

# AGENDA

## COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Wednesday 3 August 2016

Time: 2.00 p.m.

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Cox, Mrs Gooch, McLoughlin, Perry  
and Mrs Wilson

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Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Notification of Visiting Members
4. Election of Chairman
5. Election of Vice-Chairman
6. Disclosures by Members and Officers

**Continued Over/:**

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**Issued on Tuesday 26 July 2016**

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact Debbie Snook on 01622 602030**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ**

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|-----|--|---------|
| 7.  | Disclosures of Lobbying  |         |
| 8.  | To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information. |         |
| 9.  | Minutes (Part I) of the meeting held on 23 March 2016  | 1 - 7   |
| 10. | Report of the Head of Legal Partnership - Advice on the Status of Members of the Committee                         | 8 - 9   |
| 11. | Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development - Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report                     | 10 - 26 |
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| 13. | Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development - Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre Closure Report       | 37 - 42 |

## **PART II**

**To move that the public be excluded for the items set out in Part II of the Agenda because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test.**

### **Head of Schedule 12A and Brief Description**

- |     |  |                                |         |
|-----|--|--------------------------------|---------|
| 14. | Minutes (Part II) of the meeting held on 23 March 2016   | 3 – Financial/Business Affairs | 43 - 45 |
| 15. | Exempt Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development - Cobtree Manor Estate Financial Position             | 3 – Financial/Business Affairs | 46 - 52 |
| 16. | Exempt Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development - Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course Tender Update Report | 3 – Financial/Business Affairs | 53 - 65 |

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COBTREE MANOR ESTATE CHARITY COMMITTEE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY** **23 MARCH 2016**

**Present:**            **Councillor McLoughlin (Chairman), and**  
                             **Councillors Perry, Cox, Mrs Ring and Mrs Wilson**

**Also Present:**    **Mr Roger Hext – Cobtree Charity Trust Ltd**

#### 135. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Blackmore and Paterson.

#### 136. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Mrs Ring was substituting for Councillor Mrs Blackmore and Councillor Cox was substituting for Councillor Paterson.

#### 137. URGENT ITEM

The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, the report of the Cobtree Officer relating to the Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report should be dealt with as an urgent item as there were a number of recommendations that needed approving:-

- that due to the fact that the events programme had started, the proposed charges for the events needed to be agreed;
- a request had been received from a farmer to sow crops on the Forstal Field and if this was approved then the ground needed to be prepared quickly to enable a crop to be sown this year; and
- the Cobtree Trust would like formal approval of the proposal from Kent Wildlife Trust to enable the formal awarding of their grant.

#### 138. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no Visiting Members.

#### 139. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

#### 140. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

141. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That the items on Part II of the agenda be taken in private as proposed.

142. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2016

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

143. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - MANAGEMENT LETTER 2014/15 - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources setting out the current position with regard to the issues identified in the External Auditor's Management Letter that accompanied the Accounts for 2014/15.

Members were reminded that the External Auditors had recommended that the Charity should have its own accounting records separate from the Council; that the Council stop reclaiming input VAT on behalf of the Charity; and that consideration should be given to changing the legal status of the Charity.

Members were given an update by Officers on these three issues and were advised that:-

- that a spreadsheet had been set up in the Council's financial management system, Agresso which allowed the financial transactions of the Charity to be processed separately;
- the Auditors had considered the VAT status of the Charity in a separate report and recommended that the Council cease reclaiming input VAT on behalf of the Charity as it considered that the management fee paid to Mytime for running the Golf Course at Cobtree was a lease payment. However, it has been confirmed that the management fee was for running the Golf Course on behalf of the Trust and not a fee for the lease. Therefore this fee was considered a standard rated supply and therefore all input VAT could be reclaimed.

Although the VAT had been claimed correctly, the Auditors recommended that the Trust should be registered separately for VAT as the taxable supplies for the Trust are over the threshold for registering for VAT and these supplies are separate to the Council's supplies.

- the Auditors had recommended that consideration be given to changing the legal status of the Charity. The Head of Mid Kent Legal Partnership had indicated that a review of all the charitable bodies would be undertaken and a report would be brought back to



the Committee once this work has been completed. If there was a change to the legal structure of the Charity then this could require a new company to be set up.

In response to questions by Members, Officers confirmed that:

- the Head of Mid Kent Legal Partnership would be asked to submit terms of reference for the review to Members before carrying out the review of the charities.
- the Trustees' liability issue would be investigated and a report would come back to the next meeting.
- MBC enforce the car parking in Cobtree but the machines are the property of Cobtree Manor Estate Trust. This is dealt with by separate arrangement at no cost to the Trust although the Council receive the income from any fines.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Committee notes the current position with regards to the issues identified in the External Auditor's Management Letter that accompanied the Accounts for 2014/15;
- (2) That legal advice is sought on the setting up a new company;
- (3) That Officers report back to the next meeting on the Trustee's liability issue and the response to the auditor's recommendations; and
- (4) That the Charity be registered as a separate body for VAT purposes.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

144. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES - APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance and Resources which related to the appointment of External Auditors for the Trust.

Members noted that following the decision of King and Taylor not to provide external audit services to the Charity at the end of 2013/14 financial year, responsibility had been passed to UHY Hacker Young for the 2014/15 financial year.

Officers advised that a decision needed to be made on whether to continue with UHY Hacker Young for the next two financial years or give consideration to appointing another External Auditor.

Members noted that due to the nature of the Charity and its relationship with the Council, the financial aspects are somewhat complex and UHY

Hacker Young have started to develop an understanding of this so it would seem appropriate to continue to use them.

**RESOLVED:** That UHY Hacker Young be appointed external auditors to the Charity for the financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

145. REPORT OF THE COBTREE OFFICER - COBTREE MANOR ESTATE UPDATE REPORT

Members considered the urgent report of the Cobtree Officer which gave an update of the work of the Estate and the issues that affected its management.

Members noted the progress report at Appendix I together with the list of events.

The Cobtree Officer advised that:-

- A leaflet will be available mid-April detailing all the forthcoming events
- The Visitors Centre was fully functional and the charges for the car park were also operational
- Footfall in the Park continued to increase
- Kent Life had reopened for the season with a new operator which seemed to be working well
- Kent Wildlife Trust would like to install a wildlife trail between Tyland Barn and Cobtree Manor Park and to run 9 school workshops (subject to a successful funding bid)

Members were also advised that the Council had received a request from a farmer to sow crops on the Forstal Field.

Following concerns from Members, Officers agreed to:-

- Enter into a short term lease of the Forstal Field with Friningham Manor Enterprises with an annual break clause. However, certain restrictions should be applied that there should be no intensive agriculture methods used and that no harmful pesticides should be used
- Report back to Members outside the meeting on the Tree Replacement Policy
- Draw up a formal Agreement for the Wildlife trail, setting out delegated powers and working in liaison with the Chairman of the Committee

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the contents of Appendix I to the report are noted;
- (2) The changes for the draft events list ('Draft Events Charges') are approved;
- (3) The Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be delegated to enter into negotiations for a short term lease of the Forstal Field with Friningham Manor Enterprises on behalf of the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust with an annual break clause; and
- (4) That the Cobtree Officer be given delegated powers to set up a formal agreement, in liaison with the Chairman of the Committee, for the Kent Wildlife Trust to be permitted to install a wildlife trail between Tyland Barn and Cobtree Manor Park and run schools workshops subject to a successful funding bid.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

146. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reason specified having applied the Public Interest Test:

**Head of Schedule 12A and  
Brief Description**

Report of the Head of Commercial  
and Economic Development -  
Cobtree Manor Park Finances

Paragraph 3 – Info re  
Financial/Business Affairs

Report of the Head of Commercial  
and Economic Development -  
Cobtree Manor Golf Course

Paragraph 3 – Info re  
Financial/Business Affairs

147. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT -  
COBTREE MANOR PARK FINANCES**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development which set out the income generated in the park from recent commercial operations, including the café/visitor centre, and the introduction of car parking charges.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Committee notes the contents of the report;

- (2) That a project closure report for the new Café/Visitor Centre be brought to the next meeting; and
- (3) That a budget forecast report be brought to the next meeting.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

148. REPORT OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COBTREE MANOR GOLF COURSE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development which set out the procurement process to appoint a new operator for the Golf Course including an update on the outcome of the recently issued Preliminary Market Consultation and the corresponding market interest and response.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Cobtree Manor Estate Trust reaffirm its support for its primary strategic objectives in retaining a viable golf course into the future underpinned by a management contract, co-terminus lease for the land and buildings and a construction agreement based on a term of up to 30 years;
- (2) That subject to the necessary consents being obtained, the Head of Mid Kent Legal Partnership be given delegated powers to prepare and enter into the required legal agreements;
- (3) That authority is delegated to the Head of Commercial and Economic Development to negotiate an extension of the contract with the existing operator in order to enable the full competitive procurement process to be completed and allow sufficient time for handover to any new operator;
- (4) That authority is delegated to the Head of Mid Kent Legal Partnership to enter into an extension on the lease and management contract with the existing operator;
- (5) That authority is delegated to the Head of Commercial and Economic Development to proceed to full competitive tender as outlined above in recommendation 4;
- (6) To authorise the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services to seek all necessary consents under the terms of the lease dated 13 July 1971 from the Cobtree Charity Estate Trust Limited and from Kent County Council for the contract extension and the new contracts following the tender process; and
- (7) To agree that the potential for capital investment by Cobtree Management Estate Trust in an improved offer be included in the Invitation to Tender subject to final approval by this Committee.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

149. DURATION OF MEETING

4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

# Agenda Item 10

## **Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee**

**3 August 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

### **Advice on the Status of Members of the Committee**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Management Estate Charity Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	John Scarborough, Head of the Legal Partnership
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Estelle Culligan, Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

#### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. To note the contents of the report, which is for advice only.

#### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – The report relates to the status and role of members of the committee and therefore contributes to the continued good governance of the charity for the benefit of the Cobtree Estate.

#### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Committee - Cobtree	3 August 2016

## Advice on the Status of Members of the Committee

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is intended to advise members and give them some reassurance about their role and liability as individuals sitting on the Cobtree Committee.

### 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During the last meeting of the committee, on 26 March 2016, members raised their concerns about their possible individual liability as trustees sitting on the committee.
- 2.2 Members asked for some advice and reassurance on the points raised.
- 2.3 Maidstone Borough Council is the corporate trustee of the charity and is named on the Charity Commission's website as the trustee.
- 2.4 The Charity Commission has issued guidance which states that a councillor's liability depends on his/her status. The relevant issue is whether MBC has appointed the members of the committee as trustees or are they making decisions on behalf of the council as corporate trustee (i.e. managing the trustee's business).
- 2.5 The guidance states that the definition should be set out in the charity's governing document. The only such document is the original lease which transferred the park to the council on a 999 year lease to hold it on trust for the benefit of the borough. Subsequently the council set up a charity - the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity - to manage the estate. The wording of the lease indicates that the council is the trustee body.
- 2.6 The terms of reference of the committee are also relevant: "To be responsible for all matters related to the Registered Charity Number 283617 known as Cobtree Manor, and the land known as Cobtree Manor Estate, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent, **held by the Council as Trustee** under a 999 year lease....." (emphasis added).
- 2.7 It is quite clear therefore that as individuals on the committee, councillors do not sit as individual trustees (although as the council's committee appointed to manage the charity, members of the committee must always act in the charity's best interests).
- 2.8 The council as a "body corporate" is the corporate trustee of the charity and holds overall responsibility for decisions made about the management of the charity. The committee makes those decisions on behalf of the charity but members do not hold individual liability as trustees.
- 2.9 Councillors might wish to look at the Charity Commission's guidance, at the following link:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/352409/Local\\_authorities\\_as\\_charity\\_trustees.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/352409/Local_authorities_as_charity_trustees.pdf)

# Agenda Item 11

## **Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee**

**3rd August 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## **Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Cobtree Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. The Committee is asked to note the contents of the Estate Update.
2. It is recommended that the actions from the initial Café business review (Appendix III) are implemented and a further full review of the café operation is undertaken once these have taken effect, and the results and action plan brought back to the Committee.
3. It is recommended that an update on the financial performance of the café is brought to each meeting of the Committee.

### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -  
Ensuring there are good leisure and culture facilities.

### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Committee	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2016



# **Cobtree Manor Estate Update Report**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The information in the report is intended to give the Committee an understanding of the day to day work of the Estate and the issues that affect its management. It also provides a record of all that is achieved across the different parts of the estate.
  - 1.2 The work of the estate since March is set out in the Estate Update at Appendix I, and the results of the green flag judging at Appendix II. The Committee is asked to note the contents of the Estate Update.
  - 1.3 A problem with the financial performance of the café has been identified with it currently showing it will only break even in this financial year; an initial review of the operation has been undertaken with results added to the report at Appendix III. It is recommended that these are implemented and a further full review of the café operation is undertaken once these have taken effect, and the results, and action plan brought back to the Committee along with a regular performance update.
  - 1.4 The café and car parking charges were brought in to help make the park more financially self-sufficient as income from the golf course becomes more uncertain. It is therefore important that any problems with performance are identified early and rectified in order to maximise the income potential of the park and reduce the financial burden on the rest of the estate.
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## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Cobtree Manor Estate covers a large area of land left in trust to the people of Maidstone. The Cobtree Trust hold the freehold to the estate whilst the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust (CMET) have a 999 year lease. Maidstone Borough Council is the Corporate Trustee of CMET.

### **Cobtree Manor Estate Charity - Governing Object**

The governing object of the Charity remains that defined in the lease of the Cobtree Estate dated 13 July 1971 between the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited (the lessor) and the Maidstone Borough Council (the lessee). The governing object is stated as:

"To hold Cobtree Manor and Cobtree Manor Estate for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public in one or other or all of the following ways:

- i) By maintaining the Cobtree Manor Estate as an open space as defined by the Open Spaces Act 1906 and if the lessees think fit providing thereat facilities for organised games and other sports".

- ii) With the consent of ...[the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and the Kent County Council]... in such other way for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public as the Council shall from time to time think appropriate.”

2.2 The estate update outlines the workings of the estate since the previous report and updates the committee on this. Over this period work has been standard. A good result was achieved through green flag and a number of popular events have been run. The café however is currently predicted only to break even over the course of the year and it is therefore recommended that steps are taken to rectify this, as per the business review (Appendix III) and that this is further reviewed once these have had time to take effect.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

3.1 The committee could choose not to note the information contained in the appendices, and do nothing, however receiving regular reports is in the best interest of good estate management. The recommendations regarding the café are considered important for improving financial performance.

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 It is recommended that the information in Appendix I to the report is noted in order to ensure an accurate record of work across the estate is maintained.

4.2 It is recommended that the actions from the initial review of the café are undertaken and that these are further reviewed once they have had time to take effect, and the results of this and any recommended actions and are brought back to the committee.

4.3 It is recommended that an update on the financial performance of the café is brought to each meeting.

4.4 The above recommendations are considered prudent for the good financial management and monitoring of the estate.

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### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

5.1 The committee has previously resolved to receive regular updates on the ongoing work across the Estate.

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### **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 Any comments from the Committee will be passed on to the relevant parties. Improvements in the performance of the café will be implemented by the Cobtree Manager.
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## **7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The work of the charity links directly to its charitable objects and the corporate priorities of the Council.	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	Risks to running the estate are dealt with in the annual Estate Risk Management Report.	
<b>Financial</b>	Financial risks are considered in the ongoing finance updates. Failure to break even by a large amount could have a detrimental effect on the estate finances.	Cobtree Finance Officer
<b>Staffing</b>	No implications.	
<b>Legal</b>	No implications	Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	No implications.	
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	No implications.	
<b>Community Safety</b>	No implications.	
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	No implications.	
<b>Procurement</b>	No implications.	
<b>Asset Management</b>	No implications – normal ongoing works.	Parks and Leisure Manager

## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Cobtree Estate Progress Report August 2016
  - Appendix II: Green flag feedback
  - Appendix III: Cobtree Manor Park Café Business Review
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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none.

## **Appendix I**

### **Cobtree Estate Progress Report August 2016**

#### **Introduction**

This report sets out the work of the estate and covers the period from March 2016 to August 2016.

#### **Cobtree Manor Park**

##### **Green Flag**

Green flag results were very good with the final scores being:

Desk Assessment :20-24

Field Assessment: 50-54

Overall Mark: 70-74

The overall mark of 70-74 is very good and means the park will be mystery shopped rather than judged next year. The Cobtree Manager will be looking at the judge's recommendations in preparation for next year's application. The feedback from the judging is included at Appendix II.

##### **Maintenance**

A schedule of maintenance works in the park for the year has been completed and new infrastructure checklists to monitor daily, weekly and monthly checks have also been introduced.

The timber bin store is finished and operational.

It became apparent that the CCTV had ceased to operate and transmit to the Medway Control Centre. Investigations have been carried out and an assessment of current provision and potential reconfiguration is underway.

The entire cable, mechanism and seats from the zip wires were stolen from the park on 31<sup>st</sup> May during the night. This theft was reported to the Police. The replacement will cost in the region of £5,000. Insurance quotations for the play equipment are being sought.

##### **Men in Sheds**

The Men in Sheds group has continued to grow in numbers and has elected a committee to enable further funding bids. They continue to liaise closely with the Cobtree Team. Along with another MCVP led group, they have constructed 8 sturdy timber picnic benches for use outside the café. They will construct 2 further benches and 5 planters to be planted up by 'Communigrow' a community horticulture project.

##### **Events**

- During the Easter holidays, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) ran a wildlife themed Easter Trail session with 20 children participating.
- An Easter Egg Hunt Trail run from the Visitor Centre throughout Easter week attracted 125 participants.

- A planned MVCP Dawn Chorus walk with breakfast did not attract sufficient bookings for it to proceed so this will be rescheduled as a Dusk Chorus walk.
- During half-term, a Pirate treasure trail attracted 30 participants.
- A 'decorate a mole-hill competition' attracted 11 entries. A drop-in art workshop offered children the chance to create pictures and decorations from natural objects found in the park.
- MVCP launched their art competition at the Visitor Centre which will remain on display throughout the summer.
- Other events included a 'History of Maidstone Zoo' walk and talk and for a Father's Day lunch in the café.

### **Car Park**

Income from car-parking for 2015/16 (from 6/10/15) was £25,950.86

Income for the first quarter of the financial year 16/17 (to the end of June) was £22,384 (an 8% increase on target).

Visitor footfall numbers show 98,636 for the first quarter of 2016, a 4.24% decrease on the same period from 2015, which is likely to be due to poorer weather than the same period last year. The second period to the end of June gives 146,502 visitors, a 3.43% increase on the previous year. Random sampling is being undertaken to check the accuracy of the counters and to enable verification of the system.

### **Café**

The café performance is showing that it is predicted only to break even for the year. At this stage it is difficult to be accurate as it is hard to predict income over the summer which will be the busiest period. Finances are discussed in greater detail in the report of the Finance Officer. Officers will conduct a full review of the café operation in order to reduce costs where possible and increase turn over and surplus. An initial review has brought a number of recommendations which can be implemented straight away. The full review will include staffing levels, menus, pricing, margins, suppliers and opening hours. If necessary professional advice will be sought on how to improve the situation. The management of the café is under an agreement with Maidstone Borough Council for two years from opening in 2015. An update for the Committee on the outcome of the review and the on-going café performance will be brought to each meeting so that progress can be monitored.

A number of actions have already been taken to improve the situation:

- The catering offer and menu has recently been adjusted to reflect popular sales and improve margin and turnover.
- Later opening is proposed for the summer holidays.
- A 'picnic' menu has been devised to improve the offer of cold food throughout opening hours.
- Card payment machines have now been installed which will increase sales as to date customers have only been able to pay by cash.

- Children's birthday parties have been held in conjunction with the Maidstone Museum's party program in the Visitor Centre during off-peak months.
- Bookings have been taken for catering for outdoor summer parties.
- A number of retail items such as children's outdoor toys are now offered for sale.
- An additional point of sale for ice-creams and soft drinks has been established and an ice-cream bicycle will be used for another fixed point of sale outdoors in the park over the summer. A staffing review is to be undertaken for both the café and the park.

### **Visitor Centre Building**

The building was with the contractor's first year of fault rectification until 17/07/16. Some minor issues have arisen with the finish of the building such as floor joints, locks, skirting and roof integrity. A final inspection and rectification will be completed following year one end.

- Maintenance contracts have been set up to follow the one year handover.
- Upgraded ventilation has been installed to allow sufficient freezer storage for volume of sales to operate efficiently.
- Percussive taps have been fitted to increase efficiency as the standard taps were frequently left running.
- An alarm system has been fitted.

### **Golf course**

The golf course continues to perform well and returned a surplus over the last financial year. Further information on the tender process for a new contract is provided in the separate report by the Parks and Leisure Manager.

### **Kent Life**

The Parks and Leisure Manager met with the new contractor Planning Solution on 30<sup>th</sup> June to discuss progress since they took over. Visitor numbers are up on the same period last year, Kent Life and Cobtree Manor Park are to look at joint working and promotion.



- Planning Solutions have so far:
- Bought a land train (left),
- Building a Meerkat display,
- Have refurbished cafes and improved play barn area,
- Introduced big top for events functions,
- Have bought a new horse,
- Have an in house falconry display team.

### **Wider Estate**

No matters to update on.



## Green Flag Award 2016

**Name of Site: Cobtree Manor Park**

**Managing Organisation: Maidstone Borough Council**

### Desk Assessment Feedback (Management Plan and supporting documentation)

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
<b>Presentation</b>	The management plan was well laid out, easy to read and contained a lot of information	Although the plan is good and full of info it was felt that it is ready to reduce the size now the park has had green flag for some time The action plan contained day to day maintenance tasks which could be inserted into the main body of the plan
<b>Health, Safety &amp; Security</b>	Was covered well in the plan, detailed information on inspections was given which rang true on site as well CCTV has been installed and the park has a open feel to it as well as being locked every day	
<b>Maintenance of equipment, buildings &amp; landscape</b>	Was covered well in the plan The new visitor centre/cafe building looks just right for the park and is a real asset There are dedicated staff on site, in the cafe, a ranger (plans for 2 more rangers) and gardeners Litter picking was carried out daily Repairs of buildings was covered in the plan Play area looks great keeping the theme of teh zoo that was once there	
<b>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</b>	Was covered well in the plan There are dedicated staff on site Litter picking was carried out daily, Graffiti and	



## APPENDIX II

	vandalism was covered in the plan	
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	Very little waste is generated and therefore removed from site, even shrub prunings or tree arisings are chipped and reused There are recycling bins installed around the park	
<b>Conservation of heritage &amp; nature</b>	Heritage of the park is covered well with plans on conserving it This is a country park and so managing the park for conservation is in there but looking at specimen trees in the arboretum that are part of the heritage have been kept and a tree route created for education purposes	
<b>Community Involvement</b>	There isn't a friends group as yet The Cobtree Charity Trust who owns the freehold of the Cobtree estate are met with regularly to discuss the improvements and progress of the park Events and activities do happen however this is the restart of the ranger remit and there is a lot come in the future	
<b>Marketing Strategy</b>	The new visitor centre/cafe will be an asset for marketing the park as it gets established more There are uniformed staff on site	
<b>Overall management</b>	Good plan with a lot of info in it Great to see dedicated staff on site A lot of thought has gone into the park	Action plan needs to be looked at
<b>Additional comments</b>		

## APPENDIX II

### Field Assessment Feedback

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>	<p>The park sits on a main road so easy to find, didn't notice any directional signs.</p> <p>The park has a welcoming feel to it, it is well maintained</p> <p>The new visitor centre/cafe is a real asset in its position near the entrance of the site and next to the car park</p> <p>The staff will be trained in the park history and facilities to be able to advise anyone who asks for help</p> <p>The zoo themed play area looks great as well</p> <p>There is art throughout the park which adds diversity as does the many different species of trees on the tree route</p>	
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>	<p>There is CCTV on site</p> <p>Inspections were explained and match what was written in the plan</p> <p>There is dedicated staff on site, cafe, ranger and gardening team</p> <p>It is a large park with many walks to follow</p> <p>The park is locked every night</p>	
<b>Clean and Well Maintained</b>	<p>The gardening staff on site and was well maintained on the day of the visit,</p>	<p>There was some dog foul spotted but not a lot and certainly didn't detract from the visit</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>Very little waste is removed from site with everything being shredded or chipped to be left on site strategically</p> <p>There are recycling bins on site</p> <p>Recycled plastic benches have been placed around the cafe area</p>	
<b>Conservation and Heritage</b>	<p>The heritage of the site is sensitively managed to maintain the Zoo feel to the park and there is even a guided tour that relates to the zoo, there are some buildings like the Llama house and elephant house on site which are well looked after and in part reused with plans to do more</p>	
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<p>There are some events and activities happening on site</p> <p>The tree route is good and adds interest as does the art works</p>	<p>A friends group is in the plans to organise</p> <p>As the ranger gets used to his new role we can see this part increasing with education activities as well as increasing volunteers</p>
<b>Marketing</b>	<p>The signage on site, interpretation and notice boards are good quality and up to date</p> <p>The park is on a main road so very visible and well maintained</p> <p>The staff on site are uniformed</p>	

## APPENDIX II

<b>Management</b>	What is being said in the management plan is happening on the ground	
-------------------	--	--

### **Additional Comments**

There are some very dedicated staff from the management to the committed ranger and grounds staff on site, all working hard to keep this park safe, clean and well maintained.

It is at the start of its journey to becoming self sustaining with many plans only just being realised, it will be great to see the progress over the next 12 months

The judges were made to feel very welcome in this park and felt that the park was a credit to all of the people listed above

This park thoroughly deserves to retain its Green Flag Standard

**Cobtree Manor Park Café Business Review July 2016**

<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Action taken</b>	<b>Further action</b>
1. Limited opening hours	Not enough staff to rota later closure, missing out on early evening trade.	Build pool of casual staff on contract and open later when weather is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplified recruitment process agreed with HR.</li> <li>• Continuous recruitment process with adverts in window.</li> <li>• Opening hours increased from 4pm to 5pm since mid-June.</li> <li>• Weather dependent opening until 6pm during summer holidays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular advert in local paper and Jobs in Kent.</li> <li>• Work with Mid Kent College to engage students from their Catering Courses as Casuals and apprentices.</li> </ul>
2. Reliance on agency staff	High cost of agency staff as compared to contracted staff and inconsistency in quality affecting bottom line.	Recruit more directly employed staff.	As 1 above	As 1 above
3. Staff shortage at busy periods	Unable to cope with demand at very busy times and losing some customers.	As 1 and 2 See 8	As 1 and 2 See 8	As 1 and 2 See 8
4. Not able to take card payments	Customers can only pay by cash and as a result a lot of	Install merchant services machines.	Machines installed 19/07/16	Agreed minimum transaction i.e. £5 or card charge of 50p.

Problem Area	Detail	Solution	Action taken	Further action
	business has been turned away.			
5. Recruitment advertising not effective	Not getting a lot of applications to job adverts.	Review advertising methods and focus adverts in most appropriate place/s.	Advert for Casual Catering Staff displayed in the Visitor Centre with application forms available.	Local papers. Council social media.
6. Recruitment process too long	Even with a simplified recruitment process staff have not taken up appointments due to the length of time taken to issue contracts	Investigate with HR feasibility of 'subject to references' which is standard in the industry.	As 1 above.	References by email.
7. Weather	The daily take correlates to the weather and in 2016 to date this has been poor.	Investigate indoor family activities that could be offered in the Visitor Centre on poor weather days		
8. Ice cream points of sale	Customers who wish to make quick purchases of e.g ice cream and soft drinks are being deterred by length of queues at busy periods.	Requires additional staffing and is time consuming.	Additional point of sale is now operational at busy periods.	Ice cream bike to be introduced during the summer holidays
9. Inconsistent mark up on sales	Standard industry mark-up not being achieved on all lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review pricing structure and increase where</li> </ul>	Pricing review undertaken. This will be introduced when	New menu for school holidays.

Problem Area	Detail	Solution	Action taken	Further action
		appropriate especially on low value items such as water and confectionary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review portion control.</li> </ul>	new EPOS management system is operational – target date 01/08/2016	
10.Menu too long and may not reflect average customer.	At busy times delivering the full menu can be challenging as everything is cooked to order.	Review menu and simplify/shorten to a standard menu with regular changing 'specials'.	Menu review undertaken. This will be introduced when new EPOS management system is operational – target date 01/08/2016	Carry out market research with CMP customers to refine offer.
11.Some customers unaware of takeaway service.	Takeaway service not promoted or visible as all food made to order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put up signs to advertise takeaway service internally and externally.</li> <li>Produce fliers for local industrial area to increase telephone orders</li> <li>Introduce pre-made sandwiches, salad boxes and children's packed lunches and an express till for takeaway.</li> </ul>		Consider vending machines from drinks and confectionary.

<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Action taken</b>	<b>Further action</b>
12.Change float not sufficient	Currently operate with a £200 cash float imposed by Finance. Turning many customers away as don't have change exacerbated by inability to take card payments. Causing a high number of complaints. Staff wasting time going backwards and forwards to the bank for change.	Increase cash float to £1,000	£1,000 float agreed 12 July 17.	Monitor if sufficient once card payments enabled.
13.PR and Marketing	The café is not receiving enough exposure outside the park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop dedicated page on Visit Maidstone website.</li> <li>• Step up social media activity around offers and seasons.</li> </ul>		

<b>Other ideas to increase trade and monitor trade</b>
A. Free WI-FI for customers
B. Add park footfall figures to daily takings record along with weather report
C. Introduce loyalty cards
D. Refund car park ticket on sales over £? – tear off portion required on parking ticket
E. Develop special offers and marketing campaigns i.e. OAP early dinner fish and chips; parent and toddler offers.
F. Develop retail sales such as children's toys, dog food, sun screen, CMP merchandise.
G. Develop catering for parties



## Cobtree Manor Estate Committee

**3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

### Cobtree cycle path and crossing

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Cobtree Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Non-exempt
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

#### Recommendations in the report:

- That approval be given to the proposed Towpath changes detailed in the drawings attached.
- That approval be given to the proposed Toucan Crossing design as attached.
- Officers seek additional funding to contribute towards this scheme.

#### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all - Ensuring that there are good leisure and cultural facilities.

#### Timetable

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Committee	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2016

# Cobtree cycle path and crossing

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To review the proposed changes to the River Medway Towpath and road crossing facilities for pedestrian and cycle access to Cobtree Country Park, and to consider seeking grant funding for a financial contribution towards the schemes.
- 

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cobtree Manor Estate covers a large area of land left in Trust to the people of Maidstone. The Cobtree Trust hold the freehold to the estate whilst the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust (CMET) have a 999 year lease. The land is administered on behalf of CMET by Maidstone Borough Council.

### Governing Object

The governing object of the Charity remains that defined in the lease of the Cobtree Estate dated 13 July 1971 between the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited (the lessor) and the Maidstone Borough Council (the lessee). The governing object is stated as:

"To hold Cobtree Manor and Cobtree Manor Estate for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public in one or other or all of the following ways:

- i) By maintaining the Cobtree Manor Estate as an open space as defined by the Open Spaces Act 1906 and if the lessees think fit providing thereat facilities for organised games and other sports".
  - ii) With the consent of ...[the Cobtree Charity Trust Limited and the Kent County Council]... in such other way for the benefit of the inhabitants of Maidstone and other members of the general public as the Council shall from time to time think appropriate."
- 2.2 Kent County Council (KCC) and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) have approved a South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) funded walking and cycling scheme to enhance the River Medway Towpath for the purposes of encouraging sustainable access to the various destinations along the river's course.
- 2.3 Four drawings have been appended to this report demonstrating detailed designs of proposed works that would provide a desirable end destination to the River Towpath within Maidstone Borough and provide options for sustainable access to the Country Park. The first is for a Toucan Crossing (pedestrian crossing with lights) requiring changes to the park entrance layout. The second is for an improvement to the riverside towpath on Kent Life (KL) land. The design for KL has been approved by the site contractor.

- 2.4 In order to maximise the benefits of Towpath scheme KCC is seeking additional match funding contributions. The indicative cost for both elements outlined above is in the region of £70,000. KCC are therefore requesting a contribution of £30,000 to deliver these elements. Because of the financial constraints on the charity resulting from the change in golf course income it is suggested that funding for this could be sought from other grant awarding bodies such as the Cobtree Trust.
- 

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

#### **Option 1**

- 3.1 The Committee could choose to do nothing and not endorse the design alterations to the towpath and/or the crossing. This would mean that the improvements to the towpath to enable cycling would stop at the Malta Inn, before the path reaches the Cobtree Estate. This is not recommended because improvements in cycle access to Cobtree Manor Park will help to encourage sustainable access and will enable the park to be a destination for those using the new cycle path.

#### **Option 2**

- 3.2 The Committee could choose to approve the drawings as designed in the appendices of this report, any alterations to the design would need to be approved by KCC, and approve officers to seek additional grant funding for a contribution of £30,000 towards the project. This is the recommended option.

#### **Option 3**

- 3.3 The Committee could choose to approve the drawings as designed in the appendices of this report, any alterations to the design would need to be approved by KCC, and reject seeking a financial contribution. This is not recommended as the County Council are seeking match funding and may decide not to go ahead with the works if no financial contribution can be found.
- 

### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee choose to approve Option 2, to agree that the Towpath and Toucan Crossing can proceed to be built, subject to any minor changes they may consider being approved by KCC. To also approve officers to seek additional grant funding for a contribution of £30,000 towards the financial contribution to part fund the crossing. Organisations such as The Cobtree Trust may be interested in assisting with this.
- 4.2 Approval of the recommended option would add value to the accessibility of the site and improve the existing park entrance, to meet safety

recommendations from the highways engineer. In addition to the works to the crossing KCC Highways will be moving the 40mph limit “significantly” back towards the M20 bridge. Both County and Borough Members have expressed a desire to link the recreational facilities along the River Medway which would be facilitated by the proposed recommendation.

- 4.3 Connection from an improved River Medway Towpath is likely to increase the share of non-motorised access to the park whilst also providing a valuable destination and connectivity between Kent Life and Cobtree Manor Park. It would improve the sustainability of the park and encourage visitors who may not be able, or want to come by car.
- 4.4 Making a financial contribution towards the scheme increases the viability of including the crossing into the wider Towpath project. This would also provide good value with additional funding required being drawn from the wider LEP grant funding. The proposed contribution is a small amount of the overall cost of the scheme which is being funded through the SELEP. Whilst the charity does not have the funding to contribute itself to this, it could seek funding else-where so that a contribution can be made.
- 4.5 KCC engineers are looking into whether the scheme can be altered to retain the bus stop. If this cannot happen the next nearest stop is by the water works, approximately 400m from the entrance to the park.
- 4.6 Although in a report some years ago a pedestrian crossing was proposed the cost of this proved prohibitive at the time. Safety concerns at that time related to the proximity of the speed restriction and the additional road entrance opposite the park. The new proposal has been assessed by KCC highways engineers and is cheaper as a result of fewer road alterations and safer as there will be junction changes and the speed restriction will be moved further away from the park entrance.

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## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 No consultation has been undertaken on the proposals specifically affecting Cobtree, however the cycle path was discussed with ward councillors by the KCC officer running the scheme.

---

## **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 If approved the designs would be passed over to contractors for tendering and final costs would be presented back to the Committee.
  - 6.2 Officers would begin sourcing grant funding for the financial contribution.
-

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	This report directly supports the aims of the charity and the corporate priorities of the council.	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	There are no risk implications for CMET. The project itself will be subject to a full risk assessment.	
<b>Financial</b>	Implications if a grant funded contribution of £30k is unable to be found, the scheme may not go ahead as KCC require match funding to meet their contribution.	Cobtree Finance Officer
<b>Staffing</b>	No implications	
<b>Legal</b>	No implications	Legal Team
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	A full EIA would be completed however could only produce positive outcomes in this respect. Improves safety for crossing the Forstal Road	Parks and Leisure Manager
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	Improves accessibility for non-motorised access.	Parks and leisure Manager
<b>Community Safety</b>	No implications	
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	No implications	
<b>Procurement</b>	No implications	
<b>Asset Management</b>	Implications are in respect of minor changes to the estate layout and entrance to the park.	Parks and Leisure Manager

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

### **For the Toucan Crossing at Cobtree Park.**

- Proposed Toucan Crossing

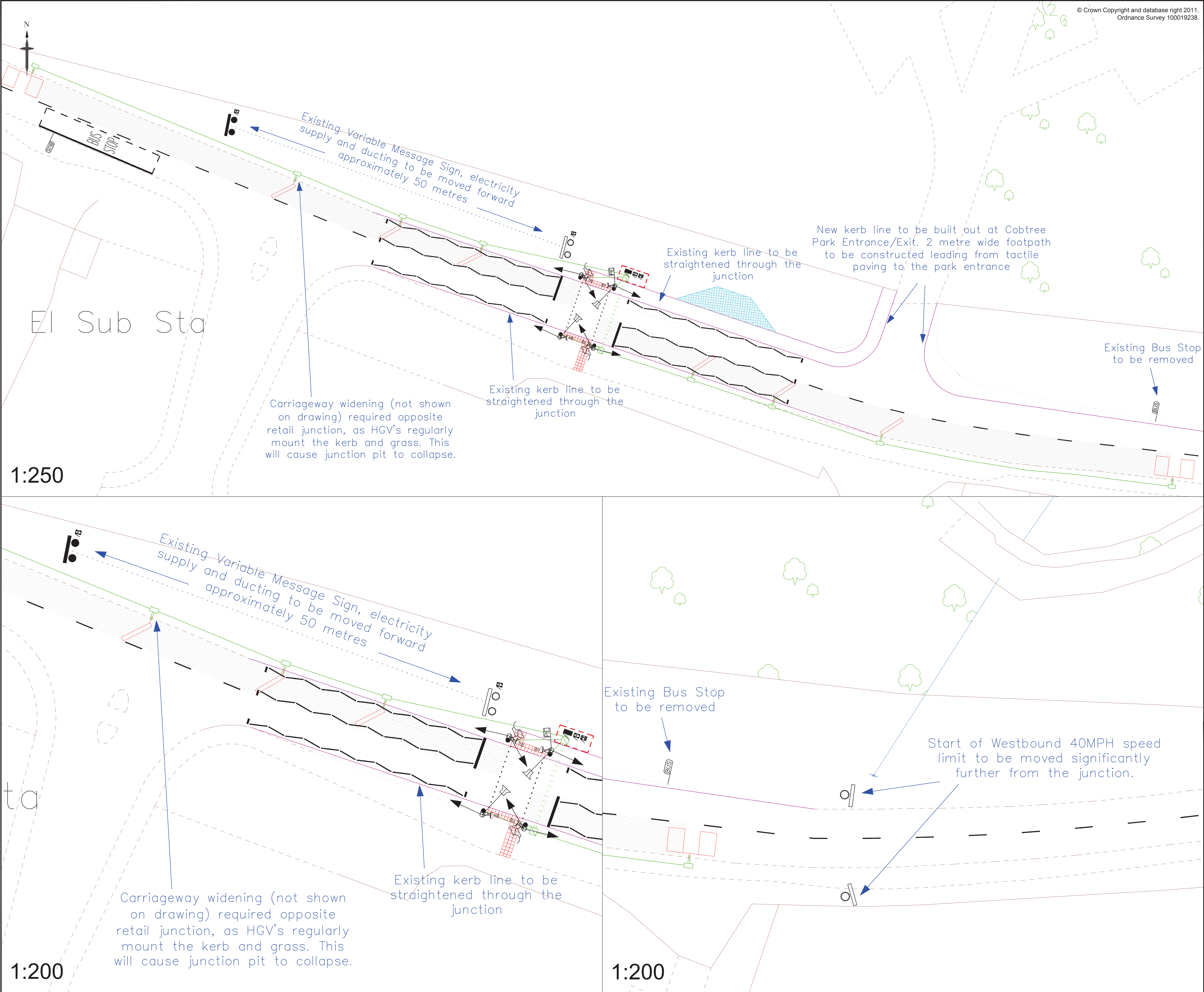
### **For the Kent Life Towpath changes.**

- Museum of Kent Life Landscape Design
  - Fencing Type details
  - Towpath Layout Sheet 9 of 9
- 

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are no Cobtree reports however this scheme is part of the wider towpath improvement scheme being run by Kent County Council.





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Ordnance Survey 100019238.

Drawing number

KCC/ITS/2016/0090/S/1

Notes

Key

- Junction box 550 mm depth (with under kerb ducts)
- Junction pit 900 mm depth (no under kerb ducts)
- Duct FW/1 100 mm dia
- Duct FW/3 100 mm dia
- Duct CW/2 100 mm dia
- Signal controller cabinet
- Electricity supply pillar
- BT termination pillar
- Vehicle detector loop and identity
- Traffic signal and pole
- Toucan pedestrian / cycle signal
- Curved crank pole
- Pedestrian push button unit
- Nearside toucan ped/ cycle signal with push button
- Pedestrian / cycle on crossing detector
- Visual pedestrian or vehicle presence detector
- Photo electric cell
- Layout of blister tactile surface modules (red)
- Roadstuds
- Proposed new kerb line and footway
- HFS (All HFS to be coloured Dark Grey or Black)
- Maintenance vehicle hard standing

Notes

- Kerb lines to be straightened through the crossing location on both sides of the carriageway, to ensure effective forward visibility and reduce crossing width to 7.5metres
- Cobtree Park entrance/exit to be narrowed and built out for continuity and safety.
- 2metre wide footpath to be built extending from tactile paving on the north side of the junction to the park entrance/exit.
- Start of west bound 40mph speed limit to be moved significantly further from the crossing location to reduce approach speeds.
- Bus Stop to be moved from current location within Cobtree Park entrance/exit.
- HFS shown as extending 80metres from the stop line as a precautionary measure. Required distance of HFS will be subject to speed assessment survey data.
- Site drawn with SD loops at 80metres as a precautionary measure. Required detection will be subject to speed assessment survey data.
- Variable Message Sign and associated power supply and ducting will need to be advanced approximately 50metres from its current location. Currently too close to proposed crossing location and will detract attention from the signals.
- Carriageway widening (not shown on drawing) required opposite retail junction, as HGV's regularly mount the kerb and grass. This will cause junction pit to collapse.
- All existing road markings to be refreshed.

0	09/06/2016	Preliminary draft: signal junction, new kerb lines and all other civils required.	TD	PT	TB
Rev	Revision Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Checked	Approved



Kent County Council  
Aylesford Highway Depot  
St. Michael's Close  
Aylesford ME20 7BU  
Tel: 03000 41 81 81

Project  
Forstal Road near Cobtree Park  
Maidstone

Drawing title  
Proposed Toucan Crossing  
Preliminary Draft Design  
Forstal Road near Cobtree Park  
Maidstone

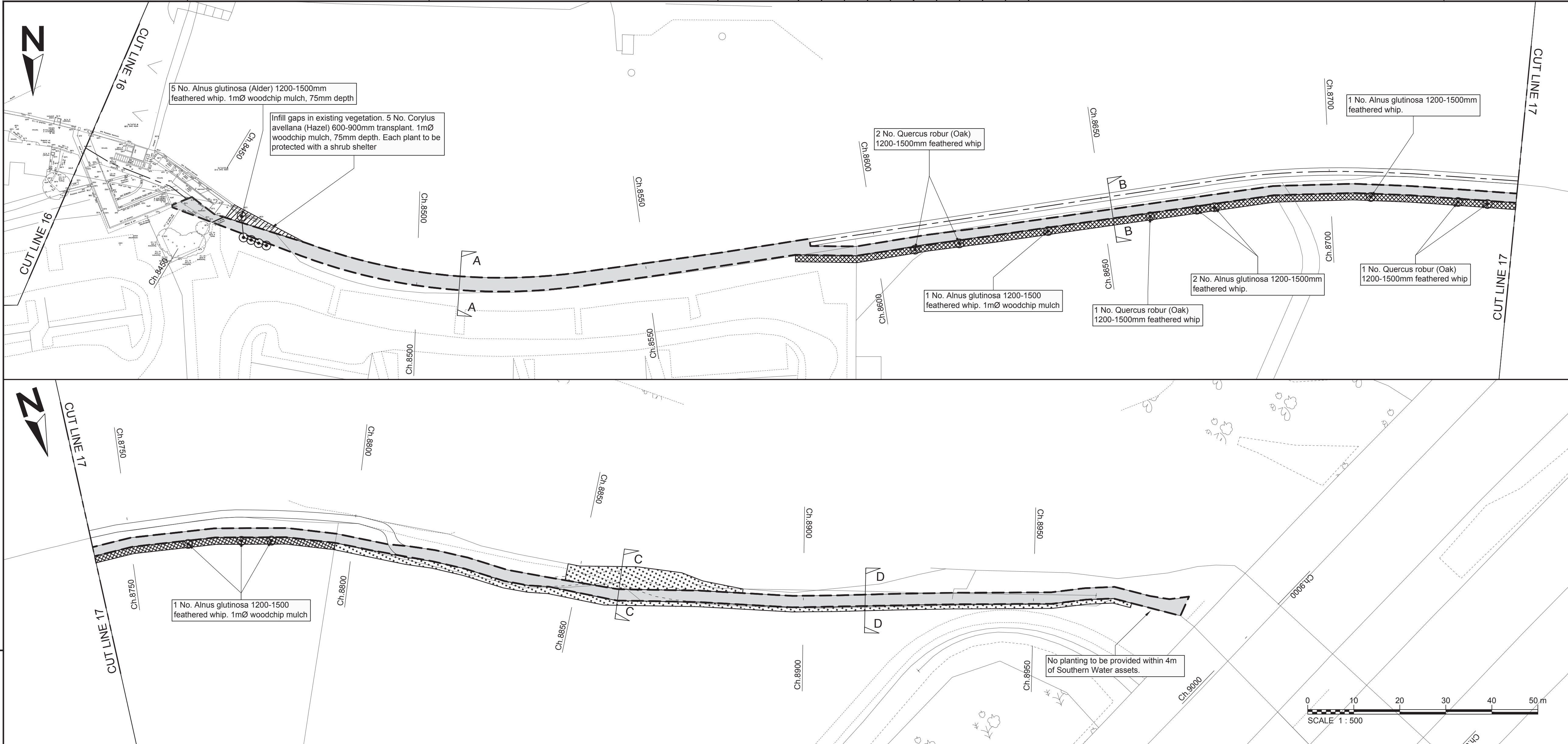
Drawing status  
Preliminary Draft

Scale  
As Shown at A1  
Do not scale

Drawing number  
KCC/ITS/2016/0090/S/1  
Rev  
0

This drawing is not to be used in whole or part other than for the intended purpose and project as defined on this drawing. Refer to the contract for full terms and conditions.



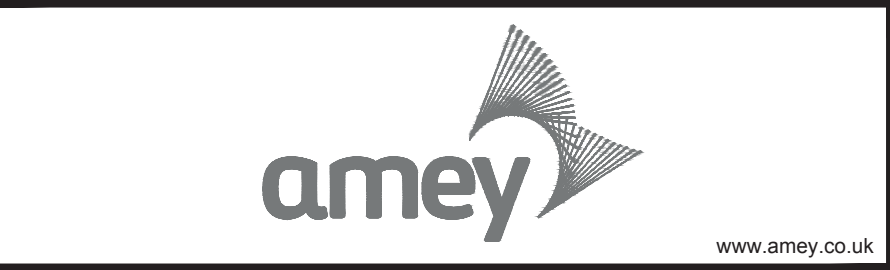


- Notes
- This drawing shall be used in conjunction with all other Contract Documentation.
  - This drawing shall be read in conjunction with 4300418/11000/09.
  - For Typical Construction Details refer to 750 series drawings
  - Continued stakeholder engagement must be undertaken with land owners and adjacent property owners. This must be in conjunction with the Overseeing Organisation. Contractors attention is drawn to the Land Ownership information within the Pre-Construction Information.
  - Verge / Agreed areas degraded by construction activities to be made good and seeded with standard wild flower seed mix to Ecovagat EH1 Hedgerow mix sown at 4g/m<sup>2</sup> to the acceptance of the Overseeing Organisation.
  - All planting locations are to be confirmed by with the Overseeing Organisation.
  - All feathered whips to be protected by tree shelter.

- NEW HEDGEROW
- KEY
- Existing fencing to be taken up and removed to Contractors tip off site.
  - 770 50% Corylus avellana (Hazel)
  - 462 30% Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)
  - 154 10% Viburnum opulus (Guelder Rose)
  - 154 10% Cornus sanguinea (Dogwood)
- Plant 600-900mm whips at 7 per metre in double staggered row. 1mØ woodchip mulch, 75mm depth. Each plant to be protected with spiral rabbit guard.
- Existing fencing to be taken up and removed to Contractors tip off site.
- Initial gaps in existing vegetation with:
- 5 No. Ilex aquifolium (Holly) 450-600mm container grown
  - 30 No. Corylus avellana (Hazel) 600-900mm
  - 10 No. Rubus fruticosus (Bramble) 450-600mm
- 1mØ woodchip mulch, 75mm depth to each plant. Each plant to be protected with shrub shelter.

- RESIDUAL DESIGN HAZARDS**
- (The following information has been collected from Preconstruction Information and Amey Process PLC-H&S-201 – Hazard Management for Designers.)
- Working adjacent to the River Medway.
  - Invasive species (vegetation) are present within the works area.
  - Southern Water Mains are assumed to be deeper than the construction of the towpath.
  - The exact alignment of the towpath is to be confirmed by the Overseeing Organisation due to Ordnance Survey inaccuracies identified at design stage.

Rev	Revision details	Chkd	Appd	Date
1	Drawn: JPB		Preliminary	
2	Design: JPB		For comment	
3	Chkd: MM		For tender	✓
4	Appd: MF		For construction	
5	Date: 20-05-16		As constructed	
			Other	

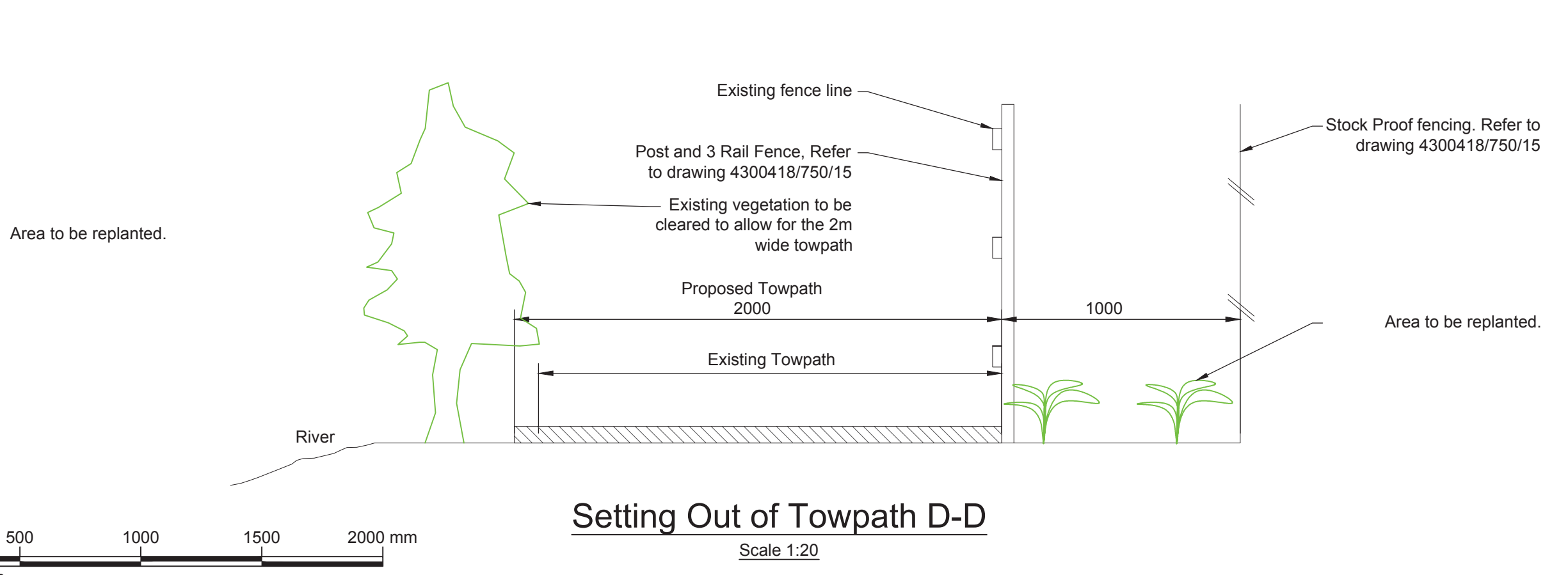
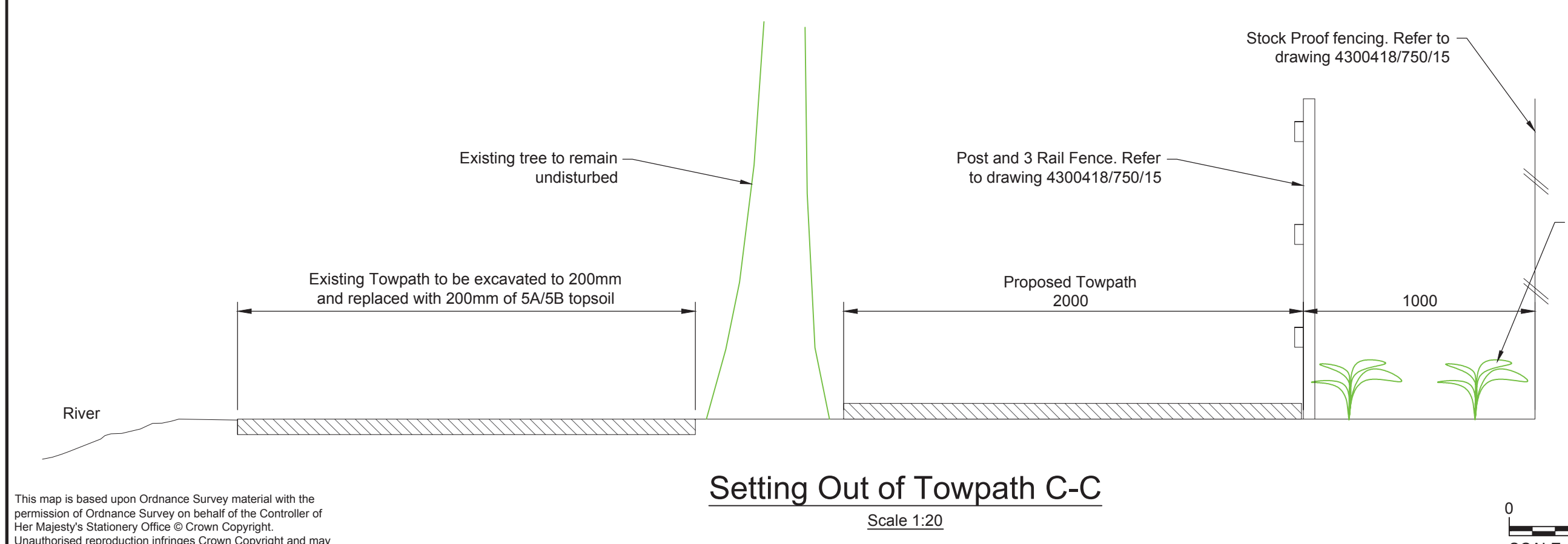
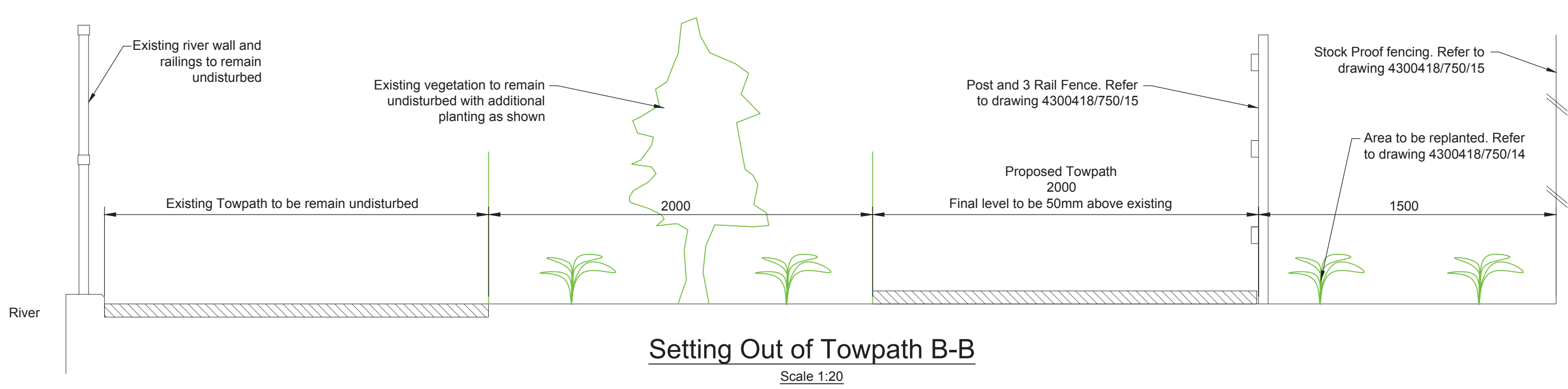
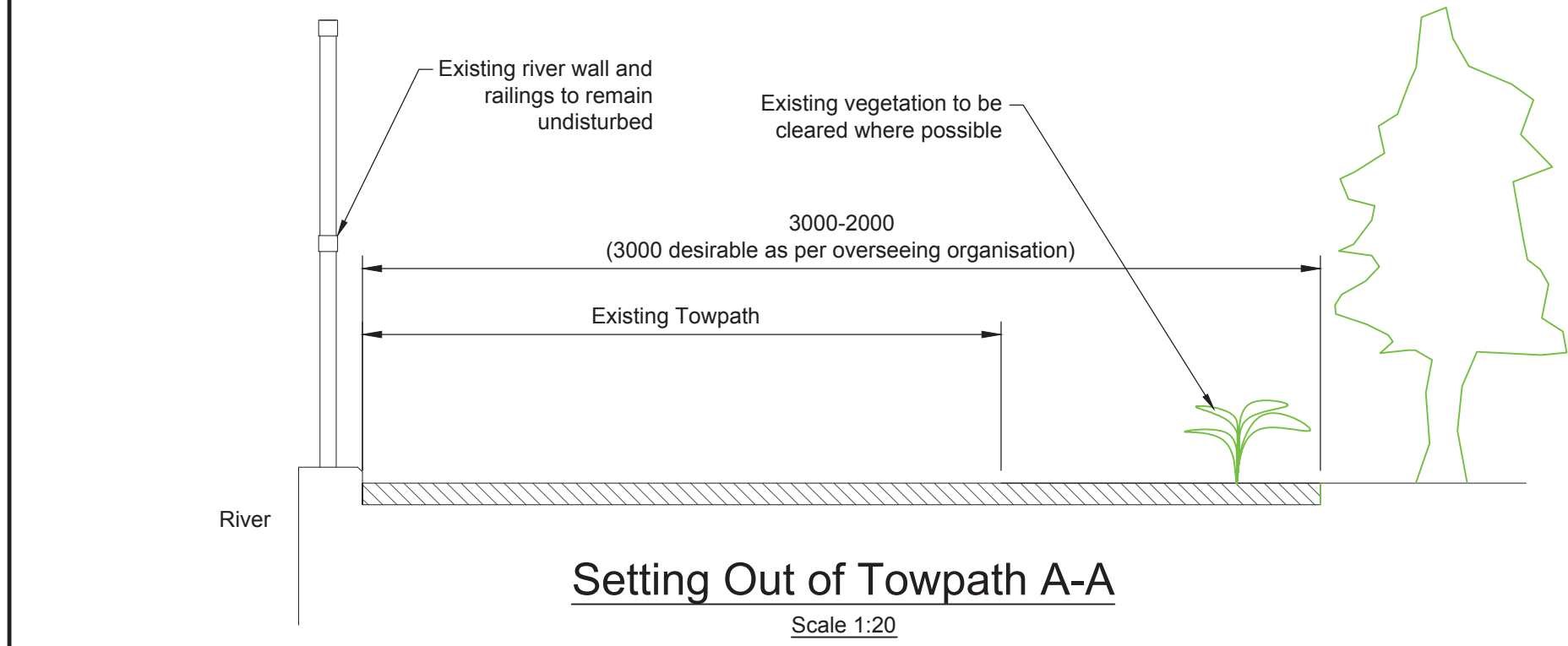


Project Name  
**River Medway Towpath**

Drawing Title  
**Museum of Kent Life (Plan 16 & 17)  
Landscape Design  
Ch.8450 - Ch.9000**

Original Drawing Size : A1	Dimensions : -
Scale : As Shown	Copyright © Amey

Drawing No <b>4300418/750/14</b>	Rev <b>0</b>
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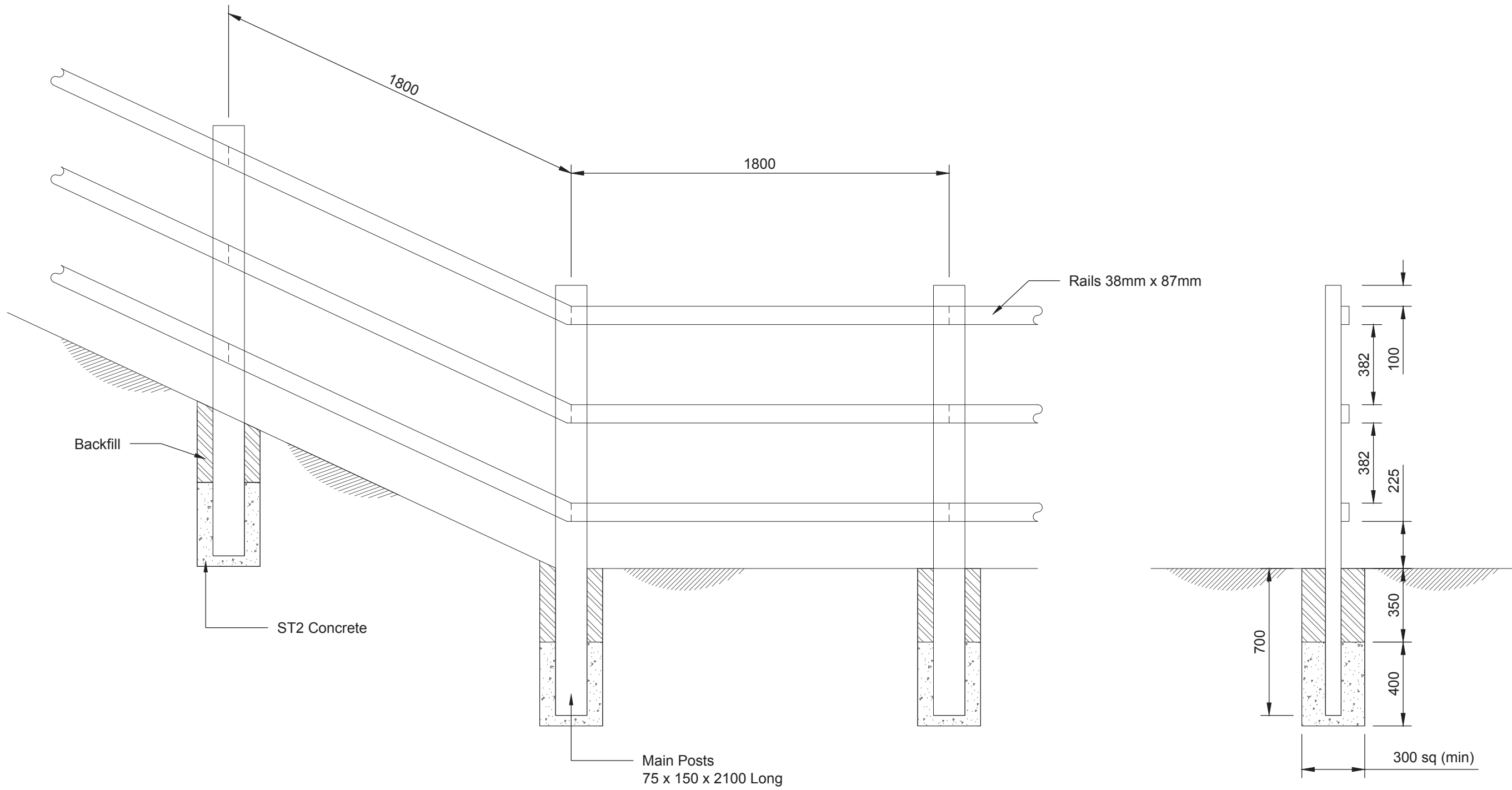
This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019236, 2016

File ref: "Towpath16/17.mxd" - project: 4300418 - museum towpath16/17 drawings/01 - drawing1700 final details/4300418-750-14.dwg



POST & 3 RAIL FENCING ARRANGEMENT

- NOTES
- 1. Specification Clause 306 applies.
  - 2. BS 1722 Part 7 Type SPR 13/4 applies.
  - 3. Fence rails are to be fixed to the footway / cycleway side.
  - 4. Posts are to be supported by ST2 concrete.
  - 5. All dimensions are in millimetres.

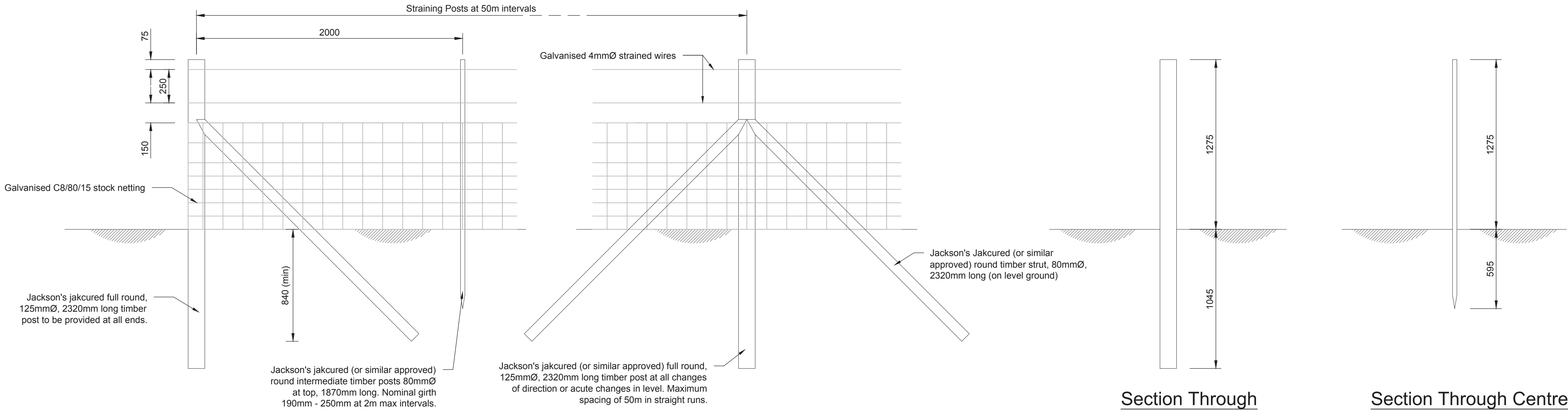


3 Rail Fence Indicative Arrangement  
Scale 1:20

Section Through Centre of Main Posts  
Scale 1:20

STOCK-PROOF FENCING ARRANGEMENT

- NOTES
- 1. To be constructed in accordance with BS1722 Part 2.
  - 2. All line wire, stirrup wire and barbed wire shall be zinc coated to comply with BS EN 10244-2.
  - 3. All dimensions are in millimetres
  - 4. Wires and mesh to be fixed with 40mm x 4mmØ staples



End Post and Intermediate Post - Indicative  
Arrangement  
Scale 1:20

Straining Post - Indicative Arrangement  
Scale 1:20

Section Through  
Centre of Main Posts  
Scale 1:20

Section Through Centre  
of Intermediate Posts  
Scale 1:20

- Notes
- 1. This drawing shall be used in conjunction with all other Contract Documentation.
  - 2. Continued stakeholder engagement must be undertaken with land owners and adjacent property owners. This must be in conjunction with the Overseeing Organisation. Contractors attention is drawn to the Land Ownership information within the Pre-Construction Information.

RESIDUAL DESIGN HAZARDS

- (The following information has been collected from Preconstruction Information and Amey Process PLC-H&S-201 – Hazard Management for Designers.)
- 1. Working adjacent to the River Medway.
  - 2. Invasive species (vegetation) are present within the works area.
  - 3. Southern Water Mains are assumed to be deeper than the construction of the towpath.
  - 4. The exact alignment of the towpath is to be confirmed by the Overseeing Organisation due to Ordnance Survey inaccuracies identified at design stage.
  - 5. Utilities have been identified in the works area.

Rev	Revision details	Chkd	Appd	Date
Drawn:	JPB	Preliminary		
Design:	JPB	For comment		
Chkd:	MM	For tender	✓	
Appd:	MF	For construction		
Date:	20-05-16	As constructed		
		Other		



Project Name  
River Medway Towpath

Drawing Title  
Fencing Type Details

Original Drawing Size : A1	Dimensions : -
Scale : As Shown	Copyright © Amey

Drawing No 4300418/750/15	Rev 0
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## Cobtree Manor Estate Committee

**3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre Closure Report

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Jason Taylor – Parks and Leisure Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

### This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee note the following report from the Project Manager.

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Ensuring that there are good leisure and cultural facilities

### Timetable

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Trust Committee	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2016

# **Cobtree Manor Park Visitor Centre Closure Report**

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report includes the closure report from the Project Manager who managed the implementation of the Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake Visitor Centre located in Cobtree Manor Park.

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## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake Visitor Centre located in Cobtree Manor Park was the third and final phase of the Cobtree Manor Park Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 The installation of this and the first two phases of the project was project managed on behalf of the Council by Lewis Small from LVS Construction Consultants Ltd.
- 2.3 The final closure report for the entire project will be brought to the committee in the future but the committee are requested to initially note the project Managers closure report shown at Appendix 1.

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## **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The committee are asked to note the enclosed closure report from the Project Manager of the Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake Visitor Centre.
- 3.2 The committee could request not to be updated but this is not recommended.

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## **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The further full project closure report will be brought to the committee at a future meeting.

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## **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 This report is for information only so no consultation was necessary.
- 5.2 It is proposed that during the summer consultation will be carried out with park users regarding their thoughts on the success of the whole project.

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## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 As this report is for information only, there is no decision to implement.

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## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	This project has had a positive impact on the priorities shown above in this report.	
<b>Risk Management</b>	No implications	
<b>Financial</b>	This will be dealt with by the full project closure report to follow.	
<b>Staffing</b>	No implications	
<b>Legal</b>	This will be dealt with by the full project closure report to follow	
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	This will be dealt with by the full project closure report to follow	
<b>Procurement</b>	This will be dealt with by the full project closure report to follow	
<b>Asset Management</b>	This will be dealt with by the full project closure report to follow	

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix 1:** Cobtree Manor Park Visitors Centre Closure Report supplied by Lewis Small of LVS Construction Consultants Ltd.
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## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers.

These will be provided in the future when the project report is issued for the entire Cobtree Manor Park Improvement Plan.

## PROJECT CLOSURE REPORT

### COBTREE MANOR PARK VISITORS CENTRE

#### DESIGN APPROACH

The previous building provided a small kiosk facility with a small kitchen serving refreshments and a limited selection of hot food to visitors. The previous building accommodated public toilets which were subject to antisocial behaviour and a lack of facilities to serve the parks growing 'family user' requirements following major enhancements to the play areas.

These key aspects and the importance of a delivering a high quality building within a sensitive park environment were captured in a brief at the outset of the project and formed the basis of a competition to identify a preferred design solution for the new visitor's centre.

Three design proposals were submitted which were reviewed and scored to identify a preferred architect. Guy Holloway architects were successful and developed planning phase drawings that were submitted to the planning department for consideration and subsequent approval.

It is considered that this process was successful in delivering a building that is sympathetic to its landscape with its larch cladding boards and modern contemporary interior. Key views were identified in the design competition documents and the building with its bi-fold doors capture these aspects well, including the main play areas enabling parents to supervise their children. In good weather the bi-fold doors can be opened to make the interior café and multi-use room feel like they are in the park, whilst also enabling visitors to enjoy a warm and comfortable space during winter months.

The main visitor space is flexible in that it can be separated into two smaller rooms, enabling its use to be adapted as required. The buildings security was also a critical aspect of the design and therefore large shutter doors were incorporated as part of the overall design solution.

The design was continually reviewed during construction and additional storage was incorporated into the layout. The building has also been designed with low maintenance highly durable materials and mechanical and electrical systems that

require low maintenance. A gas supply was installed as part of the works to provide gas fired heating and cooking components instead of electric to reduce future energy costs.

Whilst additional storage was incorporated during the project, feedback has suggested that additional storage would have been useful, however, overall the design is considered to be a real success and has met the design objectives established at the beginning of the project.

## **CONSTRUCTION**

Following a successful planning approval process, the drawings were developed into construction phase plans that were competitively tendered to identify a preferred contractor. Following this process Harpers were appointed to undertake the construction works.

Regular bimonthly board meetings were chaired and recorded by the Project Manager which clearly recorded all decisions, financial positions and project risks as well as providing regular project updates.

Progress was hampered during the winter months and weald clay ground conditions which caused flooding during the groundworks stage. This highlighted the need for effective ground water drainage systems which were installed to capture this water and to disperse it away from the building footprint.

Following early delays, the works progressed diligently and Harpers generally performed well. The works were practically complete on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and the building has been operational since the 2015 school summer holidays.

Starting operations during this period was identified as a critical milestone, to maximise income during the school holidays. The building was operational during this period, however, the kitchen could not be fully utilised until a number of final installations were completed.

Overall the capital works phase was successful and completed to a high standard of quality. Works identified at the final end of defect inspection will be completed after the summer holidays, when visitor numbers will be reduced.

These final works will attend to any defects identified following completion of the scheme.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>
A budget of £1,159,125 was set for the restoration of the park over three phases and following the completion of the final phase which included the visitors centre a marginal overspend of £5,535 is identified equating to a variation of 0.47%.
<b>FINAL STEPS</b>
Complete final end of defect works in September and close construction phase.

**Lewis Small. LVS Construction Consultants Ltd.**

**July 2016**



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