



**Executive**  
12 November 2012

**Report from the Director of  
Environment and Neighbourhood  
Services**

Wards Affected:  
FRYENT

**Local Nature Reserve Declaration at Masons Field, Fryent  
Country Park**

## **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides a brief overview of Masons Field and Fryent Country Park, details the advantages of declaring Masons Field a Local Nature Reserve and summarises consultation undertaken on the proposal. The report also outlines the improvement programme currently being implemented at Masons Field through Heritage Lottery funding.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

That the Executive:

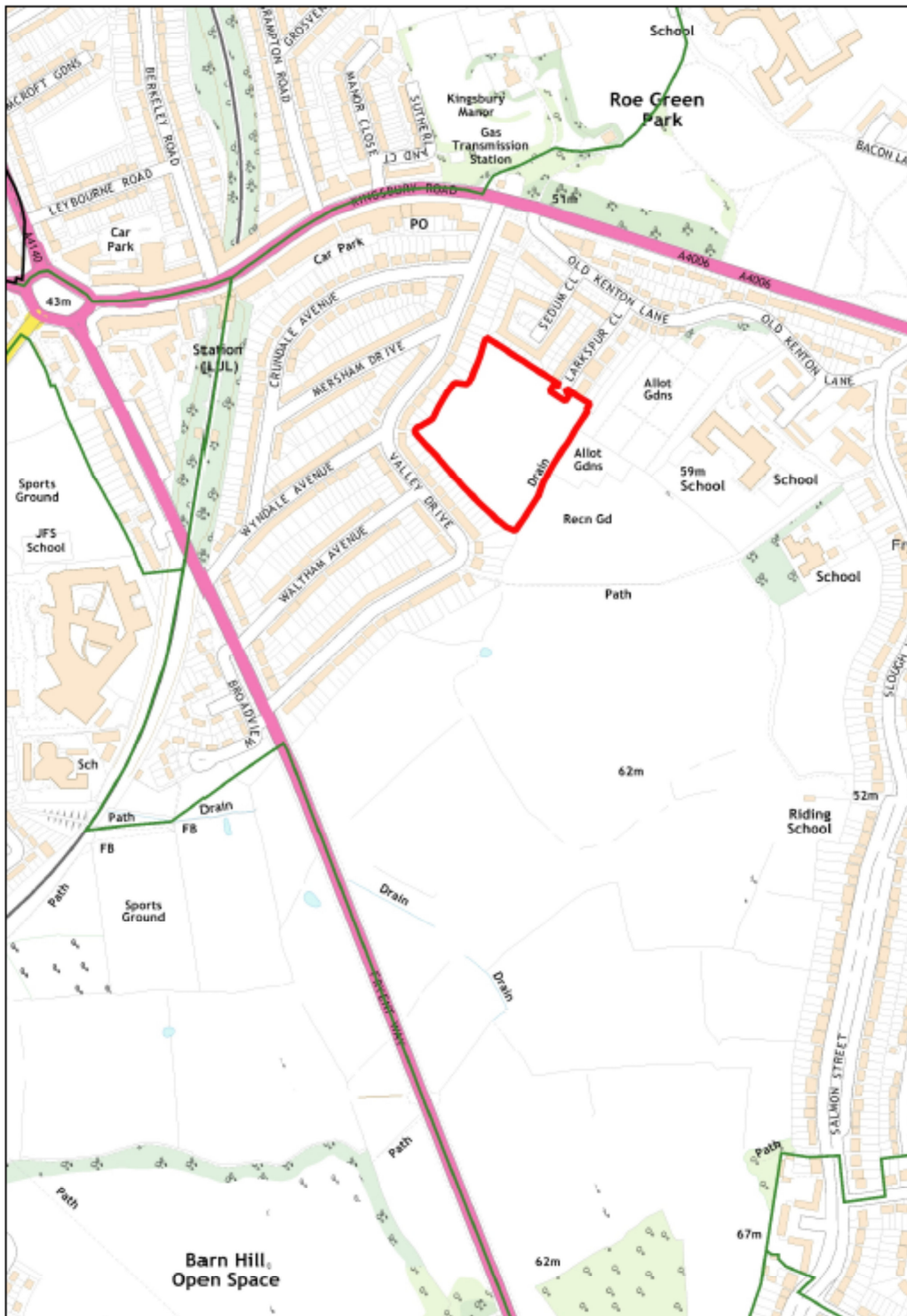
- 2.1 Agree the Declaration of Masons Field as a Local Nature Reserve.
- 2.2 Agree for officers to complete the remaining stages of the Declaration and Public Notice (as outlined in paragraphs 3.14-3.15).

## **3.0 Detail**

### **Background**

- 3.1 Masons Field (see map overleaf) is a 2.78 hectare field in the north-east of Fryent Country Park. It is bounded by housing on three sides and shares a boundary with another field of the Country Park on the south-east side.

## Masons Field, Frynt Country Park



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25 September 2012

1:8000

0 50 100 metres



- 3.2 Masons Field, in common with the other fields of Fryent Country Park, had been partially cleared of woodland probably several centuries prior to the first reliable map of 1597. Pasture for hay and grazing was the main form of agriculture until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Masons Field was acquired by London Transport as a sports field for staff use. London Transport sold part of the field for housing development in the 1990s with the condition that the remainder of the field should become public open space. In 1995 the title to the 2.78 hectare field was transferred to Brent Council on a 125 year lease.
- 3.3 In 2011 a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of up to £47,000 was received for a three-year project together with £60,000 of Section 106 matched funding. This will enable the restoration of field habitats, improved access, installation of interpretation boards and a range of linked activities. A ramp access has been installed linking an adjacent field of Fryent Country Park providing access for both visitors and machinery to manage the field. This will improve the access between the Country Park and the Kingsbury Road area. Habitat improvements are also underway to a remnant section of a green lane (a former agricultural lane that ran from what is now Old Kenton Lane and served fields westwards including Masons Field). Improvements will also be made at the meadow, to the entrance from Larkspur Close.
- 3.4 Fryent Country Park is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC); it is in the top Metropolitan category of London SINC's and is considered to be of high importance to London as a whole. Masons Field has been assessed as having the same Metropolitan SINC status by the London Wildlife Sites Board.
- 3.5 Local Nature Reserves are declared by local authorities under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended). The main part of Fryent Country Park was declared in 1991.
- 3.6 Declaring the Local Nature Reserve at Masons Field will provide advantages consistent with improving the quality of the environment by:
- Increasing the area of Local Nature Reserve space in the borough for enjoyment, recreation and education.
  - Providing consistency with the remainder of Fryent Country Park.
  - Contributing towards the objectives of the Brent Green Charter.
- 3.7 Additionally the declaration will complement the package of improvements of the Heritage Lottery Fund award to restore habitats and landscape, improve access and public participation. These will facilitate the conservation of an increased area of restored habitats as part of Fryent Country Park and enable easier access for machinery to undertake management works.
- 3.8 Declaration of the Local Nature Reserve by the local authority is evidence the
- land is being managed as a nature reserve. Nature Reserves can be either: land managed solely for a conservation purpose
  - not only for a conservation purpose but also for a recreational purpose, if the management of the land for the recreational purpose does not compromise its management for the conservation purpose.

- 3.9 Land managed for a conservation purpose preserves the flora, fauna and physical features of interest in the area and/or provides opportunities for the study of the wildlife and physical features. Land is managed for a recreational purpose if it is managed to provide opportunities for the enjoyment of nature or for open-air recreation. Masons Field is part of Fryent Country Park, and is Public Open Space. The Country Park and the field can be visited at all times.
- 3.10 The same powers are also available to the local authority to subsequently declare the Nature Reserve should this be necessary.

### **Consultation**

- 3.11 Declarations can only be made following statutory consultation with Natural England. Officers have undertaken this consultation and received a letter from Natural England formally welcoming the proposal (see Appendix 1).
- 3.12 Public consultation was undertaken locally, via a questionnaire available on the Brent Council Consultation Portal between 2 May and 15 June 2012. Twenty-five responses were received and a further four sets of comments were received by email.
- 3.13 100% of respondents were in favour of the declaration of Masons Field as a Local Nature Reserve, as were all four of the individuals who emailed their comments. Reasons given in support of the declaration included the benefits that this would bring for wildlife, amenity, open space, environmental education and providing consistency with the main part of Fryent Country Park.

### **Declaration**

- 3.14 Declaration is completed by the local authority under its standard procedures for executing legal documents. If the proposed declaration is approved by Executive, a notice of declaration is prepared, sealed, and published in the local press. A notice may be posted at the site entrance(s). Certified copies of any declaration may also be kept for public inspection at the local authority office.
- 3.15 Upon declaration, Natural England will add Masons Field to a national database and Local Nature Reserve website. The information should also be entered on the council's Planning maps as relevant.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Heritage Lottery Fund will fund 44% of the total cost of the scheme up to a maximum of £47,000. The total cost of the scheme is £104,000 so it is within this envelope. Section 106 matched funding of £60,000 includes a budget of £3,000 for the costs of declaring the Local Nature Reserve. The Local Nature Reserve declaration itself will not involve any on-going costs. The grant and section 106 funding also covers the other costs of field and habitat restoration and creation, improved access, interpretation and public participatory events

(in total up to £104,000). The post project costs of field maintenance, overall, are expected to be not more than the current field maintenance costs on the basis that access for machinery will be improved and more efficient.

- 4.2 The overall project should reduce the costs of maintaining the field. There will be some new features that will require maintenance, for example a hedge to be trimmed near to the Larkspur Close entrance. However the improved access for machinery will enable better and lower cost maintenance of the meadow, grassland areas and the mown paths, where previously access was either restricted or possible only with a detour by road.
- 4.3 The Council continues to work with local conservation and community groups who have contributed much volunteer work to the restoration of Fryent Country Park. As at early October 2012, there had been 117 volunteer sessions on the Masons Field project including a number of half-days by Barn Hill Conservation Group and additional survey work. Other sessions had been organised by the Earn Your Travel Card back scheme.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Local Nature Reserves are declared by local authorities under Section 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended).
- 5.2 Declaration is made by a process that includes the publication of a Declaration and a Public Notice.
- 5.3 Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 gives principal local authorities the power to select, acquire, declare and manage nature reserves. Although in the 1949 Act these are referred to as 'Nature Reserves managed by Local Authorities' they have by common usage become generally known as Local Nature Reserves (or LNRs). English Nature must be consulted in the process of declaring the Local Nature Reserve.
- 5.4 A Nature Reserve is defined in Section 15 of the 1949 Act as land managed for the purposes of providing, under special conditions and control, special opportunities for the study, and research into, matters relating to the flora and fauna of Great Britain, and the physical conditions in which they live, and for the study of geological and physiographical features of special interest in the area; or for both these purposes.
- 5.5 To establish a Local Nature Reserve the local authority must have jurisdiction over the area in which the proposed nature reserve lies.
- 5.6 It will be necessary for the Council to execute a declaration in order for the land to be declared a LNR.
- 5.7 The relevant sections of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 are Sections 19 and 21.

- 5.8 Schedule 11 (12) of the Natural Environments and Rural Communities Act 2006 which replaced Section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 describes a 'nature reserve'. In the case of Masons Field the description is 'land managed not only for a conservation purpose but also for a recreational purpose, if the management of the land for the recreational purpose does not compromise its management for the conservation purpose.'
- 5.9 While Declaration under Section 19 of the 1949 Act gives local authorities powers to introduce nature reserve byelaws, there are no current plans to introduce specific byelaws for Masons Field. Masons Field, and the existing Local Nature Reserve at Fryent Country Park, are already covered by Brent Council's park byelaws; and only one set of byelaws can be applied to any one piece of land. No need to change has been identified.

## **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The s149 duty in the Equality Act 2010 provides that when a council exercises its functions, it must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken (see appendix 2) and no evidence has been found to suggest that the declaration of the Local Nature Reserve would have any negative impact on any of the protected groups. Improvements to the field include easier access for visitors and interpretation boards.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 None

## **Background Papers**

Appendix 1: Natural England welcoming letter Masons Field 23 07 2012.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment Masons Field 27 09 2012.

## **Contact Officers**

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