



# LADYWELL FIELDS, LEWISHAM

**BDP.**





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Email received from a local resident

*“I don’t often find enough reason to write to say thank you for things -but I live in Ladywell, and since the recent transformation of Ladywell Fields, I’ve spent a lot of time down there with my daughter (aged 14 months). I think your team have done an absolutely amazing job. The new design feels extremely well thought through, and really uses the most of the park’s natural features. We’ve already spent quite a few hours paddling in the river at the part of the park at the end of Malyons Road, and in the new part of the river which meanders through the fields. Honestly, you would never know you were in Lewisham! So frequently, councils and large organisations over complicate designs, and don’t make the most of nature - but you have done totally the opposite and the results are superb.*

*Well done, I just wanted to let you know, your work is really appreciated.”*

Chris, 24th May 2011

## Introduction



This scheme is an enhancement of an existing green space incorporating the restoration and naturalisation of the river Ravensbourne. The scheme has created new river channels, backwaters, pools and riffles, and greatly improved habitats within the river corridor along with better access and educational benefits.

### The Vision:

*"The project will transform Ladywell Fields, creating a popular and well loved park focussed on the river"*

and

*"Sign and publicise the Waterlink Way, making it a legible and accessible route for all."*

Ladywell Fields is a large district park (21 Hectares) close to Lewisham Town Centre and Catford Town Centre. It is managed as a formal park that incorporates sports pitches, tennis courts, children's play area and skate park and the Ladywell Arena athletics facility. It is surrounded by residential properties with direct links to Ladywell Station and Catford Station. It is physically and visually divided into 3 sections by two railway lines and the River Ravensbourne, a large proportion of which had steep banks, mature trees and native vegetation fenced off by poor quality railings.

BDP were commissioned as the designers to transform this underused green space. Working in collaboration with Lewisham Council a detailed analysis and a series of public and stakeholder consultations was undertaken to establish the aims for the enhancement of Ladywell Fields.

The main objectives were established as follows:

- Increase the value of the park to the public and raise its overall profile
- Reconnect the river with the adjacent park, improving access and visibility along its length
- Increase biodiversity of the river channel, corridor and wider park
- Increase flood capacity as part of the Ravensbourne catchment area
- Improve signage, orientation and education
- Create attractive and inviting gateways to the park
- Improve safety and security within the park

The overriding concept has been to build upon the park's greatest natural asset – The River Ravensbourne and to create an attractive place in which people want to dwell. The project has revived the river by uplifting its parkland setting through re-graded banks and the creation of a new waterscape of backwaters, toes, pools and riffles. Improvements also provide better access to the waterside and enriched habitats and natural biodiversity.

Restoring the river as the dominating feature of the park provides

the enjoyment and interest in the landscape and encourages biodiversity. The existing river runs through the park and for the majority of its length is hidden from view and inaccessible. Therefore, it was vital that the Ravensbourne was brought into the park and celebrated as local amenity.

The park has been transformed in two phases, the first phase was completed in 2007 through an EU Life project - QUERCUS (maintaining Quality Urban Environments for River Corridor Users and Stakeholders) and the second phase completed earlier this year was funded through the London Development Agency and forms part of the east London Green Grid - part of the network of green corridors leading into the 2012 Olympic site.

The first phase was in the northern most field and centred on the creation of a new course for a stretch of the river allowing it to meander naturally through the fields, animating the parkland. The creation of riverside viewing platforms and inviting park entrances encourage people to use and enjoy the park. It has been designed to be a haven in which people feel safe with good inter-visibility and an environment where people can enjoy the landscape and thriving wildlife.

Other areas of the park are devoted to specific activities – such as the tennis courts, football pitches and children's play area, thus allowing the northern field to become an informal, natural space, without agenda and specific activity, but facilitating relaxation, and more passive pursuits such as watching wildlife, photography, painting, eating, drinking, sunbathing, wandering, exploring. Many community educational and volunteer events take place in this part of the park, specifically because of the new river course, water features and nature areas.

The second phase which included the middle and southern field sought to build upon the success and benefits of the northern field. This included an improvement to the park as a whole as well as removing concrete culverts from the river enhancing the water environment and introducing new social and engaging play spaces. Hand pumped fountains splash water over large boulders in the dry river bed area creating a unique, interactive and educational space. An enhanced footpath network with new lighting, boardwalks and park furniture provides new links to surrounding areas connecting the local community to their parkland.

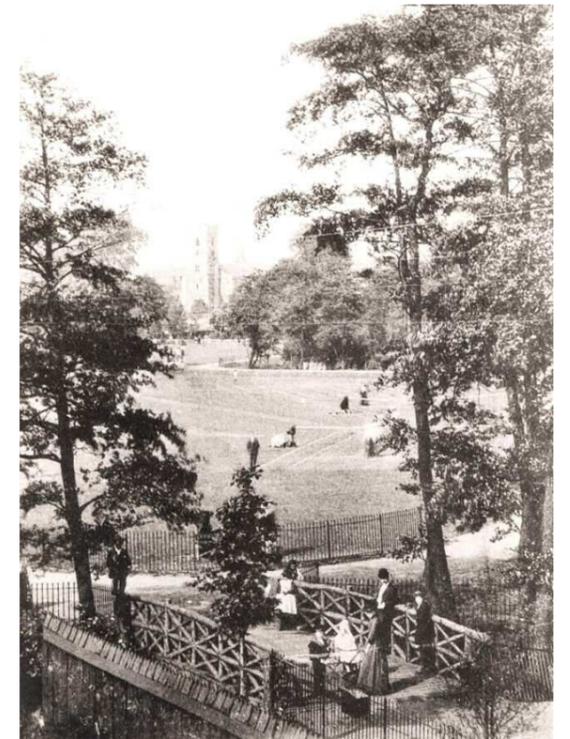
The design of the park also took into consideration the future housing development to the east of the southern field within the disused Catford Stadium site and the integration of an enclosed adventure playground in the north section of the middle field. Both phases have not only transformed the park from a featureless green plain to an interesting and attractive space, but have also massively enhanced the natural environment.

Ladywell Fields has become not only an inner city haven for people, but also a haven for wildlife.

Evidence of the Lady Well, shown on maps as far back as 1592, was likely to have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary and located somewhere near Ladywell Station and Ladywell Road. Ladywell was considered a wasteland or squatter village until the late 1700s following ad hoc enclosures. A wooden footbridge linked Ladywell to Lewisham High Street and the church followed by the construction of a brick bridge in the 1830.

The railway reached this town by 1857 which encouraged further development. Ladywell experienced a boom during the late 1880s witnessing wasteland cottages and farmland cleared to make way for shopping streets and new housing.

Ladywell Fields, formerly called (and still well known locally as) Ladywell Recreation Ground, was purchased for a public open space in 1889, to serve the growing population of Lewisham and Catford. The land had been water meadows, and much work on flood prevention had to be done before the park could be opened to the public.

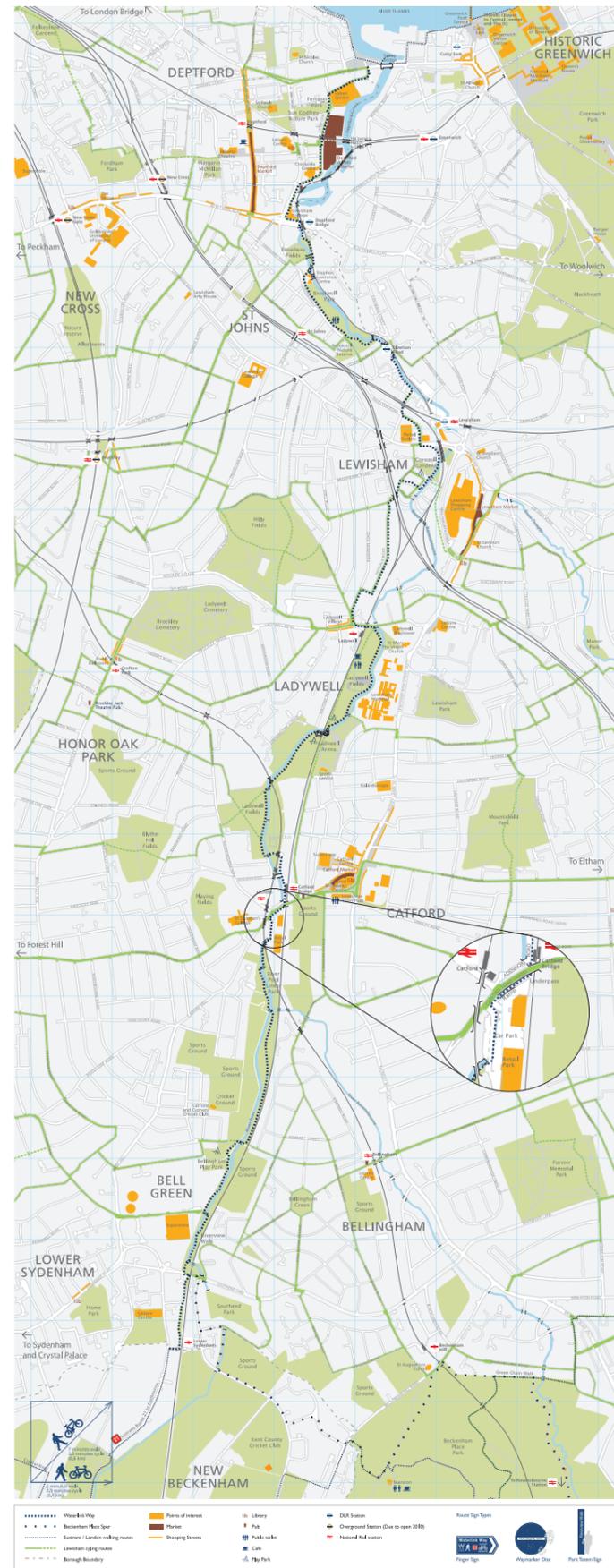


C1889 - six of these rustic bridges were built across the Ravensbourne to link the two sides of the park



C1960 - the river banks

The Waterlink Way which passes through a number of parks and open spaces linked to the Ravensbourne



The site location



## The existing fields

Initial analysis of the River Ravensbourne identified distinct river sections, at its most basic the river is sectioned into culverted sections and more natural beds and banks.

There are two existing playgrounds/areas in the northern field, but none in the southern and middle fields. The new adventure playground proposed for the middle field will fill this gap, which leaves an opportunity to create a play area in the southern field.

There is a demand to retain informal open level space for kickabout and play. The middle field is the most level of the two and therefore conducive to maintaining such play/sport provision in this field. In addition, there is an opportunity to link each side with a new bridge

The existing tennis courts and bowling club creates an activity node, however these are hidden from view due to vegetation and being the other side of the river. This activity node can be enhanced and stimulated by opening up the views and introducing flexible use space.

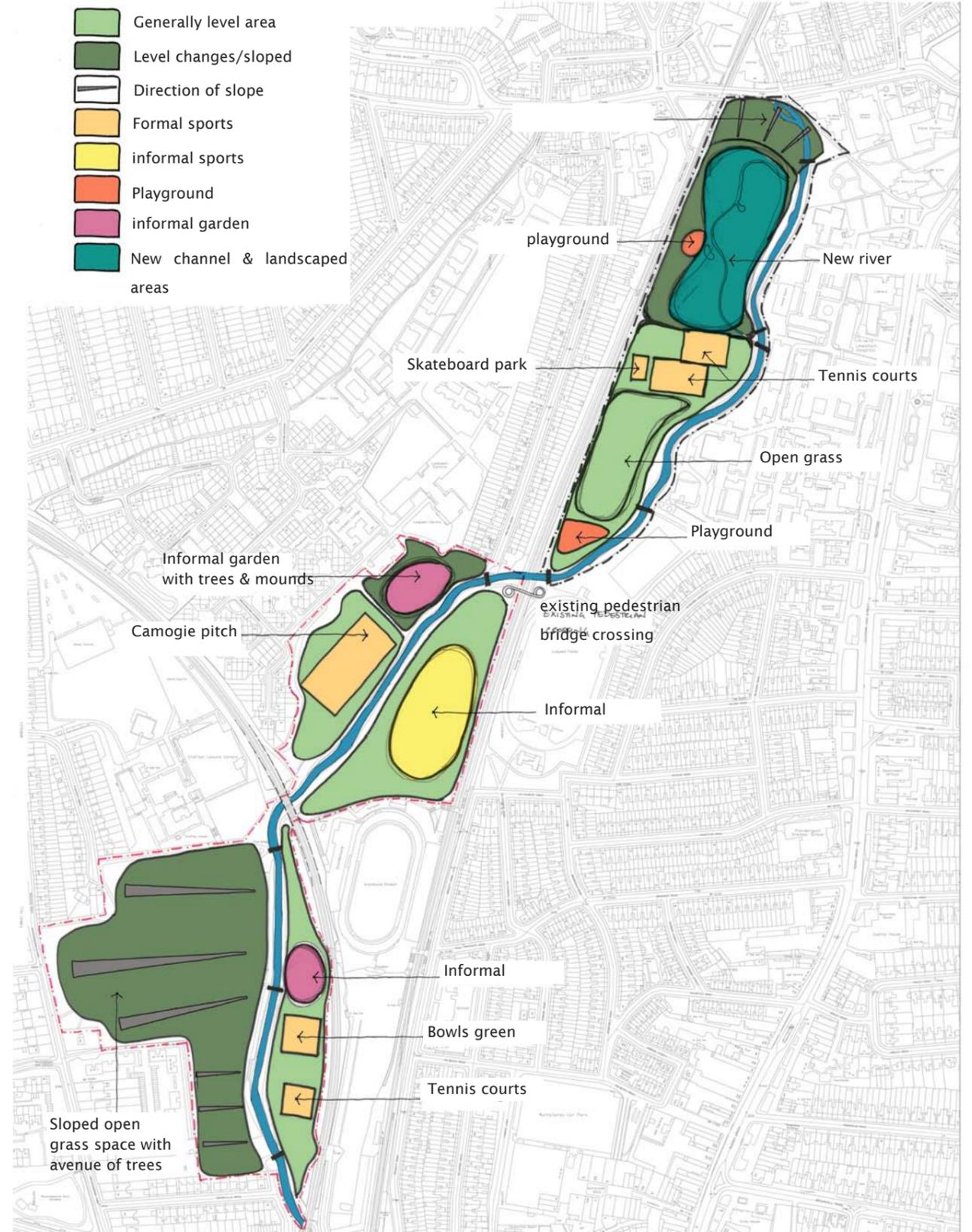
The sloping ground in the southern field is unique within the Ladywell fields and affords views down to the river, however views of the water are obscured by vegetation, particularly in spring/summer months. There is an opportunity to open up some views and better link the river to the main part of the southern field and removing visual clutter such as railings.

There are instances where railings will need to be retained where steep gradients and levels pose as a risk, for instance at under the railway bridge rail line linking middle and southern field cannot, so any proposals are restricted by this structure and network rail approvals. Further restrictions include the 1 in 100 year flood risk which dictates how the flood plain within the park can be used, i.e. no additional spoil or mounding can be introduced here as it will worsen the effects of flooding.



PARKLANDS  
middle and southern fields  
completed May 2011

QUERCUS  
Northern Field  
completed Dec. 2007



Existing analysis of Ladywell Fields identifying general land use



Culverted sections



Middle reach - toe boards and shelves



Downstream reach - artificially straight



Upstream reach - natural however in a straight line



The main entrance to the north - bad visibility and change of level is not friendly to all users



Existing Ravensbourne River is secluded and hidden behind non-native trees



Entrance to the park through Malyons Rd



View of the middle field East



Old railings along the inadequate pathways



Large open fields used for informal recreation



Railings, river in concrete culvert/channel - the hub



Steep banks to the river - the hub



Entrance from Ladywell Road offers good views across the site



Existing mature trees in the southern field West



Southern field - view from Bournville Rd entrance

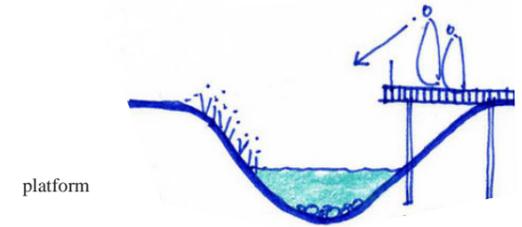
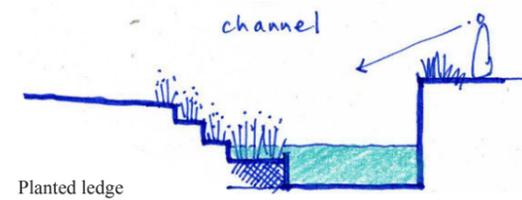
## Opportunities and constraints

### OPPORTUNITIES:

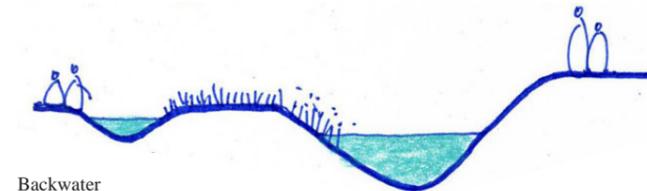
- Opening up the river visually and physically
- Each field has a distinctive identity which can be maintained and enhanced.
- Existing mature tree planting provides a structure on which new planting can build upon.
- Strengthen the connections across the river in both fields by opening up view and providing additional bridge connections.
- The existing spaces and landform provide opportunities to create the stimulus for informal play

### CONSTRAINTS:

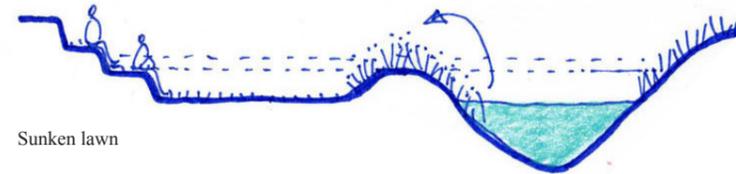
- Existing mature tree planting on the banks of the river and throughout the site.
- Iron railings at the top of the banks enclosing the river channel.
- The level change between the footpaths and water level, up to 5m in some locations.
- Concrete culverted sections of the river.
- Existing utilities underground throughout the site and adjacent/under the river channel.
- Railway bridge (Network Rail) in the "hub".
- Ravensbourne cuts the middle in two, the northern side of this area is secluded visually by tall scrub on the banks and physically no link across the river.
- Ravensbourne River cuts east side of south field
- Gradients to river will make access challenging
- Number of existing utilities in the ground creates challenge to modify banks.



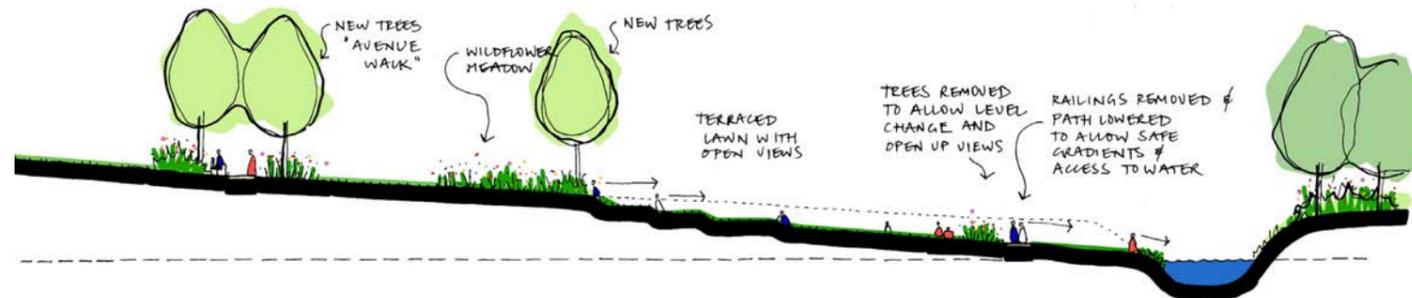
Regraded to waters edge



Backwater



Sunken lawn



The hub - existing

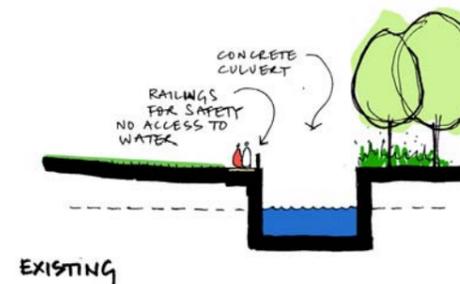


- Ravensbourne river channel in concrete culvert
- Railings wrapped around the banks - unsightly and adds to visual clutter
- No access to the parks biggest asset - the river!
- Railway arch perceived as a dangerous area of the park when dark.
- Degraded habitat value of the river and vegetation

The hub - potential



- Concrete is removed and banks regraded where possible
- New bridge and railings removed - clears views and makes the hub more inviting
- Steps and vegetated slopes provide people friendly access to the waters edge
- Railway arch lit at night (lights will be angled to avoid light spill in to the river)
- Appropriate river side grasses and wildflowers strengthen the banks and enhance local biodiversity.



The existing channel is flanked by steep slopes, iron railing, overgrown scrub and mature trees. There are however opportunities to explore approaches to opening up the river. This can be achieved by re profiling the banks or removing culverts



## Engaging with users and stakeholders

“The rejuvenation of Ladywell Fields means the area is now an oasis of calm for people to socialise and relax in.”

Mayor of London Boris Johnson  
(Quote extracted from BD)

An extensive consultation strategy was put in place for both phases of this project. BDP and LBL have been the facilitators of the events and meetings which have continued through from inception to practical completion.

Key to the successful transformation of Ladywell Fields has been the steering group, comprising of the park user group chairman, the Ladywell Society chairman, representatives from the Environment Agency, the local police, Lewisham's parks maintenance contractor, the cafe owner, park keeper, relevant officers from the Council and a local councillor. All major project decisions have been brought to this group for discussion or approval, and it is through this group that such broad local support for the project has grown.

Ladywell Fields has a very active friends group who have been fully supportive of the improvements to the park, organized events, promotion via social networks Facebook etc. The Lewisham Council web site has also been used as part of the on going consultation and promotion of the completed projects.

The Environment Agency were key stakeholders of the project, not only approving the scheme, and providing some capital funding for the phase one delivery, but also in providing ongoing support and advice throughout the design and delivery stages.

The northern field was part of the European Partnership, QUERCUS, Lewisham Council officers involved have also had the opportunity to learn about different techniques and approaches through their partners in Chester and S-Hertogenbosch, as they have invested in their urban rivers.

The consultation strategy included a number of different methods of engaging with stakeholders, interested parties and local community, these included the following :

- Stakeholder group meetings and discussions
- Primary school visits
- Ladywell Assembly presentation
- Organised walks in the park
- Workshops in the parks learning room
- Exhibitions at the local shopping centre
- On line website, forums and blogs

The following groups have been engaged in the process

- LBL Council officers
- Environment Agency
- Environwork Lewisham
- Maintenance team contractor
- Cabinet members and councillors
- Ladywell fields User Group
- Ladywell Society
- Lewisham Disability Coalition
- Local religious groups
- Local primary schools
- TFL Cycling and Sustrans
- The public and people in the park

The comments received were extremely broad and varied, covering a whole spectrum of concerns and 'wants'.

As a general overview the main conclusions are noted as:

- Create a distinctive feel to each 'part' of the park; Northern, Middle Field and Southern Field.
- Physically and visually open up the river to increase its appeal and value to the user.
- Provide connections across the river to physically and visually link the spaces either side.
- Improve the existing facilities; including footpaths, furniture, signage and lighting.
- Increase the facilities to provide for existing users and also to potentially broaden the user group, thereby maximising the park's appeal.
- There is a strong desire to retain the trees.
- There is a strong desire to improve access to the river and to remove railings.
- Enhance the planting within the park, providing variety with designated areas for ecology/wildlife value separate to those accessible to the public.

Since completion the success of the scheme can be seen through its use and the comments received from both previous and former users. The transformation of the park has attracted lots of local, borough and London wide interest as it sets a precedent in the design of urban parks with watercourses. Lots of comments have been made through twitter and local blogs and the local papers have all hosted positive articles showing the park.



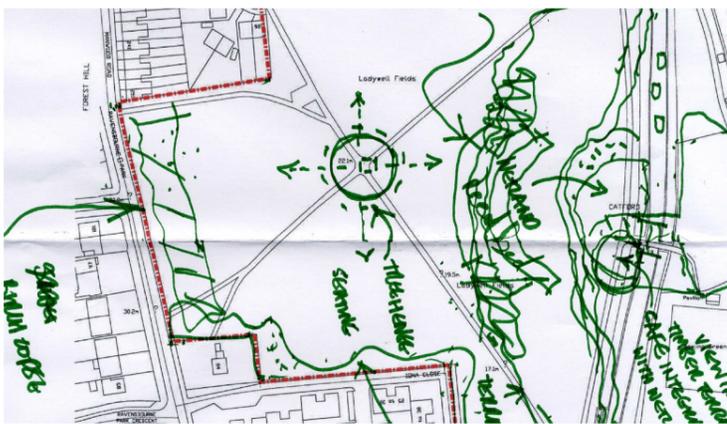
Walks in the park



Exhibition in Catford shopping Centre



Design workshops



Workshop thinking

Today we would like to use your expertise and experience to explore thoughts for further improvements to Ladywell Fields. We will look at a site within the middle field and discuss ways this could be enhanced.

The following topics are just some of the issues that could be considered...

**Value from biodiversity and nature**

Vegetation can bring environmental benefits to urban areas, but provides an opportunity for people to be close to 'nature'.  
 How can the Ravensbourne river be improved / incorporated into the wider space?  
 Is there too much or too little vegetation?  
 How can the ecological benefits of an urban river be explored?

**Reducing crime and fear of crime**

Fear of crime and, to a lesser extent crime itself, can deter people, not just vulnerable groups, from using even good quality public spaces.  
 Should the space be made secure?  
 Improved lighting?  
 Reduced vegetation?  
 Surrounded by residential; build upon the sense of community and natural surveillance?

**The social dimension of public space**

Public spaces are open to all and create opportunities to shape the cultural identity of an area, it can become part of its unique character and provide a sense of place for local communities.  
 What elements can be introduced to improve the space for the local community and visitors?  
 A venue for social events? performance, festivals?  
 Gardens and allotments? Hard landscape piazzas?

**Movement in and between spaces**

An important function of public space is to allow us to move around- on foot, by bicycle or by public transport. Well designed spaces can encourage walking and cycling in a safe environment.  
 How accessible is the space for all? Can this be improved?  
 Where are the important links?  
 Consider the needs for pedestrians and cyclists

**The benefits for children and young people**

Play is crucial for many aspects of children's development, from the acquisition of social skills, experimentation and physical activity.  
 What type of play should be introduced, if any?  
 ...and is this formal or informal?

**The impact on physical and mental health**

Access to good quality, well maintained public spaces can help improve our physical and mental health by encouraging us to walk more, play sport or simply enjoy a green and natural environment.  
 More sports pitches to encourage participation? What about more relaxed activities? Cycling, bowls, golf?  
 Consider the age range and variety of users

**who we are**

BDP is a multi-disciplinary practice of landscape architects, urban designers, architects and engineers, with a London home in Clerkenwell. We work with public and private clients on a wide range of projects across the UK and in Europe, operating from 10 offices in Great Britain and Ireland and a growing network of locations in France, Germany and Spain. We are able to build upon our experiences within the local area through our ongoing project upstream, with the creation of Cornmill Gardens at the heart of Lewisham Town Centre. Other projects that have helped to shape our approach to the design of urban places include the new public spaces in the Rope Walks area of Liverpool, the new park at Cathedral Gardens in Central Manchester and Henbury Trym at Cribbs Causeway in Bristol where works have recently been completed to create a more attractive watercourse.



**QUERCUS ladywell fields**

Consultation material



**the aims of this project**

To improve the environmental quality of the inner city stretches of the River Ravensbourne, maximising accessibility and providing a range of public uses along the river

The design brief recognises the following issues to be considered:  
 Reconnecting the river with the adjacent park/ floodplain  
 Improving access to the site and river  
 Increasing biodiversity within the river corridor

Improve general appearance and entrances to park  
 Improve safety and security within the park  
 Improve facilities for cyclists (signage, footpath materials..)



**what we have established so far...**

**Proposals for the River Ravensbourne:**  
 A secondary channel through the northern section of Ladywell Fields is welcomed. The additional channel should be formed in such a manner that caters for a range of users of all ages and interests.  
 Careful selection of trees and shrubs is needed along the river corridor to open up views, improve security concerns and enhance native planting.  
 Viewing platforms / decks to be positioned to allow views through the river corridor, across the park and to act as destinations on a route

**Improving the identity of Ladywell Fields:**  
 Improved signage and information points, increasing awareness of the space from inside and out

All Entrances need reinforcing

Further integration of existing components is needed, for example:  
 The Café, The nature reserve, St Marys quadrant



**Lewisham**

**New plans for Parklands: Ladywell Fields**

**Come and have your say!**

Walkabout and workshop  
**Sat 4<sup>th</sup> April**

To book a place contact Alison Taylor by 30<sup>th</sup> March  
 020 8314 8758  
 alison.taylor@lewisham.gov.uk

Meet in the park by Bournville Road, Catford  
 at 10am



An opportunity to voice opinions



The hub, existing - facing north

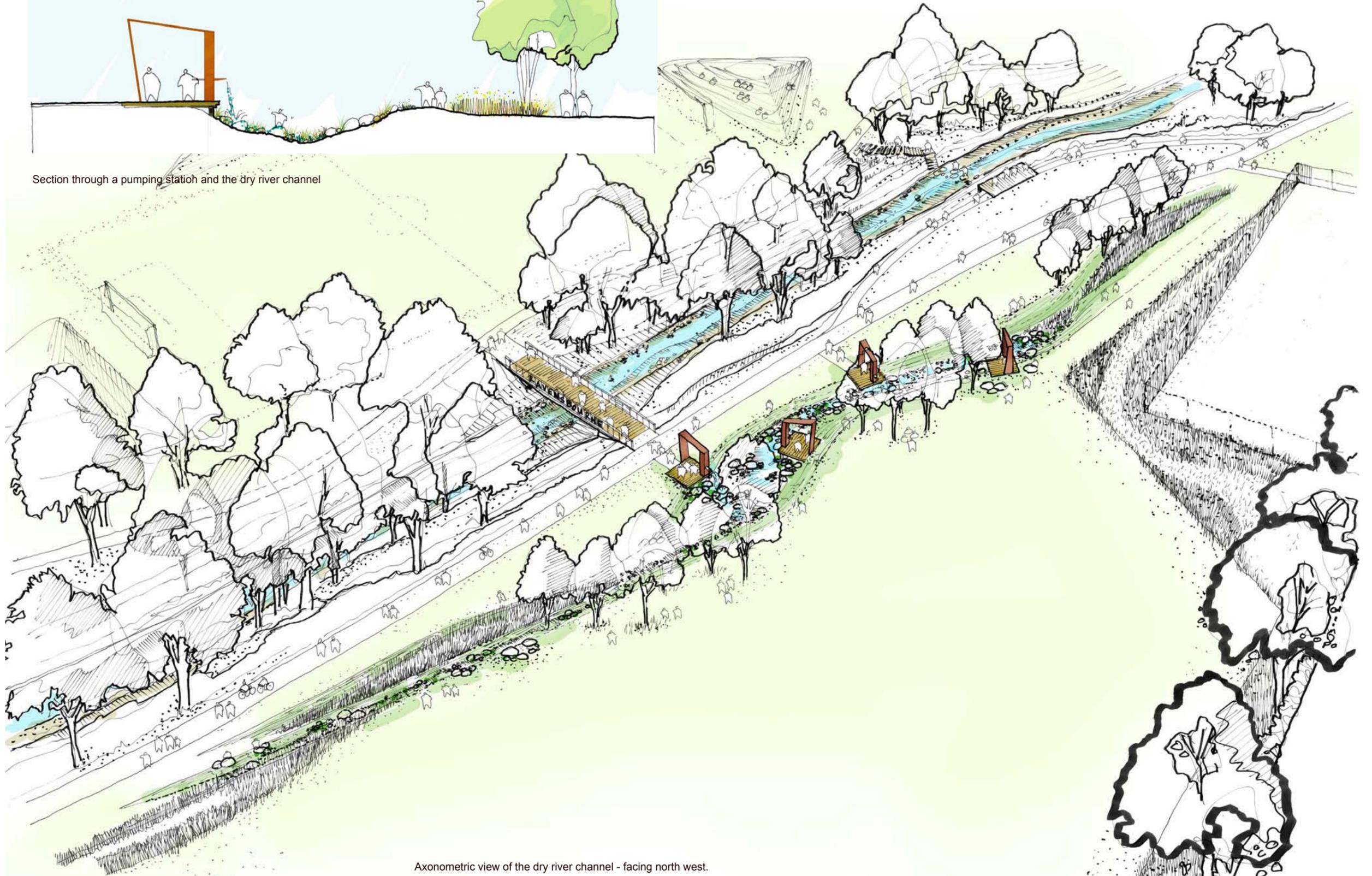


The hub, proposed - facing north

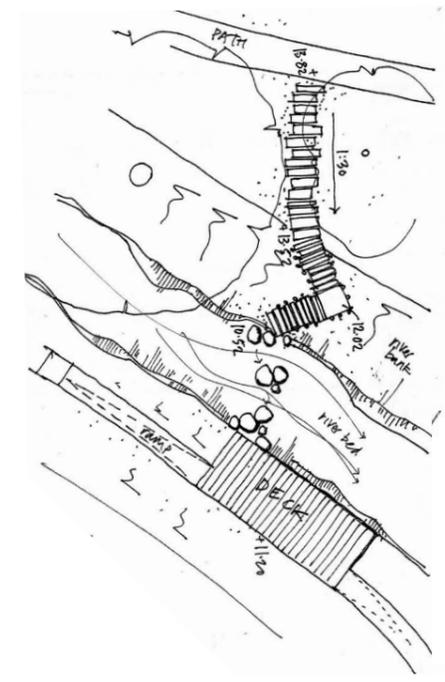
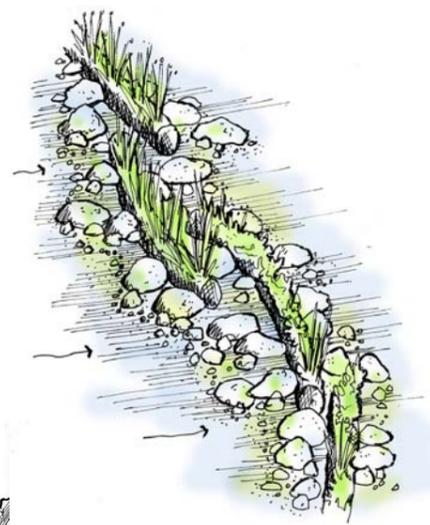
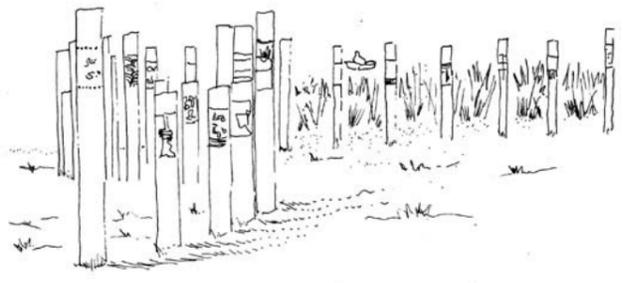
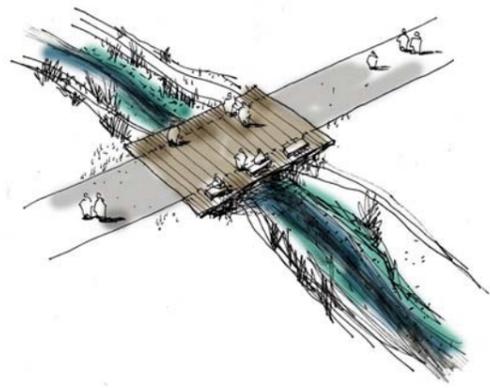
Initial ideas



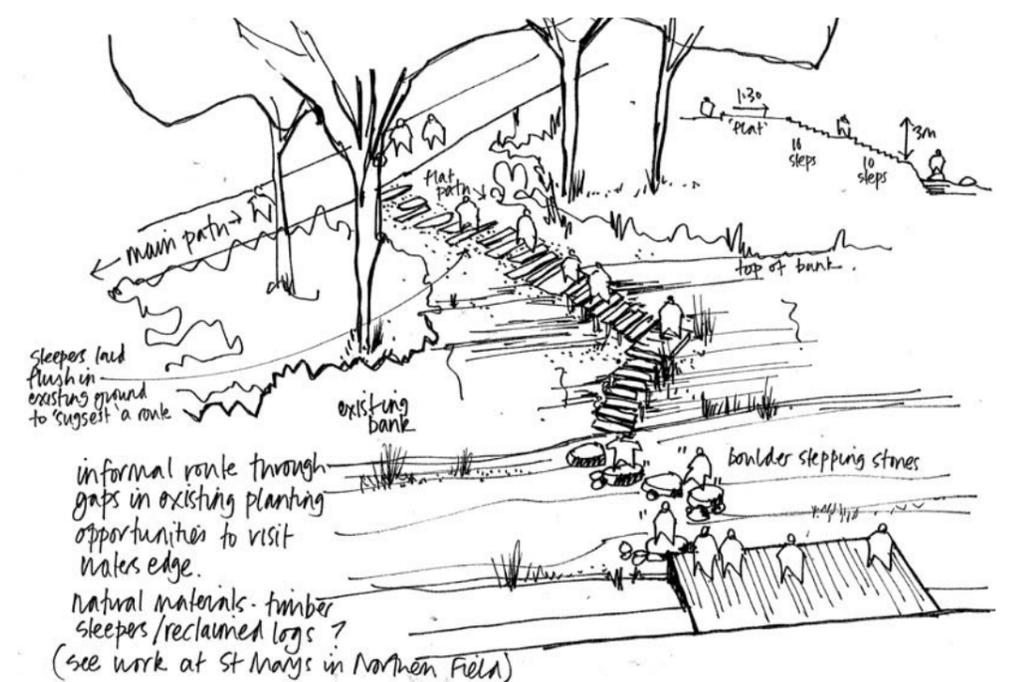
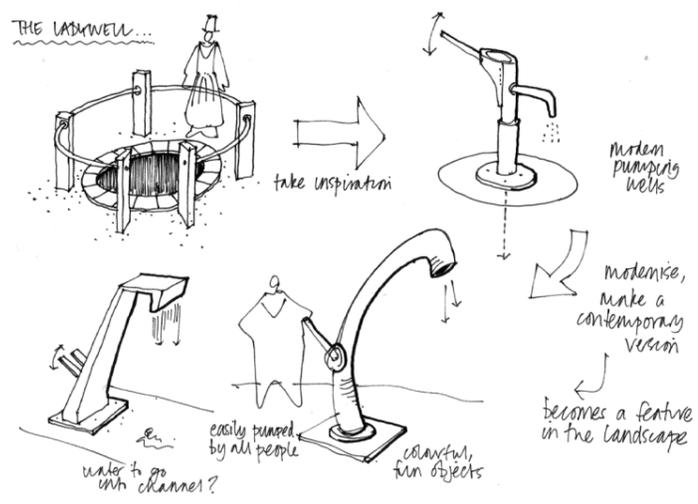
Section through a pumping station and the dry river channel



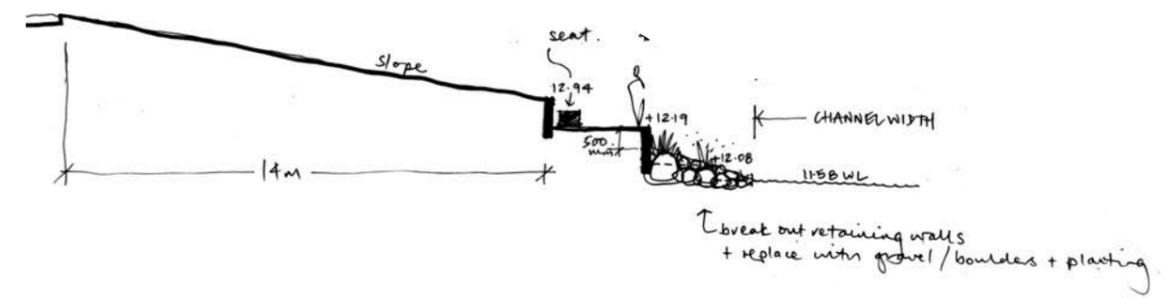
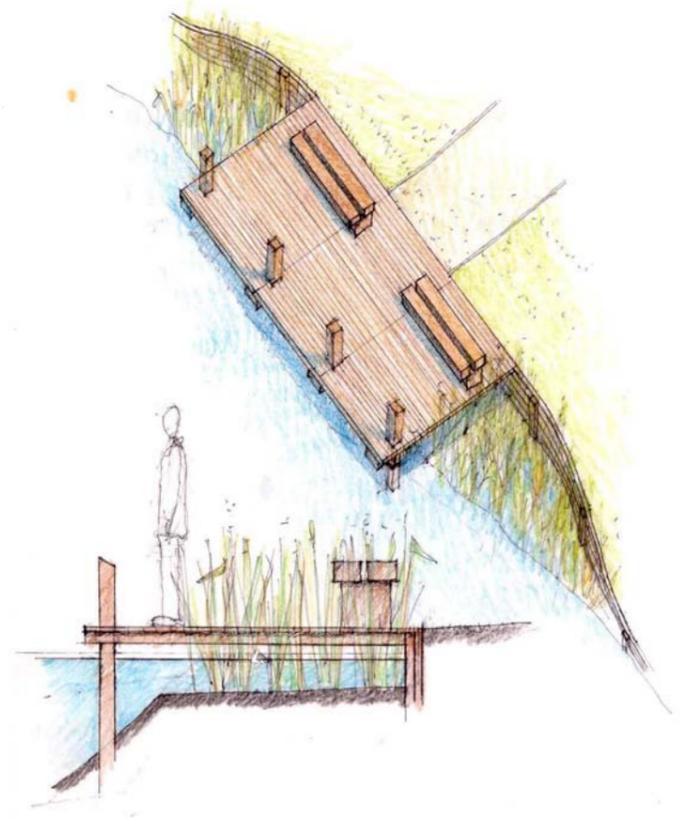
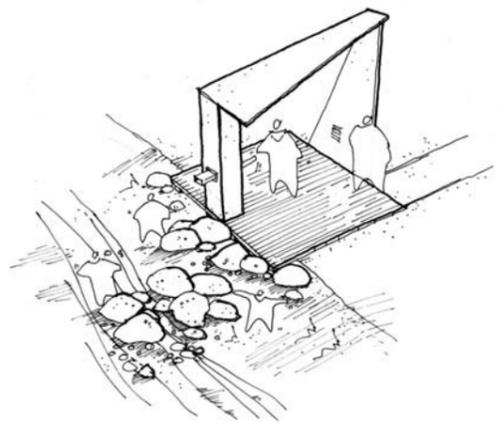
Axonometric view of the dry river channel - facing north west.



will stepping stone  
boulders stay put?!  
if not then a route  
to the river is created:  
+ that can't be a bad  
thing!



Proposed informal steps to the water's edge



# The masterplan



The overall masterplan for Ladywell Fields



- KEY TO MAIN SPACES**
-  wildflower
  -  decks
  -  new trees
  -  tarmac footpath
  -  amenity grass
  -  signage
  -  existing river corridor planting

Northern Field masterplan

## Inclusive design



Middle and Southern Field masterplan

The design of the park has been based on an understanding of the existing and potential users. Extensive consultation and analysis took place prior to agreeing a design which has ensured that the scheme is appropriate and loved by those who use it.

The regeneration of Ladywell Fields has raised the profile of the River Ravensbourne hugely. Once a hidden and forgotten channel on the perimeter of the park, the river has now become the focus and key attraction of the open space. One of the objectives was to create better access for all to the river. This vision was initially met with some anxiety locally, as some people felt that an open river channel would pose an unacceptable risk to children in a community park. Through detailed design and further consultation we were able to alleviate the concerns and it has been particularly rewarding to see the park thriving following the completion of the project. Access has been provided by re-grading banks, new DDA compliant paths, boardwalks, dipping platforms and bridges across the river.

Prior to the works, many park users were unaware of the river. Often visitors would pass through quickly, simply using the park as a route. Two years later, following completion, the average daily visitor numbers have increased with many staying for over an hour, lingering on the river banks with picnics and nets for river dipping.

We were keen to ensure that the park was not designed in sections and zones relative to individual user groups. We removed lots of railings and fully integrated both formal and informal children's play area into the park so not to create exclusive areas. The result has been a park which is comfortable for all users which encourages social interaction. A new events area has been located in the southern field which has three in ground power supplies suitable for markets and events – again this is looking at encouraging all parts of the community to be using and spending time in the park.

New paths have been installed throughout the park and were necessary these are three metres wide so that can be used as combined pedestrian and cycle paths. One of LBL's objectives is to encourage walking and cycling throughout the borough, therefore this key link between urban centres is vital to be suitable for commuting and leisure purposes. All of the paths are lit to current British Standards and specific attention has been taken to open out and highlight the entrances and nodes.

Community involvement has been a key aspect of this project and much of the activity has revolved around the river. Weekend clean ups, volunteers removing himalayan balsam from the river banks, and regular environmental education sessions focusing on habitats, life cycles and biodiversity in the river, have all ensured that local people begin to feel an ownership of the park, and are enthused and more informed about the river.

## Sustainable design

Sustainability was a main consideration when developing the design of the scheme. Given its location within an urban environment, and the objectives to improve biodiversity and the natural elements of the park, we considered a number of strategies linked to a sustainable approach.

One of the main considerations was excavated material (15,000m<sup>3</sup>) and its relocation within the site. Across the three fields the strategy was not to remove any material from site which meant that precise calculations were required to determine a balance between cut and fill. The excavated material to create the river channel, scoops and backwaters were used to re-profile paths so that they are more accessible, create landform and raise levels to assist in flood attenuation.

Other physical environmental impacts included:

- used timber from certified sustainable sources for all bridges and signage
- used native species for all planting
- used a meadow seed mix of locally appropriate seeds only
- designed the new river channel to maximise biodiversity
- created deadwood habitats to cater for the endangered stag beetle
- improved habitats in the park, reducing the area of amenity grass, and replacing it with running water, still water, marginal habitats and meadow.

Some of the amenity grassland in the park has also been replaced with wildflower meadow, providing, not only a riot of colour in early summer, but also much richer habitat for a variety of birds and insects. As a result, the number of different species present in the main part of the park has doubled since the project was completed.

Native tree planting, wild flowers and self seeding areas have been established both along the river banks throughout the park. While contributing to creating diverse, rich biodiversity habitats the planting embellishes the parkland making it an attractive and enjoyable place to be.

The social sustainable impacts of the park were also considered. One of the aims was to reduce crime and fear of crime in the park. This was achieved largely through the creation of 'self policing space' - increasing use of the park, and improving sight lines. Many of the park entrances were overgrown and it was difficult to see into the park, these were all redesigned and opened up to be inviting and safer.

The involvement of local people throughout the project also helps to safeguard the sustainability of the project. There was lots of participation through volunteer events and activities allowing people to feel a level of ownership of the park, ensuring they will not only use it, but will also care for it and invest in the space. The economically sustainable effects have also been considered. The ongoing maintenance of the park is paid for by Lewisham Council, and provided within the parks management contract.

## Promoting the park

The success of the scheme has encouraged local groups, the council and others to promote the scheme through events, walks and further funding.

Ladywell fields has a very active friends group who have been fully supportive of the improvements to the park, organized events, promotion via social networks Facebook etc. Lewisham Council web site has also been used as part of the on going consultation and promotion of the completed projects.

The Quercus project web site, works and project outcomes have been disseminated throughout the EU which gives a valuable case study for other areas to use when considering improvements to green space including rivers.

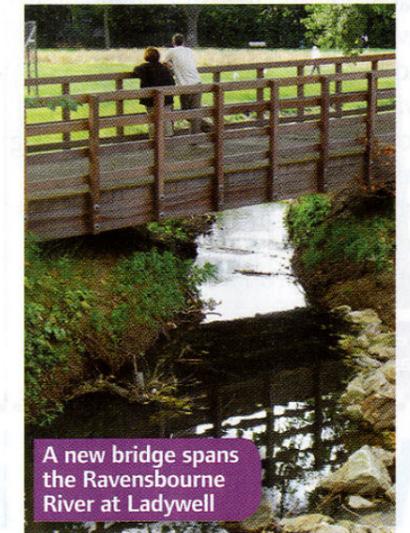
As part of an ongoing programme, river clean ups and Green Gym volunteering continue to be organised within the park – there is lots of ongoing volunteering within the park which is supporting the council in maintaining the facilities and making improvements. Further funding has been secured from English Nature's "Access to Nature fund" which has allowed further education work with local schools and community groups, engaging with the community



## LADYWELL FIELDS GETS A FURTHER MAKEOVER

★ Ladywell Fields Park has received £2 million in funding to redevelop the rest of the park. Many of you will have seen how a featureless open space was converted into a riverside haven in the north part of Ladywell Fields with the creation of a new river channel through the park. The new funding has been received by a central Government fund called Parklands and it will be used to transform the park with new features, facilities and better access to the river. These will entice more people to enjoy the park, improve habitats for wildlife, improve safety and provide effective flood defence. They should also encourage people to use the Waterlink Way – a riverside footpath and cycle way which follows the river from Lower Sydenham, through Ladywell Fields to Deptford Creek.

If you would like to tell us your ideas on how Ladywell Fields can be



A new bridge spans the Ravensbourne River at Ladywell

improved, please come along to a walkabout and workshop on Saturday 4 April. Meet in the park by Bourneville Road at 10am. For more details, please call Alison Taylor on 020 8314 8758 or email [alison.taylor@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:alison.taylor@lewisham.gov.uk).

Celebrating the scheme. An official opening event attended by the mayor of Lewisham and key members from Design for London took place in May 2011.

On Saturday 17th September 2011 Ladywell Fields has been included in the Open House London. Mehron Kirk, the design lead from BDP, LBL and the Landscape Institute will be leading a guided tour around the park.



The Mayor Sir Steve Bullock at the opening event

# Open House London



Architectural information

## Contrasting Landscapes in Lewisham: Ladywell Fields



The first phase was centered on the creation of a new course for a stretch of the river allowing it to meander naturally through the fields, animating the parkland. The creation of riverside viewing platforms and inviting park entrances encourage people to use and enjoy the park. The second phase removed concrete culverts from the river enhancing the water environment, and introduced new social and engaging play spaces. Hand pumped fountains splash water over large boulders in the dry river bed area creating a unique, interactive and educational space. An enhanced footpath network with new lighting, boardwalks and park furniture provides new links to surrounding areas connecting the local community to their parkland.

Native tree planting, wild flowers and self seeding areas have been established both along the river banks throughout the park. While contributing to creating diverse, rich biodiversity habitats the planting embellishes the parkland making it an attractive and enjoyable place to be.



*A river restoration project within an existing park. The scheme has created new river channels, backwaters, pools and riffles, and greatly improved habitats within the river corridor along with better access and educational benefits.*

This riverside park has been transformed in two phases, the first phase part of EU funding in 2007 and the second phase completed earlier this year. The overriding concept has been to build upon the park's greatest natural asset – The River Ravensbourne. The project has revived the river by uplifting its parkland setting through re-graded banks and the creation of a new waterscape of backwaters, toes, pools and riffles. Improvements also provide better access to the waterside and enriched habitats and natural biodiversity.



## There's a whole new LADYWELL FIELDS



Including:  
 New walking routes  
 New access to the River Ravensbourne  
 New adventure playground and sports courts

Join the celebrations:  
 Saturday 28 May, 12 noon–3pm  
 by the Malyns Road entrance, near the corkscrew bridge



[openhouselondon.org.uk](http://openhouselondon.org.uk)

Landscape Institute  
 Inspiring great places

BDP.

Lewisham

An initiative by  
 Open City  
 Opening eyes, minds and doors

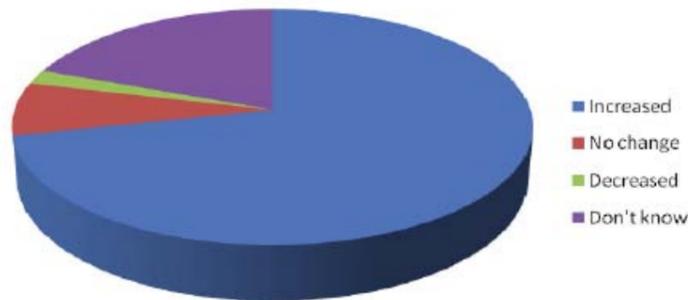
BDP. Lewisham

## Following completion

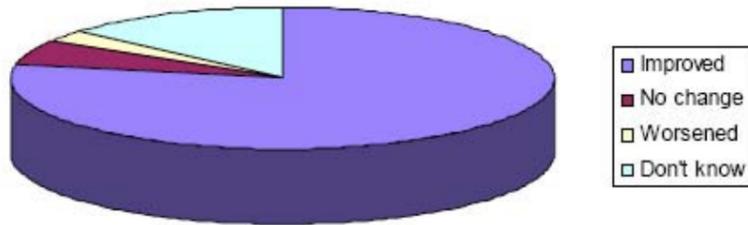
"Whilst chilling out in Ladywell Fields for 3 or 4 hours yesterday afternoon with a cuppa from the cafe, Cynthia reading a book, Daisy paddling in the River (with lots of other kids), it occurred to me, not for the first time, how fantastically Ladywell Fields is becoming what we hoped, a few years back, it might become."

Park User Group secretary

### Perceptions of the use & enjoyment of Ladywell Fields and the River Ravensbourne



### Has the QUERCUS project improved habitats in Ladywell Fields?



As part of the EU Life funding for the northern field a series of baseline information was gathered prior to commencing the design and this was then repeated following completion. These were aimed at responding to the QUERCUS three main aims:

- To increase use and enjoyment of Ladywell Fields and the Ravensbourne River corridor
- To reduce crime and fear of crime
- To improve habitats for wildlife

The achievement of each aim was examined in turn and documented within a report. A summary of findings are represented on this page. The information relies on data collected over July in 2006 and 2008.

### Perception of change

The changes made have been well received by park users and local people. The bar chart below shows how survey respondents rated the major physical changes carried out to the park through the QUERCUS project 2006-2008.

- 1 General landscape changes
- 2 Opening up the nature reserve to become part of the park, accessible to all
- 3 New river channel
- 4 New path to the station
- 5 New entrance, renewed use and renovation of the education centre
- 6 Removal and planting of trees
- 7 Removal of railings along the existing river channel
- 8 Renovation of St Mary's Garden

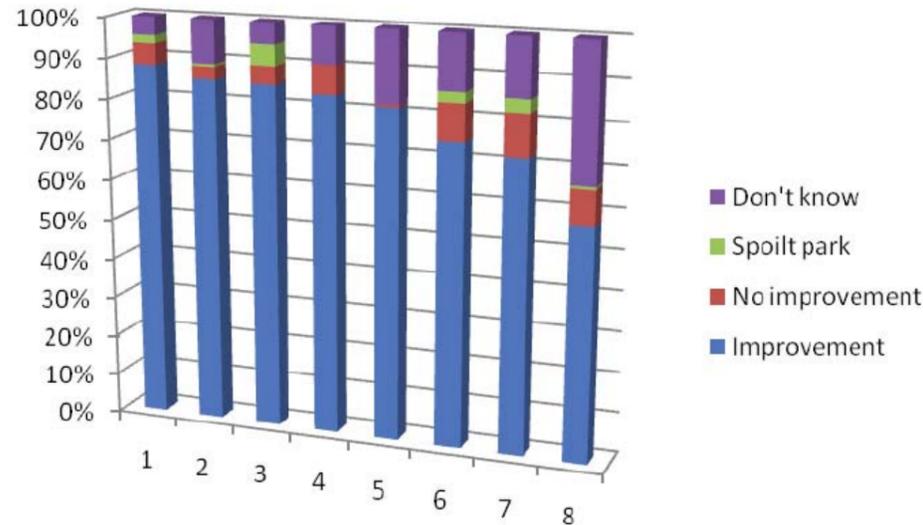
The most popular change is to the general landscape – 88% of respondents think the QUERCUS project has improved the landscape, and over 85% agree that creating the new river channel has improved the park. Even the removal of railings and trees – opposed by some when the project sought planning permission - has been welcomed by over 70% of respondents.



Volunteers helping out in Ladywell to remove some old fencing



School children learning about the wildlife found in Ladywell Fields



### Park Usage

To provide a snapshot of total park usage, the park keeper carries out a headcount of people in the park at around 2pm each day. Data from July 2005 was used to create the baseline from which QUERCUS worked. This is compared with data from July 2008 on the graphs below:

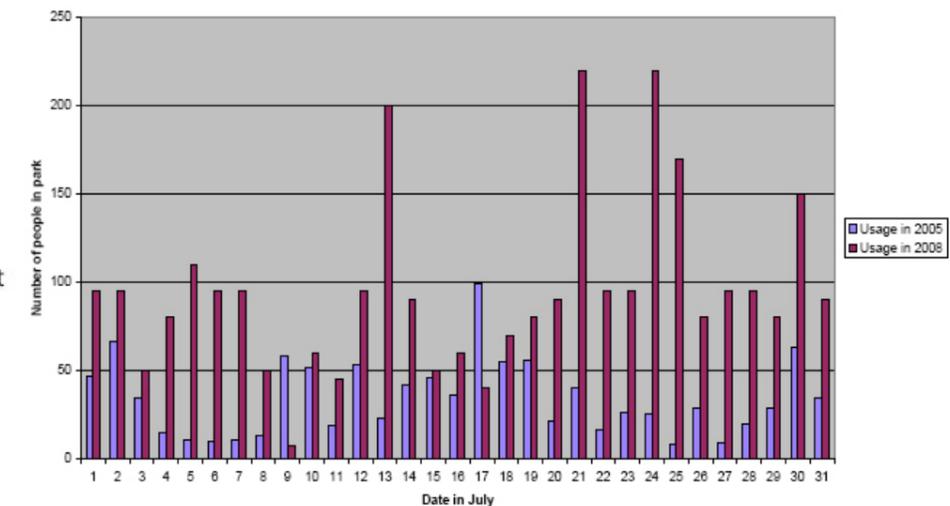
The graph above show a dramatic increase in park usage since the completion of the QUERCUS works. In 2005, the average number of people in the park at the time of the headcount was 34. The average number of people in the park in 2008 however, throughout July, was 94 – a 276% increase on 2005!

This two and a half fold increase in usage exceeds the aims and expectations with which the QUERCUS project set out.

Previously the children's playground was the major draw of the park - almost half of park users normally used the playground during their visit in 2006. By summer 2008 this had fallen to 21%. Prior to the project, the playground was one of the few facilities in the park, now the river and landscape itself provides enjoyment and amusement. As a result, while many children and families still use the park, the river, its banks and pools provide a natural environment for explorative play and have become more popular than the artificial environment of the playground.



Bar chart to compare park usage in 2005 and 2008



### Changes in perception of the park

The survey of park users revealed a clear perception that the general facilities in the park have improved through the QUERCUS project. People now rate park facilities (benches and bins, the cafe, facilities for children, paths and maintenance and sports facilities) considerably more highly than they did before the works took place, as the bar chart below demonstrates.

Interestingly survey respondents felt the sports facilities were better in 2008 than in 2006, although within that timeframe the only substantial changes to sports facilities in the park were the removal of a tennis court and football pitch! It seems that the success of QUERCUS has engendered a positive feeling towards the park such that even facilities which have not been enhanced through the project are now regarded with greater satisfaction than they were two years ago.

Whilst most park users feel the facilities in the park have improved, nevertheless, there remain some concerns about using the open space. For the vast majority of people these issues do not create insurmountable barriers, but they may tinge the enjoyment of their visits. On the whole the number of survey respondents rating issues of concern has decreased significantly as the bar chart below (figure 6) illustrates. There are just three areas in which levels of concern have escalated during the lifetime of QUERCUS. The first is concern about dogs – particularly those not on a lead. This is likely to be as a result of the increase in number of people in London owning dogs which are perceived to be aggressive or threatening. Given that 22% of survey respondents were concerned about this issue, consideration is being given to establishing a ‘dogs on leads’ policy in this part of the park, enforced by the park keeper.

The other two issues of increasing concern to park users are related to perceptions of safety – park users increasingly feel that the space is too enclosed, and that the visibility of paths is poor. This is despite the efforts made by QUERCUS to design out crime from the park. Interestingly, the re-landscaping, the tree pruning and removal in Ladywell Fields have opened up views to and from the road, making the space less enclosed, and on pre-existing paths visibility has only been enhanced. However, it may be that survey respondents are thinking of the new paths in the wildlife area where sensitivity to the natural environment has led to designing less clear sight lines than in other parts of the park.

### Reducing crime and fear of crime

At the beginning of the project, the QUERCUS partnership employed Groundwork SE London to research criminal activity and fear of crime within the three urban river corridors. They developed a model which all three partners could employ to make their river corridors safer.

Essentially three approaches were recommended:

Firstly, and most crucially, Groundwork recommended creating self-policing space. To achieve this the open space needs to be busy, and sight lines clear. In such spaces park users look out for each other, and any potential perpetrator is prevented from carrying out criminal activity as too many pairs of eyes are watching. The space should be well maintained, as neglect generates fear of crime, and may indicate to potential perpetrators that criminal acts will be tolerated.

Secondly, Groundwork recommended protecting the potential victim, by removing potential hiding places, providing formal surveillance and creating alternative routes so a victim has easy means of escape.

Thirdly, Groundwork recommended that in some specific areas, limiting access to parts of a linear open space could make it safer, by excluding potential perpetrators from areas which are difficult to enliven.

The QUERCUS project in Lewisham has sought to implement this model in Ladywell Fields. Groundwork identified particular issues within the site which could encourage criminal activity. These are listed below, together with the solutions implemented to overcome these problems.

Survey results show the changes have been effective. Despite the dramatically increased usage of the park, the number of crimes reported in the park has remained constant, and people feel significantly safer. Prior to the project, only 44% people felt safe or very safe in the park; following the improvements this has risen to 78%.

### Species diversity

In the species survey carried out by the GLA in 2005 areas containing large amounts of amenity grassland were less biodiverse than other habitat types such as running water and semi-improved grass land.

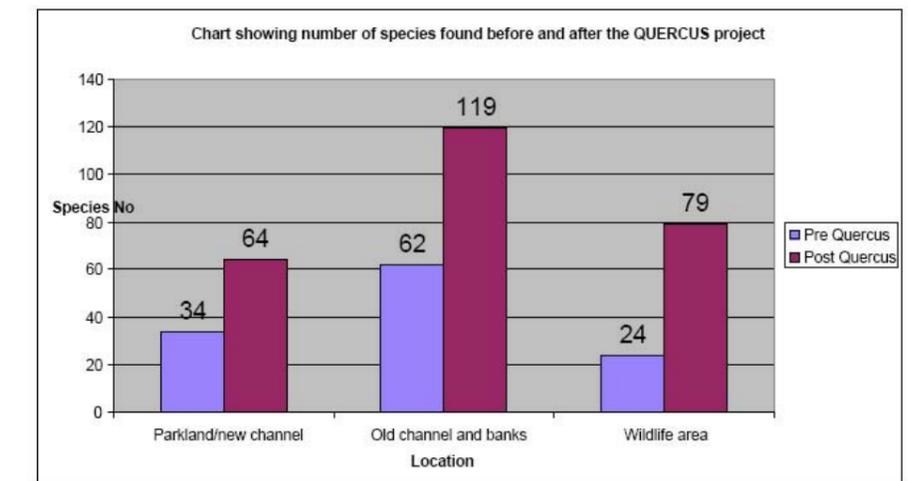
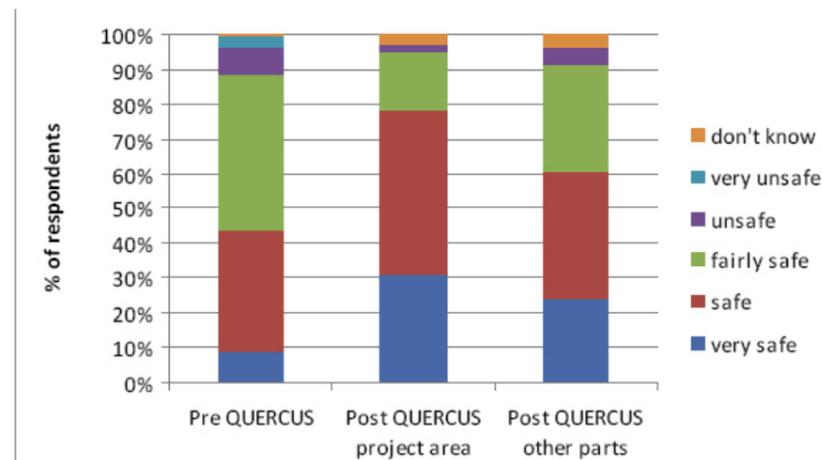
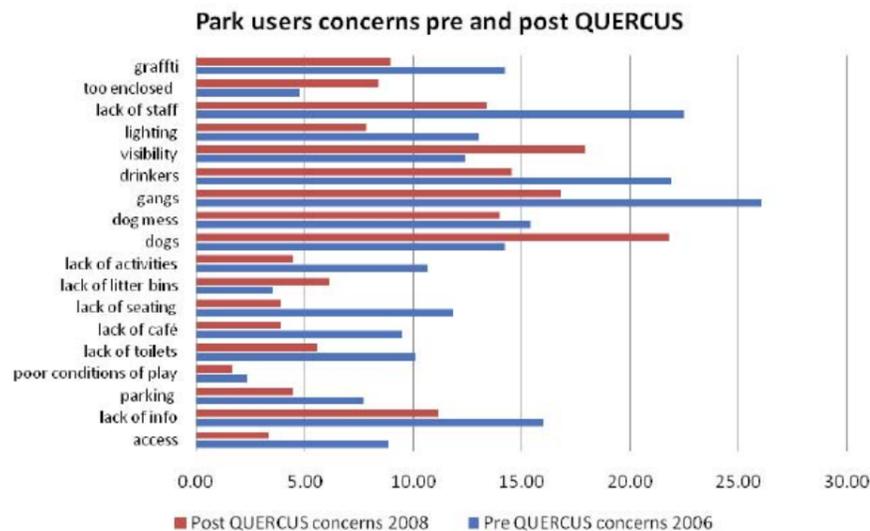
Amenity grassland has been significantly reduced in the project area and replaced with semi-improved grassland, running water, ephemeral pools and dead wood. This has had a positive effect on the number of species found in the northern field of Ladywell Fields.

The survey of park users carried out since the QUERCUS project shows that local people recognise and appreciate these changes, as the pie chart below illustrates:

The QUERCUS team are also delighted to see the dramatic increase in the number of different species already using these habitats, as revealed by the survey. As good management of the site continues, and the habitats mature and establish further, additional biodiversity gains are expected.

The former nature reserve in the northern field was not part of the park, but a small area of dense scrubland between the park and the station, only accessible to a few key holders. It was not managed well, and as such was not an effective haven for wildlife. In the species survey carried out prior to the project in this part of the park, only 24 different species of flora and fauna were found. The fences were removed by local volunteers, ground re-graded with spoil from the river channel (all of which was used within the project site) and a gravel path was established to the former station ticket office, now used as an environmental education centre. Different habitat areas have now been established through the work of a group of regular volunteers - including coppiced woodland, deadwood habitat, a pond, and woodland meadow. The next project is to lay the mixed hedgerow. Already the number of different species recorded in the area has increased to 79.

These improvements in habitats and biodiversity are particularly encouraging in an inner city park. The changes show that it is possible to create a haven, not only for people, but also for wildlife, in a relatively small green space within an urban environment.



The completed scheme: the northern field









The middle fields

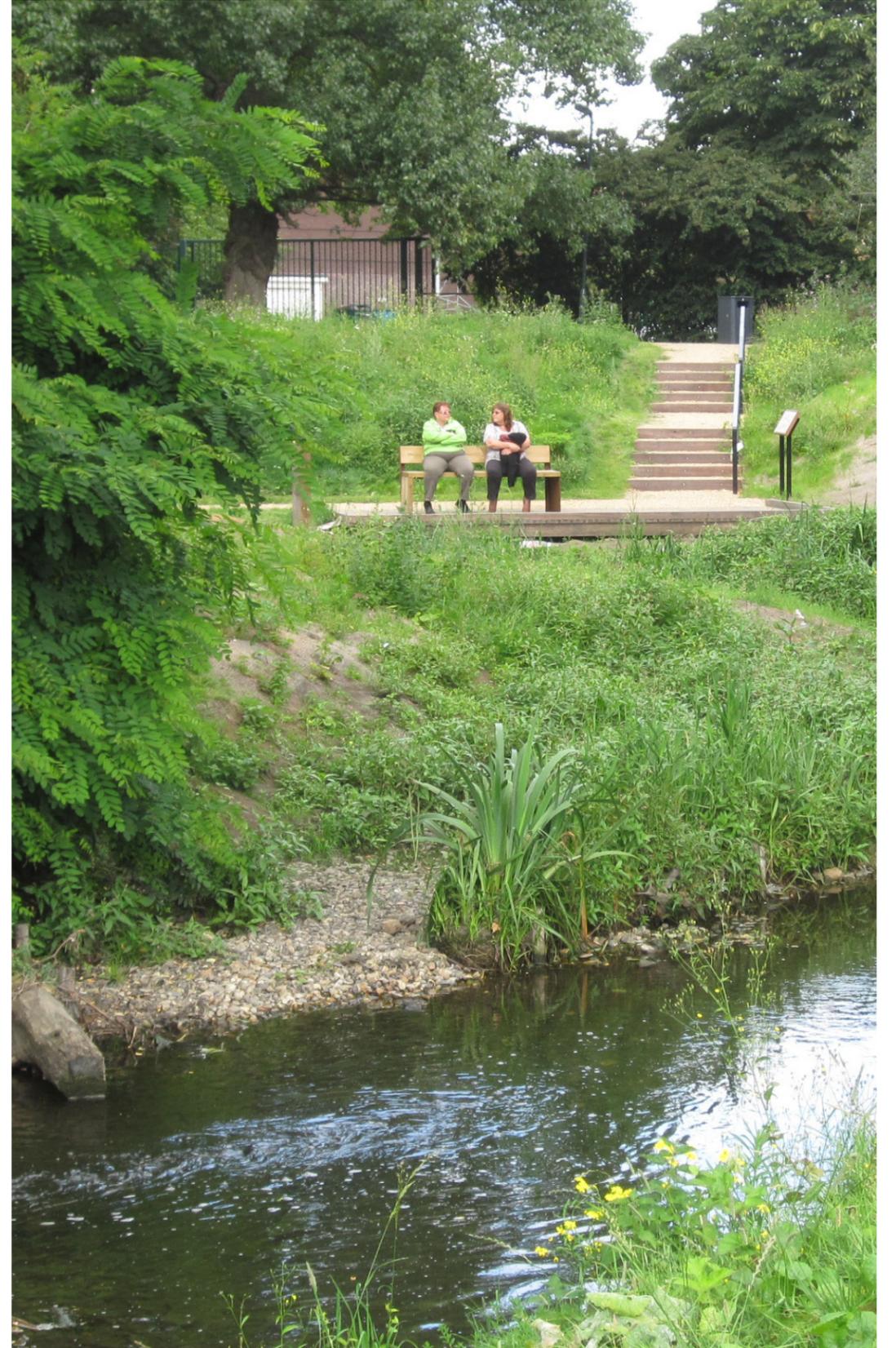
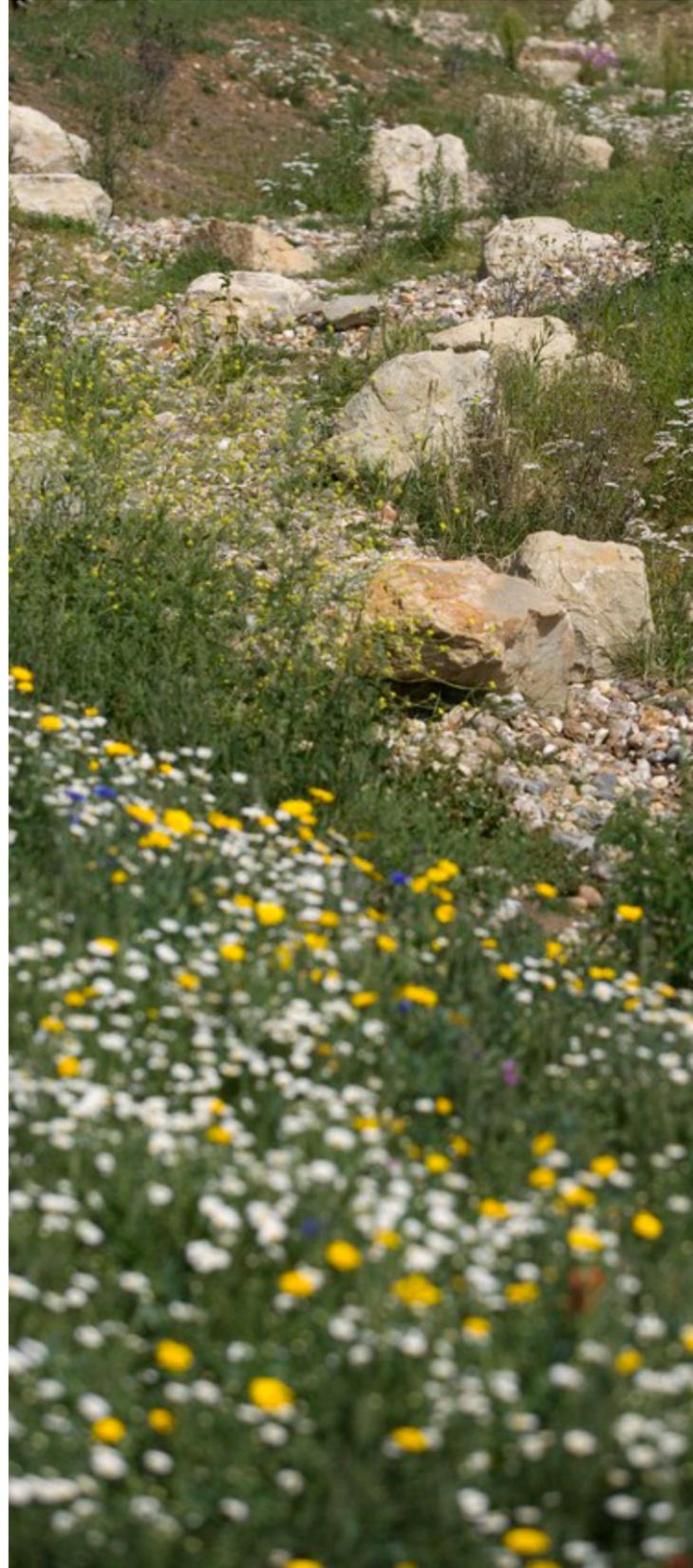






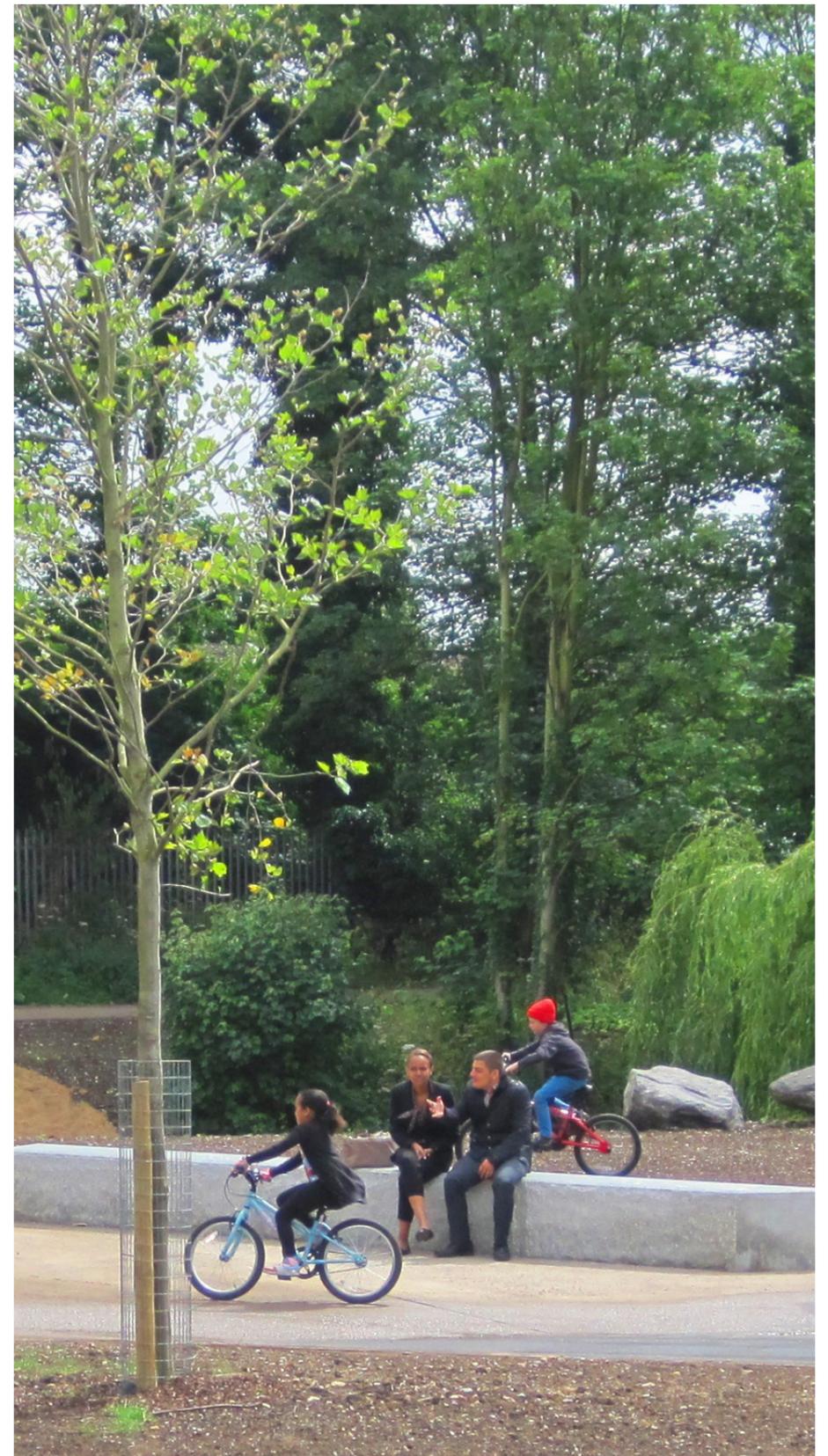
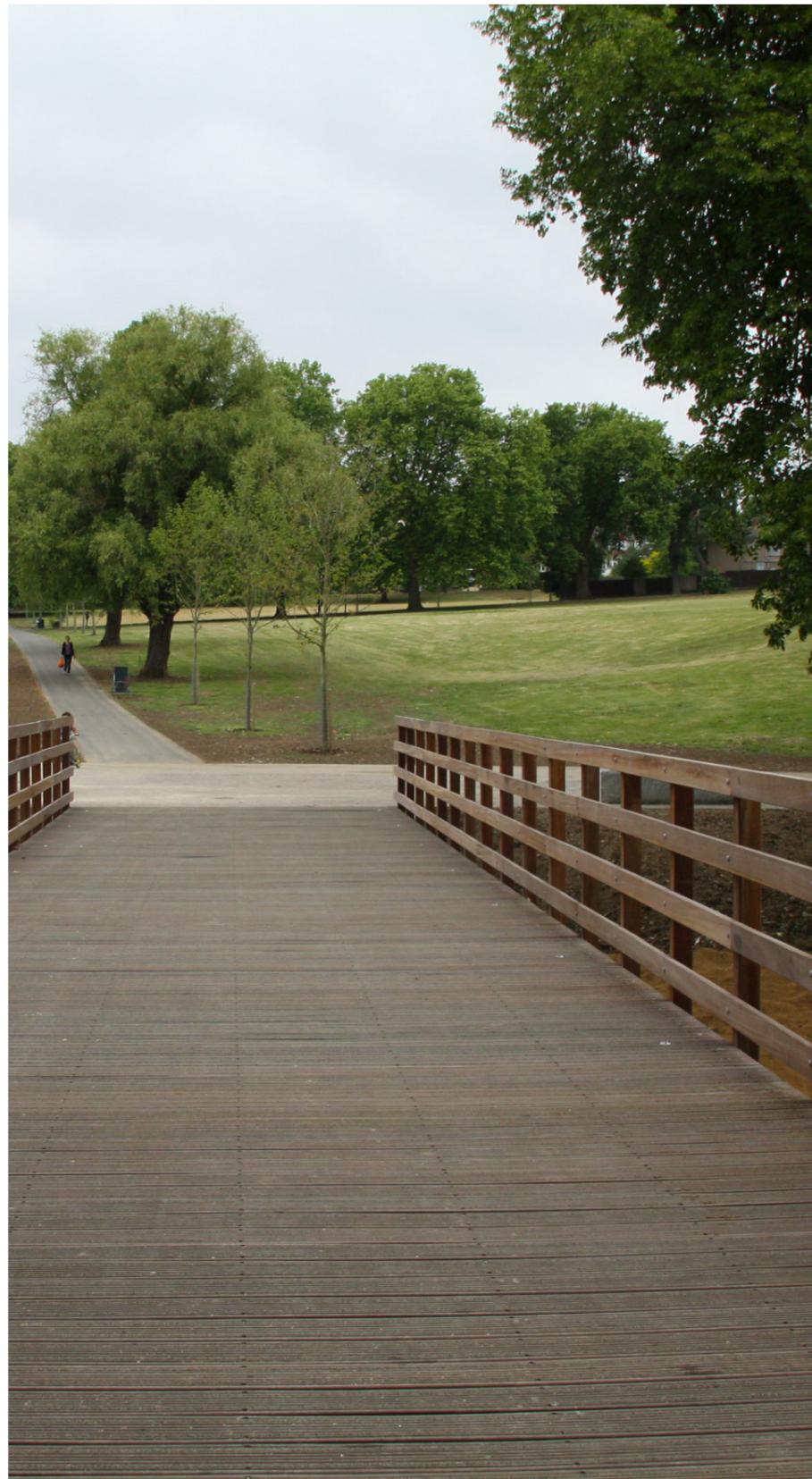
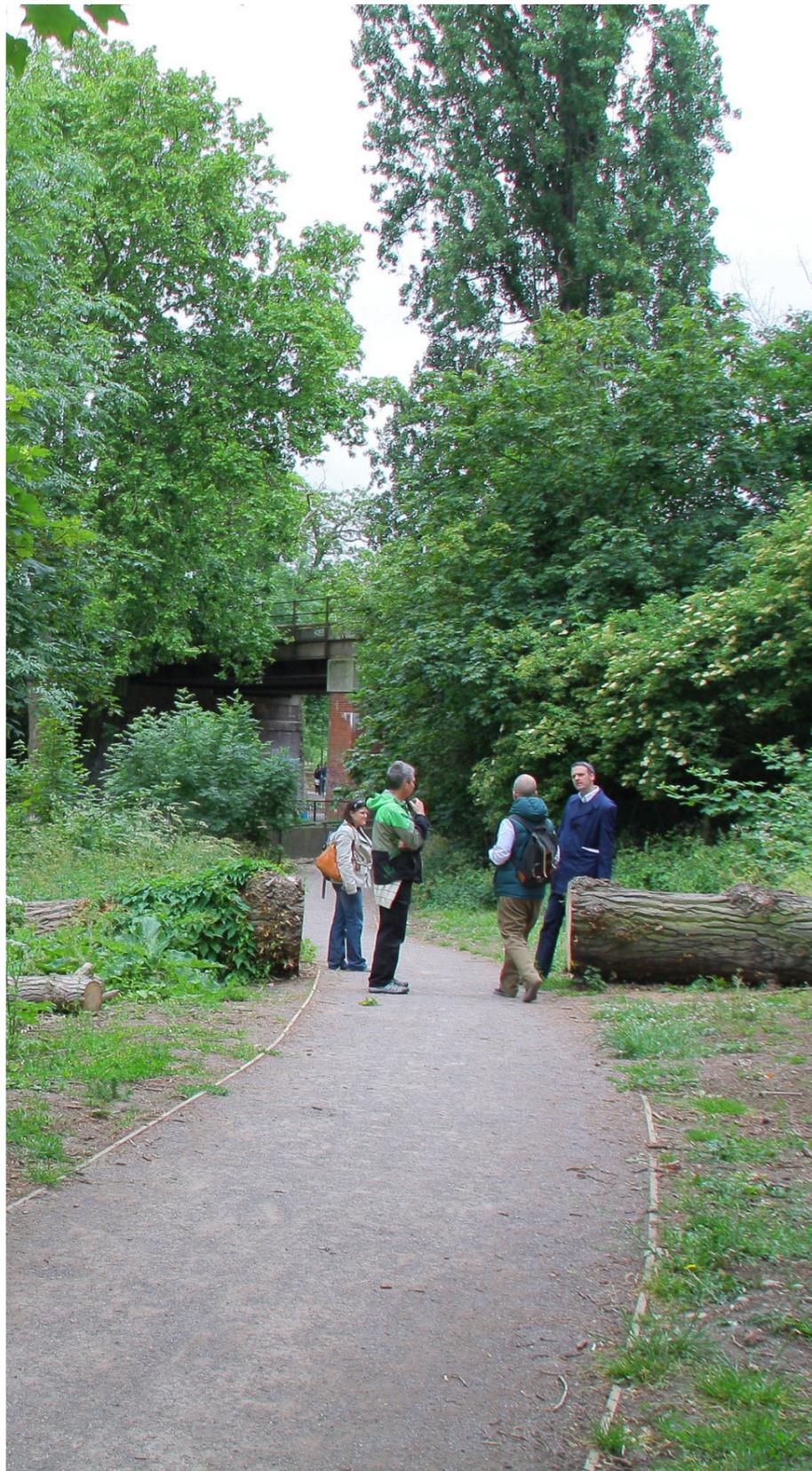




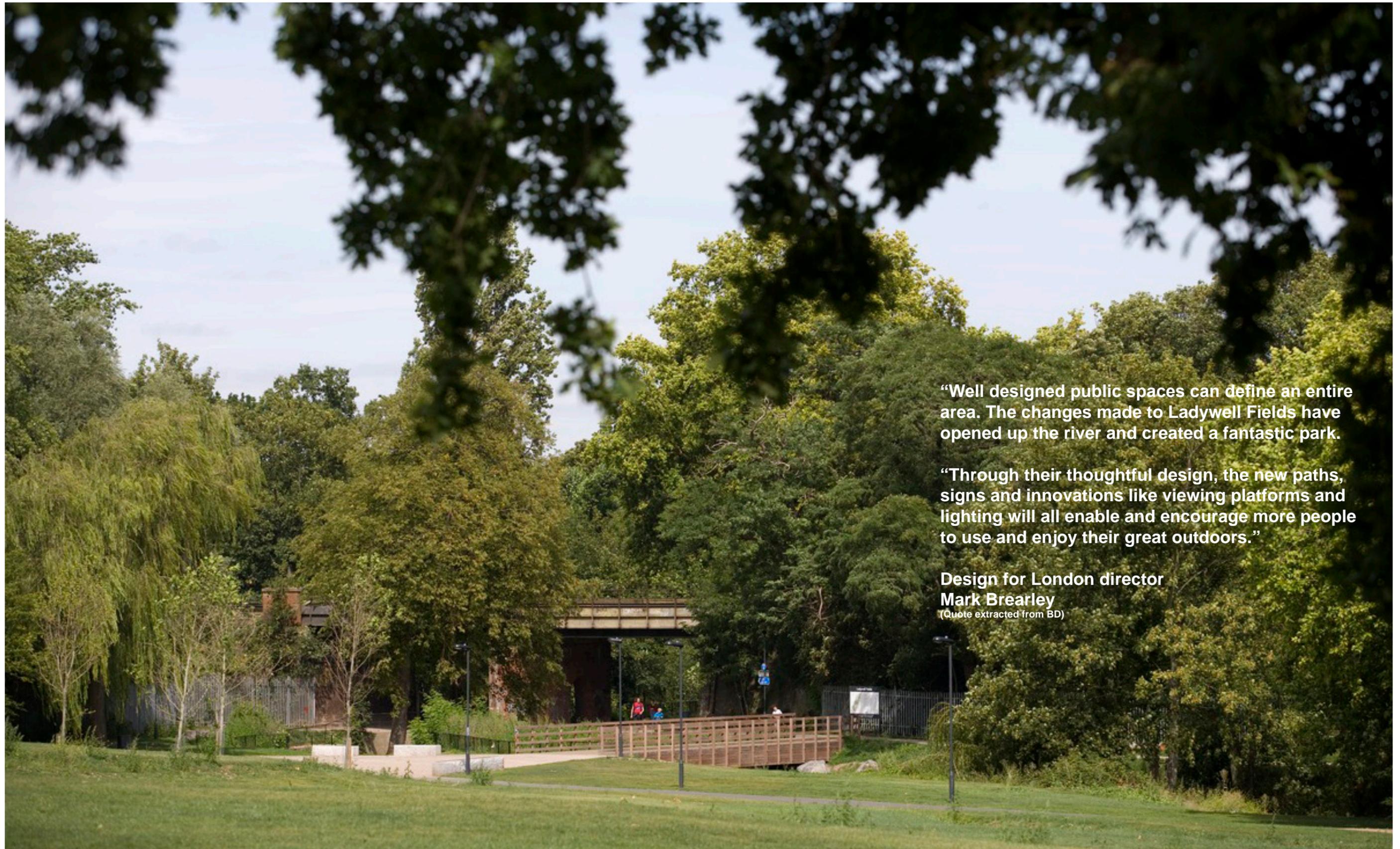


THE HUB...





## The southern field



“Well designed public spaces can define an entire area. The changes made to Ladywell Fields have opened up the river and created a fantastic park.

“Through their thoughtful design, the new paths, signs and innovations like viewing platforms and lighting will all enable and encourage more people to use and enjoy their great outdoors.”

Design for London director

**Mark Brearley**

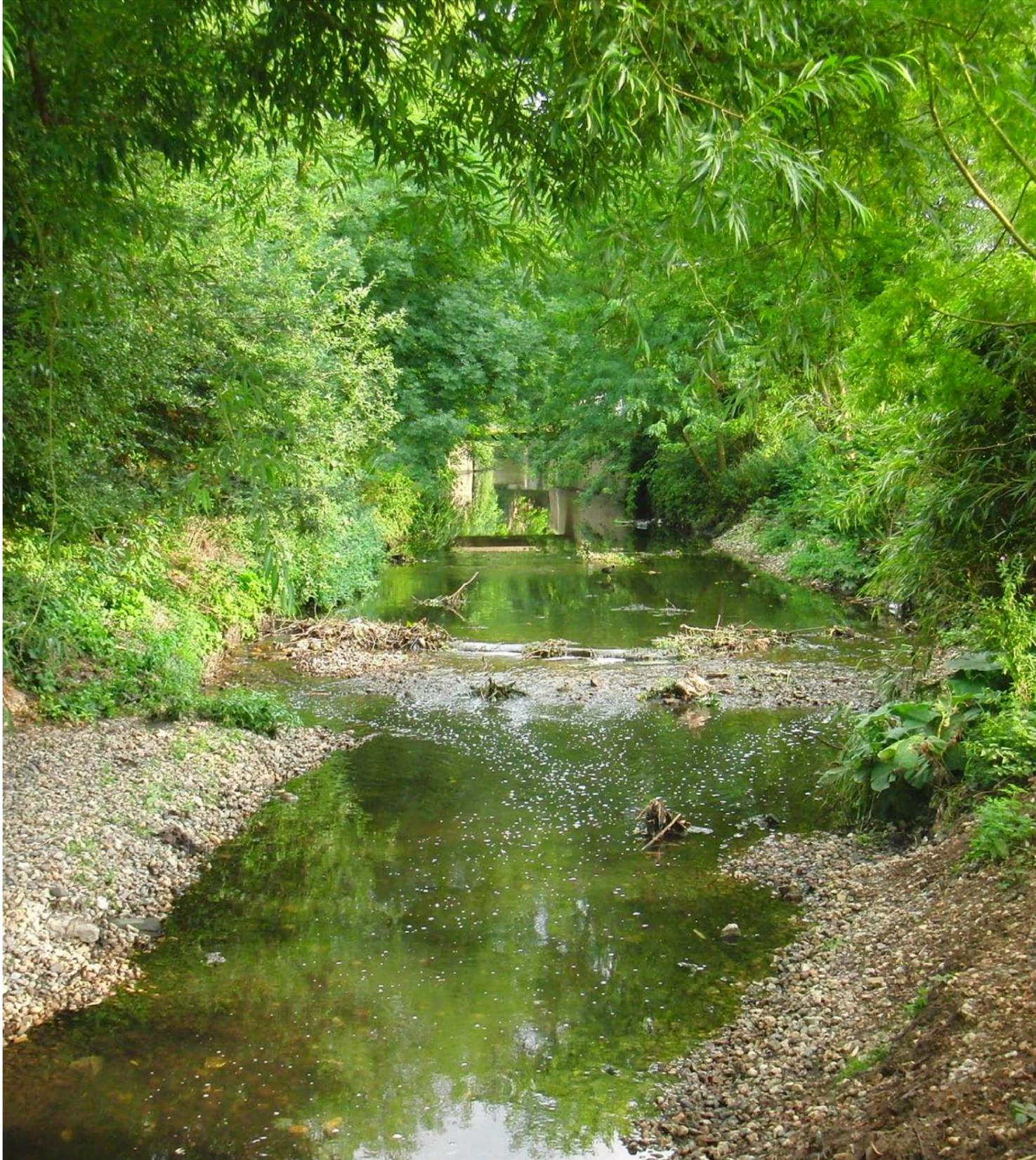
(Quote extracted from BD)



"The landscaping of the River Ravensbourne and its parkland has transformed the central and southern sections of Ladywell Fields, successfully building on the earlier award winning QUERCUS project in the northern field. As Cabinet Member for Customer Services, it gives me great pleasure to support this wonderful project's application."

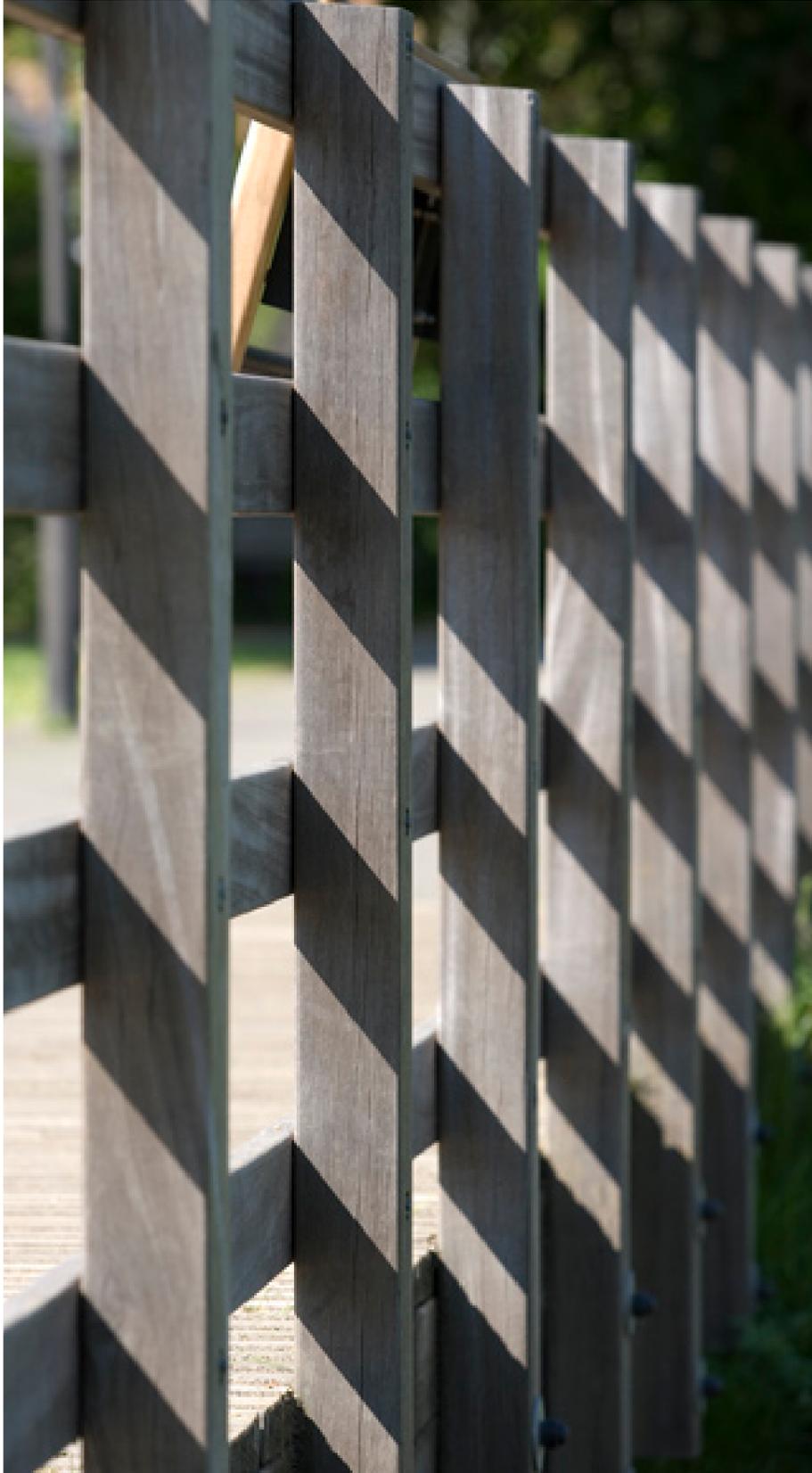
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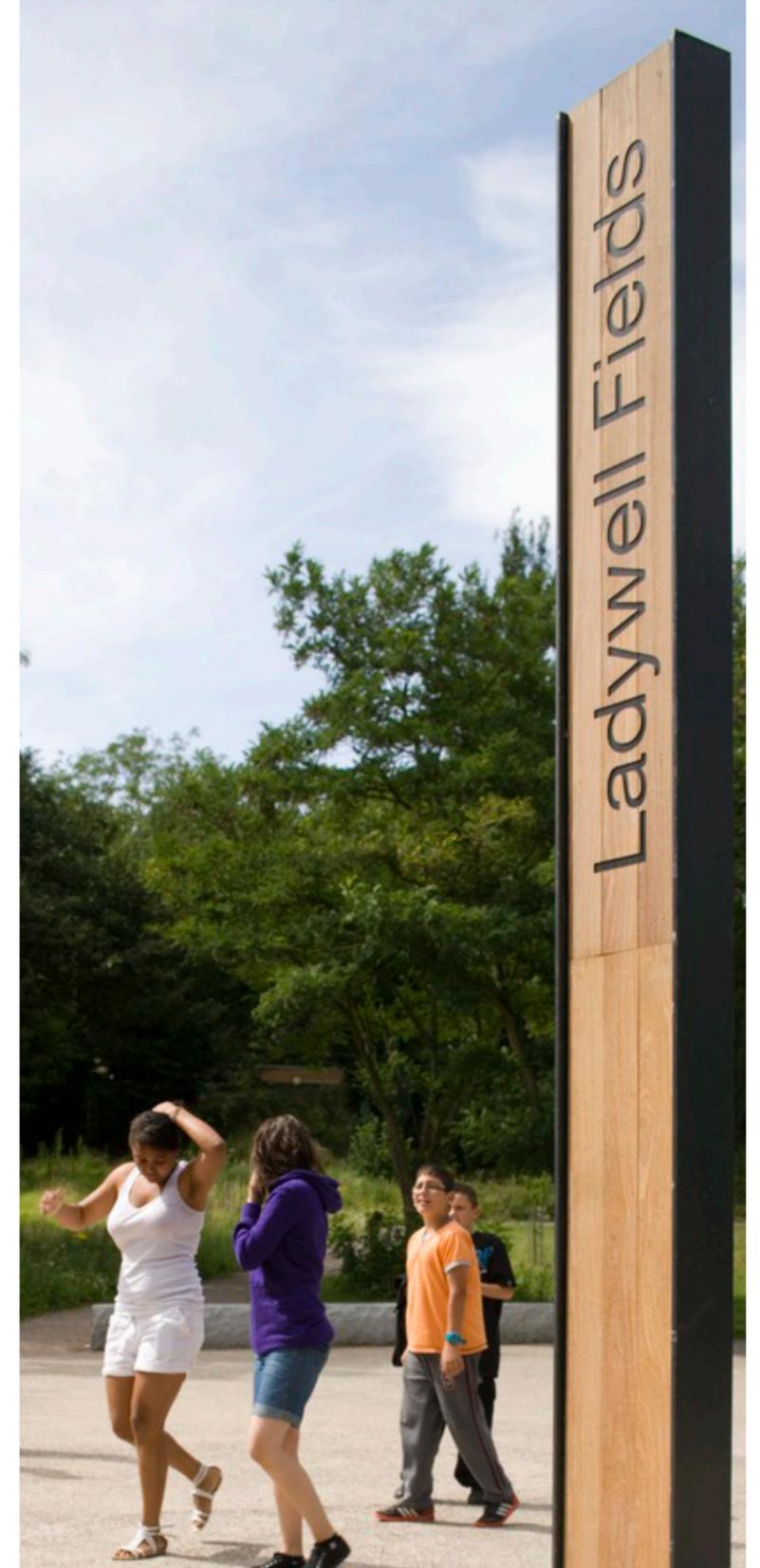
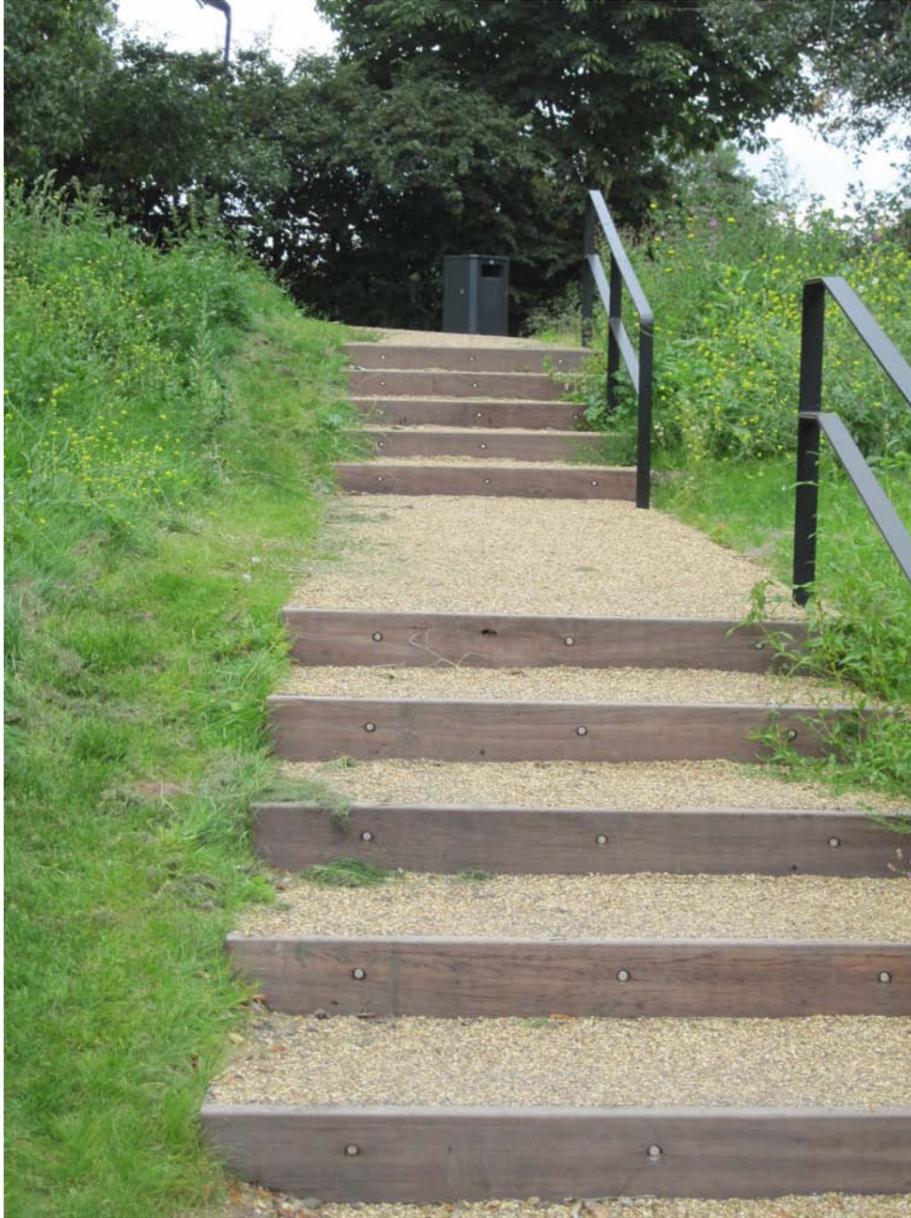












## Maintaining the park

A detailed maintenance and management plan has been prepared and the park has been awarded green flag status. The maintenance contract has been written with sufficient flexibility to allow for dramatic landscape changes and will be maintained by Glendale the current contractor. Through ongoing meetings with the design, client and maintenance team the opportunity has been taken to ensure that the contractor is fully aware of all aspects of maintenance required, including more specialist techniques such as meadow management and the maintenance of river channels and banks.

The format and content of this Management Plan also follows guidance provided in 'Raising the Standard – The Green Flag Award Guidance Manual (updated 2009)'. Ladywell Fields has been awarded green flag status.

The purpose of the Management Plan is to:

- Develop and cost the way in which Ladywell Fields is managed and maintained as to ensure an enjoyable experience for present and future users;
- Identify and address who is responsible for certain aspects of management;
- Identify, discuss and resolve issues relating to park infrastructure, park users and available resources;

The Management and Maintenance plan has been written to cover the new landscape for a 10-year period. It is a 'working document' that brings together all the information relating to the park for use by all those involved in its management. It will be updated, revised, periodically reviewed and formally rewritten in the 10th year after completion of the restoration works. The Plan also serves as a benchmark against which delivery and performance of the identified objectives can be measured.

## Scheme costs

### Northern field

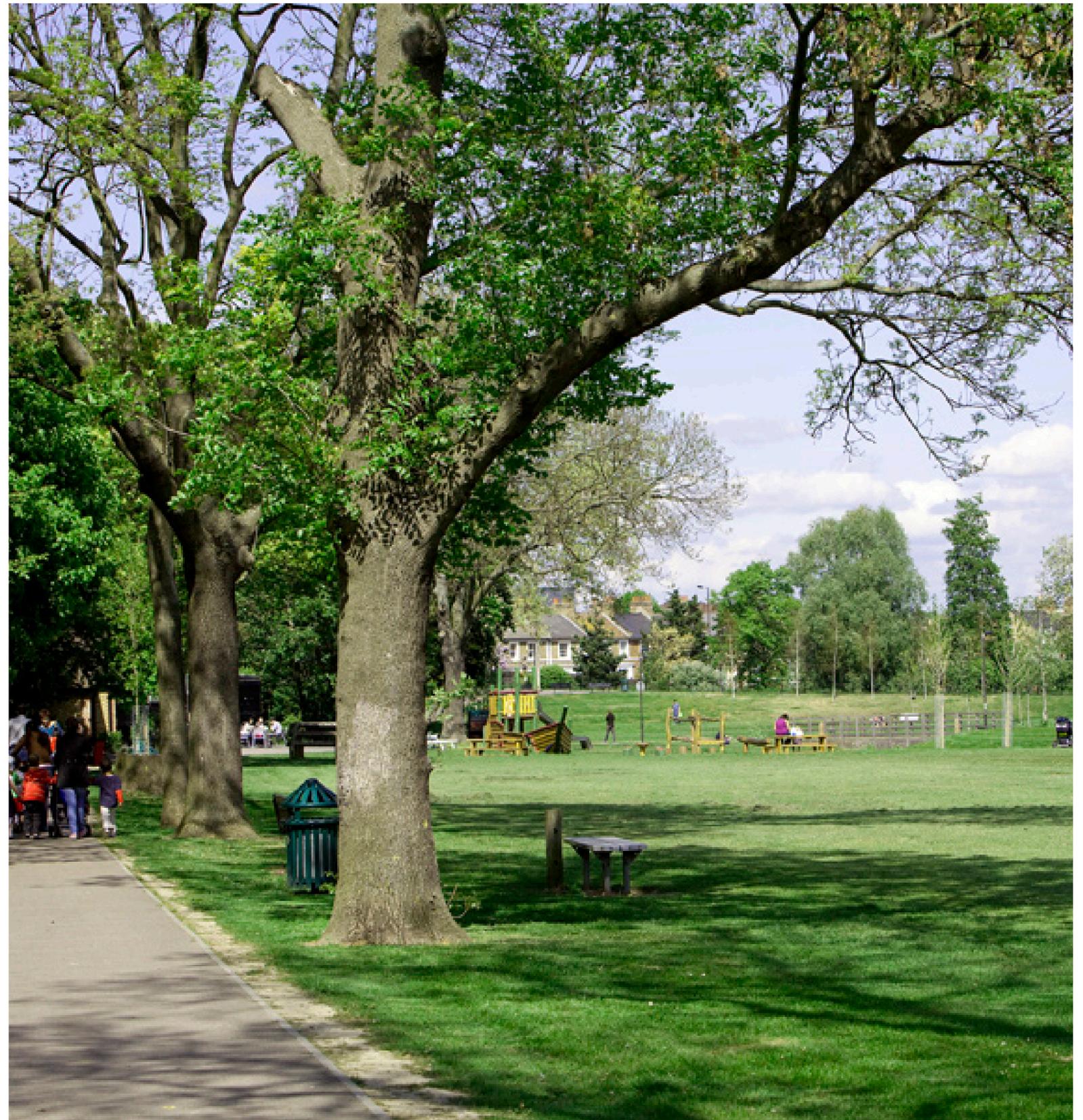
prelims	£63,720.00
site clearance	£13,190.00
earthworks	£53,532.00
pavements	£53,225.00
lighting	£3,775.00
bridges	£101,125.00
street furniture	£50,065.00
river revetments and planting	£18,049.00
soft landscaping	£66,517.00

Total scheme cost **£423,198.00**

### Middle and Southern fields

prelims	£134,847.17
site clearance	£79,639.96
earthworks	£142,388.80
pavements	£299,133.27
lighting	£119,536.78
bridges	£302,313.83
street furniture	£76,559.97
sport and play	£92,069.59
river revetments and planting	£47,223.16
soft landscaping	£110,787.51

Total scheme cost **£1,404,500.04**



## Project team

### Client

London Borough of Lewisham  
Regeneration  
Programme, Management & Property  
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www.bdp.com

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### Main Contractor

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Contact: Terry Willemite  
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