

COMMITTEE REPORT

14/01/2026

The Green & Stones Orchard
Draft Management Plan,
2025-2030

CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
14 January 2026

PART I

The Green & Stones Orchard Management Plan, 2025-2030
ADE

1 Summary

- 1.1 A new five-year management plan has been developed for The Green & Stones Orchard in Croxley Green.
- 1.2 The new plan contains proposed management actions over the next five years from adoption of the plan until March 2030. The detailed actions relate to habitat and wildlife improvements for biodiversity alongside improvements to public access and signage. Should the plans be approved, Officers will seek to implement the actions using existing budgets or where necessary actions will be subject to external funding being secured.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Climate Change & Leisure Committee:
- 2.2 Adopt the new five-year Management Plan for The Green & Stones Orchard.
- 2.3 Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding for actions relating to The Green & Stones Orchard Management Plan.
- 2.4 That public access to the report be immediate.

3 Details

3.1 Plan Development Process

- 3.1.1 The plan was developed by officers from the Leisure & Natural Infrastructure team in partnership with officers from the Grounds Maintenance and Property Services & Facilities teams with support from Croxley Green Parish Council officers
- 3.1.2 The process commenced with the creation of a briefing document which outlined the process and purpose of the management plan. This was consulted upon with the public and local stakeholders. This process invited interested parties to share ideas and thoughts on the management of the sites for the coming five years.
- 3.1.3 Upon completion of the draft plan, a second period of consultation was held to enable stakeholders (detailed 3.2.2) to comment on draft versions of the plans. Minor amendments were made to the plans to produce the final version.

3.2 Consultation Process

- 3.2.1 The initial consultation on the briefing document was held over four weeks between 4th November and 2nd December 2024. The consultation was hosted on the council's "Have your Say" platform; publicised online and received 16 individual responses to the consultation. Appendix D overviews the responses submitted as part of the briefing document consultation process.

3.2.2 Public and stakeholder consultation, on the draft management plan, took place from 7th August to 30th September 2025. The consultation was hosted on the council's "Have your Say" platform; publicised online, on-site through posters and local stakeholders were directly contacted notifying of the consultation. A total of 88 individuals responded.

3.2.3 Some of the key items raised included:

- The future aspirational action "Pond / Wetland Creation on The Green"
- Dislike of parking inhibitors on the Green
- Concerns for future development on the sites
- Opportunities to plant more trees

3.2.4 An overview of the consultation responses is included within the Appendix D with feedback and how this engagement has been incorporated into the management plan development process.

3.2.5 Direct contact with local Stakeholders included: local Councillors; Croxley Green Parish Council; Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service; Three Rivers Museum; Croxley Green Residents Association; Croxley History Project; Croxley Revels and local allotments.

3.2.6 Following the consultation period, a series of amendments were made to the management plan draft. The more significant amendments were as follows (where applicable paragraph reference points have been included):

- Addition of references throughout the document to direct information sources.
- 1.7: Addition of reference to the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- 3.10: Additional information has been provided in relation to the Pond/Wetland Creation on the Green.
- B2: Inclusion of "The Parish & District councils will continue to prevent illegal parking and unwarranted vehicle incursion to the sites" in relation to a health, safe and secure site.
- E3: Further information on the grassland and hedgerow management.
- Action: Grass Cutting (edge management) – The Green: Amendment to the grass cutting along the hedge lines.
- Action: Preventative measures to restrict unwanted vehicle incursion on The Green at key locations: Removed as now complete, addition of a statement within B2 as above to continue to prevent illegal parking and unwarranted vehicle incursion.
- Action: Installation of a Legend on the Bench at an agreed location: Removed as now complete, management of this bench will now fall into the annual and regular actions.

- Actions: Two actions in relation to the presence of badger setts have been added, firstly signage to make public aware of risk and secondly to consider opportunities of rerouting the path around the badger sett.
- Action: Seek funding for aspirational items, where applicable: Addition of action to investigate and seek appropriate funding for aspirational actions.
- Action: Review Site Risk Assessment: following addition of the site risk assessment, action to ensure it is annually reviewed internally.
- Removal Engagement Response appendix which has been replaced with Appendix D Consultation Report.
- Appendix a – Site Description Map: The map has been amended to show the woodland edge management of the grass alongside the hedgerows.
- Appendix c – General Site Risk Assessment: a risk assessment for the site was included due to several site specific risks.

3.3 Aims & Objectives

3.3.1 The proposed aims and objectives of the management plan are for the site to be:

- a) A Welcoming Place - to provide a welcoming green space for the enjoyment of the local community, finding a balance between biodiversity and public access.
- b) Healthy, Safe and Secure - to provide and maintain clear and safe public access onto, and around The Green and Stones Orchard.
- c) Well-maintained and Clean – to ensure that all aspects of The Green and Stones Orchard are kept clean and well maintained.
- d) Environmental Management – to ensure all aspects of site management are undertaken with sustainability as a guiding principle.
- e) Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage – to conserve and enhance the important wildlife, landscape and heritage features of The Green and Stones Orchard.

3.3.2 The proposed actions relate to environmental management and improvements for public access and signage; these are subject to availability of external funding and include:

- Planting of orchard trees
- Ecological surveying of the habitats/wildlife within the sites
- Introduction of interpretation boards on the topics of history and ecology
- Delivery of a history project with local stakeholders including community events.

4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The officer recommendation is that the management plan for The Green & Stones Orchard is formally adopted by the Council so that Officers can begin to implement the actions within the plans, subject to available funding where necessary.

4.2 If the plan is not approved, maintenance of the site will continue at a base level, but no additional improvements for biodiversity or public access will be undertaken

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed budgets. The proposals also relate to securing additional funding in order for some proposed actions to be undertaken. Such works will not be progressed until such time as funding is in place.

5.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators for the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service Plan 2025-2028.

- LNI04 - External Funding secured to support Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Projects and Activities.
- LNI05 - Year on year increase in the area of land owned by Three Rivers District Council, being managed for biodiversity benefit.

5.3 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following Corporate Framework Objectives:

- Sustainable Communities
- Net Carbon Zero and Climate Resilient

6 Financial Implications

6.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan includes an annual budget to maintain 13 sites with management plans. At present this does not include The Green & Stones Orchard, however works are undertaken at this location by the council Grounds Maintenance team as part of general budgets for that area. This work is supported by the Parish Council who also undertake some general grounds maintenance of the sites. In addition, the Hay Cutting in this location is provided for under the existing budgets for this work .

6.2 There are within the proposed plan a number of actions which will require additional funding in order to be implemented. Delivery of such projects will be dependent on securing external funding which will need to be obtained in advance of projects proceeding.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 All proposed works and equipment will be tendered within the Council's constitution and Contract Procedure Rules, where required.

7.2 The preparation of this plan is being undertaken in order to support compliance with the Council's statutory obligations and its Corporate Framework and Priorities.

7.3 The Council has a duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity under S40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This does not mean that the duty must be given greater weight than other matters and the Management Plan recommendations that are being presented within this report satisfy the duty, which is for the Council to 'have regard' when it exercises its functions.

7.4 Subject to the receipt of external funding, under the Council Constitution (as outlined in part 3, section 4.1.3 of the Council Constitution), Committee approval is required to enter into any contract or accept receipt of grant funding above the value of £25,000.

7.5 The Green is classified as common land and the associated rights to this are protected by the Commons Act 2006.

8 Equal Opportunities Implications

8.1 A Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment is included at Appendix C.

8.2 The assessment outlines the positive impact the project will have on equality. Due in part to improved accessibility through facilitating active travel for all through the site, appropriately managed site furniture, accessible site interpretation and community events.

8.3 Realising these positive impacts is dependent on securing external funding highlighted within this report.

9 Staffing Implications

9.1 Delivering the Management Plan project and objectives as well as securing external funding in order to deliver these will be led by the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service within existing staff resource.

9.2 The council will also be supported in the delivery of this management plan by Croxley Green Parish Council.

9.3 Officers will also be working collaboratively and will require support and input from Officers in other services, including Regulatory Services, Environmental Protection, Finance and Legal.

10 Environmental Implications

10.1 A Climate & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed, with summary results within the table below:

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.00
Travel	3.50
Goods and Consumption	3.00
Ecology	3.00
Adaptation	3.50
Engagement and Influence	4
Total Overall Average Score	3.5

10.2 Appropriate habitat management as outlined within the management plan will have a positive impact on the environmental conditions of the sites.

10.3 Completion of the ecological surveying of the habitat and wildlife of the site will give a greater understanding of the composition and condition of the ecology of the sites.

11 Community Safety Implications

11.1 The proposed management plan, appropriate site management and implementation of the associated action plan are expected to have positive impacts on Community Safety. For example, with preventative measures to restrict unwanted vehicle incursion on The Green at key locations and installation of drop-down bollards at the entrance to Stones Orchard & the 'in' and 'out' vehicle entrances on The Green where events are hosted.

12 Public Health implications

12.1 The proposed management plan, appropriate site management and implementation of the associated action plan are expected to have positive impacts on public health outcomes. Being able to connect with wildlife has a positive impact on both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals.

13 Customer Services Centre Implications

13.1 None that are specific to this report.

14 Communications and Website Implications

14.1 The website will be kept updated with any relevant changes to the site, following the adoption and ongoing delivery of the Management Plan.

14.2 Good news stories will be circulated and shared via the Communications team, including across a range of social media channels.

15 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

15.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

15.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Leisure & Natural Infrastructure service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
Actions within the	Reputational damage to the	Implementation of the plans is	Tolerate	4

Management Plans are not implemented due to a lack of resources	Council	monitored and reported to highlight any issues at an early stage		
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15.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely Likelihood ↓ Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	Impact			
Low -----> Unacceptable				

Impact Score
 4 (Catastrophic)
 3 (Critical)
 2 (Significant)
 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score
 4 (Very Likely ($\geq 80\%$))
 3 (Likely (21-79%))
 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
 1 (Remote ($\leq 5\%$))

15.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

Report prepared by:

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Data Quality

Data sources: Public Consultation

Data checked by: Charlotte Gomes, Head of Leisure & Natural Infrastructure

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

Background Papers

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – The Green & Stones Orchard Management Plan

Appendix B – Climate & Sustainability Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Short Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix D – Consultation Report

