pruned or felled in the next few years. This means that there will be further gaps in the original avenue. Any shrub planting, perhaps to exclude the sight of vehicles from the common, would prevent travellers from looking over the common. The scale and quality of any future buildings along the elevated south side of the common will affect the character of the whole common. This is particularly so towards the eastern end where it would be impossible to screen any new development.	The relationship between the common and its residential surroundings should be maintained and where possible enhanced by high quality architecture and appropriate tree planting. As the horse chestnut trees are lost over the years they should be replaced with the same species to maintain the avenue experience from the road. There should be additional tree planting within the common, outside the avenue of horse chestnuts. This will compensate for the sparse nature of the planting; camouflage the losses from the avenue when viewed from the side; and provide shelter for the trees from north east gales. It will also create a stronger link with the planting at Jesus College and on Jesus Green. Views of the common from under the trees along Victoria Avenue should in general be maintained as the trees mature. The impact of any development on land around the common should be assessed for its potential effect on distant views in addition to its immediate surroundings. Space for tree planting around the edge of the development site should be included to continue to the eastern end of the common the

Significance	Vulnerability	Conservation Guidance
There are important views out of the spire of All Saints Church and St John's College Chapel to the west and the chimney of the Museum of Technology to the east. The changing scene of grazing cows, preparations for events and the activity of those passing through is in its way all part of the townscape experience.	These views could be blocked by development around the common or by tree planting. A change to this variety could leave the common a dead and featureless space.	visual buffer provided by the existing trees. This is particularly important where the buildings are to be on elevated ground. New buildings should relate to the common rather than turn their backs onto it. Where possible the high quality views from the main paths should be protected. The richness of activities on the common is in keeping with its long history and should therefore be allowed to continue, taking appropriate steps to minimise nuisance to its neighbours.
3.10 Natural or aesthetic beauty		
The common is a semi-natural space bounded by the River Cam. There are some fine mature trees beside the river and around the rest of the perimeter. The grassland is very colourful in late spring when the buttercups are in flower.	Some of the trees are in poor condition and some are inappropriately ornamental. The exposed nature of the common has led to some serious wind damage in the past. Additional lighting would unbalance the common and give a false sense of security.	There is considerable scope for enhancing the aesthetic quality of the common and its setting by appropriate tree planting.

APPENDIX 5 Midsummer Common Gazetteer

1. VICTORIA BRIDGE



Description

TL 4559 15/702

This is a single span cast-iron bridge on stone abutments and approaches, with an elliptical arch and open iron balustrade. It is decorated on either side of the pierced spandrels with arms of the City and the University. The foundation stone was laid in 1889.

Significance

The bridge is listed Grade II.

Guidance

Continue to emphasise the ornamental nature of the bridge with a decorative colour scheme.

2. ELIZABETH WAY BRIDGE



Description

The Elizabeth Way Bridge built in 1971 provides a major link between Newmarket Road and Chesterton and the north of the city.

Significance

No significance.

3. FOOTBRIDGES



Pye Footbridge



Fort St George Footbridge

Description

The footbridges were built in 1927 to replace ferries across the river. They are owned and maintained by the County Council. The bridges themselves are simple, graceful structures although the ramps leading to them could be integrated better into the surroundings.

Significance

The bridges are a vital part of the infrastructure carrying pedestrians and cyclists over the common.

Guidance

The ramp to the Pye bridge could be made less conspicuous by planting some trees or shrubs near, but not necessarily against it.

4. LIGHTS

**Description**

The lights along the riverside path are a modern globe design that fits fairly unobtrusively into the surroundings. The single lamp standards that illuminate the path intersections on the main part of the common are inappropriate in a situation where an isolated column stands alone.

Significance

No significance.

Guidance

The fittings chosen in the future should be of high quality and whether modern or traditional they should be able to stand alone in design terms.

5. PATHS



Description

The paths are surfaced in asphalt and are generally unobtrusive. When viewed from a distance the paths crossing the common are almost invisible. This is a suitable material for path surfacing close to the riverside poplars and willows as it is flexible and involves a shallower construction than a paved path. The surfacing material needs to be easily repaired where heavy vehicles overrun the edges.

Significance

The routes of the paths have been established over a long period and many are definitive footpaths.

Guidance

The surface could be made more appropriate to the setting by the application of a gravel chipping topdressing emulating the appearance of a gravel path while affording the practicality of asphalt.

6. RAILINGS



Description

The majority of the railings around Midsummer Common are black painted cast iron, three rail Cambridge bollard style. Recently pram irons have been replaced with cattle grids that make movement easier for cyclists and give better access for wheelchairs and prams. The railings along the river at the east end are a more modern style using vertical bars to discourage climbing.

Significance

The style, quality and colour of the railings are very important in resolving the junction between the rural character of the common and the urban surroundings. The fact that they are high quality and well maintained shows that this is an open space that is cared for and that its informality is intentional.

Guidance

The railings should continue to be coordinated in their style and colour. The riverside railings should be painted a receding rather than a pale colour to make them as inconspicuous as possible in long views.

7. SEATS and BINS



Description

There are 9 Wicksteed 'Huntington' seats on Midsummer Common and 17 bins of a slatted timber design.

Significance

They have no significance other than that their appearance is appropriately low key and a satisfyingly simple design that is easily repaired.

Guidance

An assessment should be made as to whether more seats are required along the towpath or placed elsewhere on Midsummer Common. Users of the common could advise the City Council on this matter. They are vulnerable to vandalism and should be repaired promptly in order to avoid the creation of a run down air.

8. TREES



Description

(Victoria Avenue horse chestnut avenue in summer 2000)

The trees were the original planting following the construction of the road and bridge in 1890. They are in mixed health and it is likely that a few will have to be heavily pruned or felled within the next few years.



(Towpath tree planting in summer 2001)

The willow, poplar and London plane trees planted along the riverside emphasise the curve of the river; provide broken shade for walkers and those sitting watching the river; and integrate the various building styles of the boathouses to form the visual boundary of the north side of the common. These river frontage trees are in a poor state being either young and badly damaged, or over mature and are in need of heavy pruning to maintain safety.



(Perimeter trees in summer 2000)

The two wych elms on Maids Causeway and the weeping lime along Brunswick Walk are in excellent condition. The limb structure of the group of London plane trees facing the Four Lamps roundabout is weak. The planting around the rest of the south side of the common is sparse.

Significance

The chestnut avenue is an important link between the formality of Jesus Green and the semi natural character of Midsummer Common. The experience of travelling along Victoria Avenue is greatly enhanced by the trees and the removal of some or all of them in time will be a serious loss both in terms of the experience from the road and long and short views from within the common and around its edges. Only a proportion of the trees visible along the west boundary are actually planted on Midsummer Common. The trees on Jesus Green and within the grounds of Jesus College are all components of what appears to be a single generous belt of tree planting. Midsummer Common is therefore vulnerable to tree losses in these other locations.

Guidance

An arboricultural strategy needs to be prepared for the maintenance of the existing trees and future planting to maintain a mixed aged tree stock which complements the semi natural character of the common; maintains the relationship between its residential surroundings; integrates other developments within its visual envelope and continues the important white willow habitat that runs along the River Cam from outside the city.

9. TREE GUARDS



Description

The timber tree guards are practical in protecting the trees from the effects of cattle grazing and vehicle compaction. However a large number of them on the common could look intrusive. There are some older timber tree guards with netting that have not stood up well to vandalism and therefore create a run down air along parts of the towpath, particularly where the trees within them are also in poor condition.

Significance

No significance.

Guidance

An alternative tree guard should be chosen which combines durability with being unobtrusive when there are a number needed in a small area.