



# Coombe Abbey Park



## Management Plan 2024 - 2028





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## ***Declaration***

Coventry City Council (the Council) recognises and accepts the need to provide the financial resources required to implement the Management and Maintenance Plan for Coombe Abbey Park for a minimum period of ten years. The Council agrees to up-hold the standards of management and maintenance indicated within the plan, to be evidenced by securing a Green Flag Award and Green Flag Heritage Award. The 5 year Management and Maintenance Plan, including the Financial Plan is formally adopted by the Council.

Coventry City Council, Parks Service  
Date: 20 November 2023





# Summary

## Executive summary

The plan concentrates on those areas of the park currently managed by Coventry City Council although reference is made to areas of historic landscape currently not in the Council's land holdings.

Consultation is and will be an ongoing process with our key partners and service users. This plan covers the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2023.

The plan is designed to cover the three key areas of management – historic buildings and landscape, environmental conservation, and visitor management.

### Understanding the value of Coombe

The social and economic benefit of parks and green spaces is becoming increasingly more understood within the national agenda.

A key issue that has been recognised during the last five years is the need to integrate and improve our management of the country park as an integral part of the Coventry and Warwickshire landscape, the emphasis of a landscape approach rather than site-based approach to managing the natural environment is one of the key messages in Central Governments first white paper on the natural environment for 20 years - The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature. This issue will be addressed in this management plan, one of the key drivers will be the Dunsmore Living Landscape Partnership which is already in place and has started to drive landscape wide initiatives, across Coventry and Warwickshire.

Whilst Coombe is very much a country park, with excellent links to Warwickshire's broader countryside, its proximity to the City of Coventry means that many of the demands which are placed upon it are similar, if not identical, to those placed on urban parks. These challenges are met by a dedicated team of staff, who are based on site, supporting the extensive range of facilities and experiences offered at Coombe. This enables

the provision of a safe and discreetly structured visitor experience which recognises the needs of most visitors to the park who desire access to the 'open countryside' whilst enjoying the comforts and convenience of the onsite amenities and services that might normally be expected in an urban setting.

Coombe, therefore, with its range of habitats, wonderful opportunities for structured and unstructured play, educational resources, and its setting within a unique historic landscape has the potential to contribute significantly to the lifelong learning, and health and welfare of the city's residents. Coombe also contributes to the economy by adding value to the surrounding property, encouraging employment and inward investment through a positive image of the city, and the site clearly attracts local, regional, and national visitors.

The final report of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force, stated that:

“The quality of parks and green spaces provides a quick and highly visible indicator of whether an area is an attractive place for people to live and for business to locate. The potential of parks and green spaces in enhancing and contributing to the changing economies of towns and cities should therefore underpin regeneration programmes.”







# Part 1

*Where are we now?*

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 What sort of management plan?

Coombe Abbey Park is designated as an historic landscape, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and a Local Wildlife Site. It was acquired by Coventry City Council in 1964 and has been managed since then as a valuable recreational and educational resource for the sub region and beyond. The Coombe estate has seen many changes between the formation of the Cistercian Abbey in the twelfth century to the opening of Coombe Abbey Hotel and improved services for the public in 1993. This management plan will aim to ensure that we learn the lessons of the past and that any future developments will enhance rather than destroy any of the historic and natural features which are essential to the character of this beautiful park.

#### The main reasons for developing this management plan are to:

- Set out a clear vision for Coombe Abbey Park
- Promote consensus through consultation and involvement
- Ensure continuity and capacity
- Prepare for change
- Ensure the site is properly described
- Provide a framework for making decisions
- Set clear standards
- Enable strategic planning
- Set out a clear and achievable action plan
- Establish a framework for monitoring achievement of the action plan

**‘The management plan needs to be a site-specific, working document that provides a clear vision of the site’s development and should identify how the Green Flag criteria are managed and maintained.’**

#### Green Flag Guidelines

### 1.2 Structure of management plan

#### Where are we now?

- Introduction
- Policy context
- Site description

#### Where do we want to get to?

- Vision
- Assessment and analysis

#### How will we get there?

- Work / action plan
- Finance and resources

#### How will we know when we have arrived?

- Monitor and review

This management plan is based on a structure that has been devised to meet the needs of the Council’s Parks Service, Historic England, Natural England and to meet Green Flag guidelines and is an update to the 2012-2017 Management Plan. The plan includes a statement of Coventry City Council’s current vision for Coombe Abbey Park, along with background information about how the estate has evolved over the last millennium.

### 1.3 Intended audience

This management plan is first and foremost a working document that will be a reference point to potentially all who have an interest in the management of Coombe Abbey Park such as the Council, Historic England and Natural England.

It has been written to clarify decisions made by Coventry City Council with regards to how the site should be used and how it will be maintained. The plan also contains the background information to provide a development framework at a strategic level with a clear understanding of the diverse range of issues facing the country park both on a day-to-day basis and into the future.

## **1.4 *Period of the plan and stages of review***

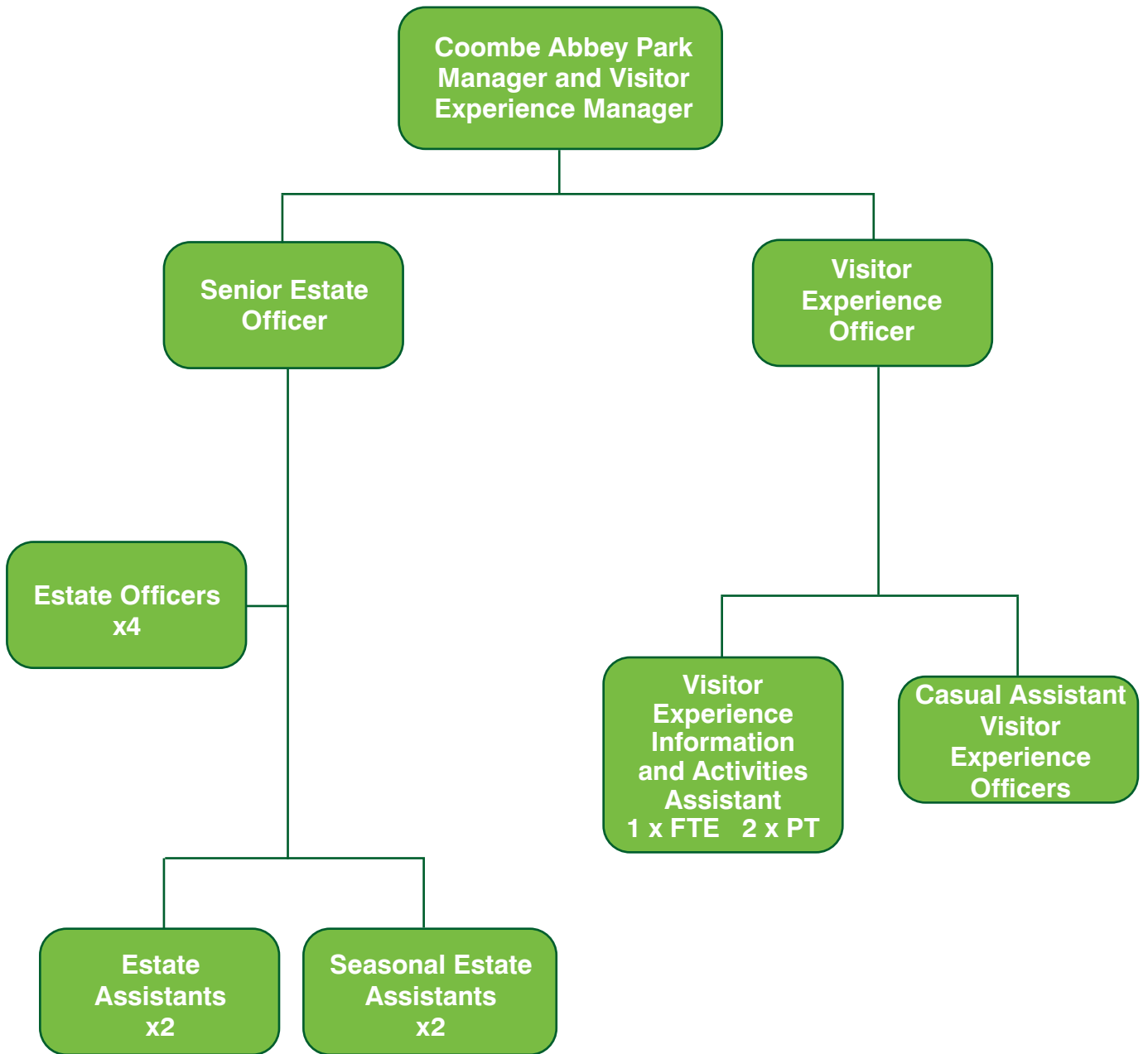
This management plan has been written to cover a period of 5 years, from 2023 to March 2028. to support the day to day and future management of the site as well as submission for the Green Flag Award.

The plan will remain in circulation and as the foremost guide to decision making for Coombe Abbey Park until 2028, unless subsequent review of the whole document decides that revision is necessary.

Action plans are continually updated and reviewed annually. The management team will meet to discuss the success and failure of any decisions and work.



## 1.5 Management Structure



## 2.0 The local context

### 2.1 The Council

Our Chief Executive is responsible for making sure decisions made by Councillors are carried out and that services are well run. They are supported in this work by two Executive Directors, each responsible for a group of Council services.

These are:

- People - responsible for a wide range of services including adults' and children's social care, education, libraries, and public health.
- Place - leads the services delivering highways, transportation, waste and street services, planning, inward investment, and regeneration.
- This directorate is also leading the Kickstart programme, which has delivered a new Council office building "Friargate" and in addition leading on the development of a new business district for the city centre.

The Council has a Cabinet and Scrutiny system. Each of the 10 Cabinet Members are responsible for one part of the Council's services.

Cabinet meets monthly and Members hold

individual meetings throughout the year. These meetings are held in public. The current council members can be found in Appendix 2.

### 2.2 The community

With central Coventry only 5km away and Rugby, Hinckley, and the Birmingham conurbation nearby, Coombe is within easy reach of large numbers of people. A previous survey revealed that Coventry residents make up 50% of visitor numbers, Coombe Abbey Park being one of the largest public open spaces locally available. Former surveys have revealed that most visitors came by car. While some visitors come to the estate to enjoy specific facilities such as Coombe Abbey Hotel or the Visitor Centre, many visitors come for passive recreation - e.g., walking, dog walking, family picnics, enjoying the landscape and its history and wildlife.

The park is open dawn until dusk, 365 days a year.

| VISITOR NUMBERS   | 2021/2022       | 2022/2023       | 2023/2024       |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| April             | 72,646          | 59,725          | 56,093          |
| May               | 43,738          | 53,315          | 59,677          |
| June              | 54,781          | 57,725          | 56,890          |
| July              | 51,917          | 64,278          | 51,872          |
| August            | 71,779          | 85,994          | 86,224          |
| September         | 45,808          | 41,085          | 47,024          |
| October           | 42,320          | 46,634          | 46,307          |
| November          | 28,214          | 24,861          | 25,987          |
| December          | 25,002          | 23,872          | TBC             |
| January           | 41,718          | 35,146          | TBC             |
| February          | 31,171          | 46,986          | TBC             |
| March             | 47,251          | 30,573          | TBC             |
| Luminate          | 43,000          | 52,000          | TBC             |
| <b>Year Total</b> | <b>599,346*</b> | <b>622,192*</b> | <b>430,074*</b> |

\* Does not include annual car park season ticket holders

## Households and health

The following tables derived from the 2011 census outline the levels of health, employment and diversity within Coventry, Rugby and, as comparator, UK. Most visitors to Coombe come from the conurbation of Coventry being only 6.3 miles away (centre) compared to 8.3 miles to Rugby (centre).

Coombe in relation to Rugby and surrounding area.

## Age and employment

| Status                    | Coventry | Rugby | UK    |
|---------------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| Employed                  | 60.40%   | 65.5% | 62.1% |
| Unemployed                | 5.3%     | 3.5%  | 3.4%  |
| Student                   | 3.7%     | 2.8%  | 2.6%  |
| Retired                   | 10.5%    | 15.2% | 13.5% |
| Looking after home/family | 1.00%    | 3.4%  | 6.5%  |
| Permanently sick/disabled | 6.5%     | 3.1%  | 5.3%  |
| Other inactive            | 3.1%     | 1.5%  | 3.1%  |

As can be seen from the above, visitors to Coombe come from a range of health expectations with visitors from Coventry faring worse against the National Average, although showing improvement in several indicators such as low income, homelessness, and unemployment.

| Age Group | Coventry | Rugby | UK    |
|-----------|----------|-------|-------|
| 0-4       | 6.23%    | 6.3%  | 6.2%  |
| 5-9       | 6.64%    | 6.3%  | 5.6%  |
| 10-14     | 6.96%    | 5.8%  | 5.8%  |
| 15-19     | 7.37%    | 6.1%  | 6.3%  |
| 20-29     | 15.01%   | 10.7% | 13.6% |
| 30-44     | 21.34%   | 13.5% | 20.4% |
| 45-59     | 16.58%   | 20.7% | 19.5% |
| 60-74     | 12.45%   | 15.8% | 14.5% |
| 75-89     | 6.89%    | 7.4%  | 7.0%  |
| 90+       | 0.54%    | 1.0%  | 0.7%  |

## Ethnicity

| Age Group                 | Coventry | Rugby | UK    |
|---------------------------|----------|-------|-------|
| British                   | 78.3%    | 84.1% | 80.5% |
| Irish                     | 3.5%     | 1.0%  | 0.9%  |
| Other White               | 2.2%     | 5.4%  | 0.1%  |
| White and Black Caribbean | 0.8%     | 0.9%  | 4.4%  |
| White and Black African   | 0.1%     | 0.2%  | 0.8%  |
| White and Asian           | 0.5%     | 0.6%  | 0.3%  |
| Other Mixed               | 0.3%     | 0.3%  | 0.6%  |
| Indian                    | 8.0%     | 3.1%  | 0.5%  |
| Pakistani                 | 2.1%     | 0.6%  | 2.5%  |
| Bangladeshi               | 0.6%     | 0.1%  | 2.0%  |
| Other Asian               | 0.6%     | 1.4%  | 0.8%  |
| Caribbean                 | 1.1%     | 0.8%  | 0.7%  |
| African                   | 0.6%     | 1.0%  | 1.5%  |
| Other Black               | 0.1%     | 0.2%  | 1.8%  |
| Chinese                   | 1.2%     | 0.4%  | 1.1%  |
| Other                     | 0.5%     | 0.2%  | 0.5%  |

### 2.3 Other local green spaces

Coombe Abbey Park sits just outside the city boundary and falls under the jurisdiction of Rugby Borough Council. The park is surrounded by agricultural land in private ownership, with the nearest other formal Coventry City Council amenity park being Caludon Castle Park. Informal greenspace owned by Coventry City Council surrounds the nearby University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire.





## 3.0 Policy context and strategic significance

### 3.1 Coventry Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Coventry represents partners from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

The Partnership for Coventry priority is “Growing the city and Tackling Poverty”. This priority cannot be addressed by one organisation on its own, but together partners bring their combined resources, energy, and creativity to meet the economic, social, and environmental needs of Coventry by working together to improve the ‘quality of life’ of residents and to improve the city as a place to live, work and play.

The Partnership for Coventry is well established in Coventry with good working relationships and effective participation of all partners. Partners recognised that joint ventures and cooperative and collaborative working will give better results, reduce duplication and lead to greater efficiencies. The Partnership will work together to deliver positive change within the city.

#### Priority:

- Growing the city and tackling poverty

#### Themes:

- Getting people into good jobs
- Raising Incomes and financial Inclusion
- Early action and communities
- Better understanding and evaluation

The Coventry Partnership feeds into the strategic direction for the council and contributes to all plans. It directly links with the Parks Service via the Feeding Coventry Group. The Park Service works with this group to promote sustainable food growing using community growing schemes such as at Glentworth Road and also by planting community orchards and fruiting hedges on our sites.

### 3.2 Council Plan 2016 – 2024

This plan sets out our vision for the city and our priorities for the next eight years - based on our commitments to the people of Coventry and the issues that residents have told the Council are the most important to them. It builds on the council’s previous plan and reflects the progress that has been made since this was written some five years ago.

“The Council has an overall budget of £233million a year to deliver hundreds of services across the city. But in this we have £95million a year less in central government support than we did in 2010. By the end of the decade this will rise to £120million a year; the equivalent of £234 less to spend on every person living in Coventry.

These government spending cuts are, of course, a major challenge to us and will mean we will have to make some difficult decisions about services over the coming months.” (Leader, George Duggins, 2016)

The Coventry Plan sets out at a strategic level the key issues that need to be tackled in partnership by organisations throughout the city. Although based on the current Community Plan, the new Sustainable Community Strategy will have a longer timeframe and will look to 2026 to fit better with regional spatial and economic strategies and spatial planning timescales.

### 3.2.1 Coventry's Local Plan 2011 - 2031

The Coventry Local Plan was formally adopted by Council on 6 December 2017 following receipt of the [Planning Inspectors Report](#). The Local Plan is the statutory document used by the Council to determine planning applications. [The Local Plan](#) including the adoption statements and all evidence examined in public can be found in the [Library](#). Please use the interactive [online policies map](#) to view our Local Plan policies map.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that support the Local Plan and its policies can, if adopted, be found on the [SPDs page](#). This page includes SPDs currently in draft form, which will also be listed on our [consultation page](#).

[View the Local Plan by topic](#), or view our [Planning homepage](#) if you are searching for a specific planning application or looking for other Development Management considerations. The City Centre Area Action Plan (CCAAP) has been in place following adoption on 6 December 2017. The CCAAP provides a blueprint for the development of the City Centre only across the next decade. It is a statutory document that provides planning policies to guide development in the City Centre.

Read the [City Centre Area Action Plan](#).

The [Inspector's Reports, the Modified Final Plan, SA/SEA reports and Adoption Statement for all examined Plans are available online](#) for public inspection free of charge.

### 3.3 Cov Culture

The Park Service is fully engaged in the cultural life of Coventry by virtue of its incidental use of sites by citizens of Coventry daily, by use of its sites for city scale and many local community events, it's participation in the Positive Images Festival and, more recently, by its engagement with the City of Culture Team via our partnership and community engagement work.

The full Cultural Strategy can be supplied upon request and is available to download from the website [Cov-Culture-2.pdf](#) (culturechangecoventry.com)



### 3.4 Green Space Strategy

The Green Space Strategy has been developed to provide a strategic framework for the future management of Coventry City's parks and green spaces. The strategy also addresses the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17), which sets out government guidance in relation to the development of clear and transparent planning policies for parks, open spaces, outdoor sports, and recreational facilities. The guidance calls for local authorities to set standards for parks and open spaces that recognise both the present level of provision, and local people's views and aspirations regarding the present and future provision.

The vision of Coventry City Council for green space is:

'To provide attractive, high quality accessible green spaces that are well maintained, safe, clean and are important to local people. This will be achieved through clear, open and robust planning policies that ensure that green space contributes to local character and plays an important role in everyday life of residents whilst supporting the regeneration of the city.'

The new GSS will have much stronger links with the Sports strategy (2014-2024), as well as closer links with planning to maximise baseline information for our sites and forward planning of spend and includes a more focused element of community consultation as well as city wide consultation.

[https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/754/green\\_space\\_strategy](https://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/754/green_space_strategy)

### **3.5 Equality Strategy**

Coventry City Council is committed to making a difference to the lives of the people of Coventry by improving equality of access to Council services and ensuring that our employment opportunities are fair and that our workforce reflects the demographics of our city. We intend to achieve this by challenging discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. As a Council and as a city, we have come a long way but, we are still determined to make improving equality of opportunity in Coventry, an integral part of all that we do by placing equality at the heart of the Council's commitment to service quality and improvement. During these difficult financial times, we need to ensure that the decisions we make on how we allocate resources, how we design or redesign our services and how we enable access to Council services, are taken in the knowledge and understanding of how these decisions advantage or disadvantage any particular community. This is challenging. This Equality Strategy builds on the Council's objectives for Coventry set out in the Council Plan and is the result of a robust consultation process with people who work, learn and live in Coventry, and focuses on those areas of inequality which impact most on the lives of local people. We will continue to embrace this approach, and focus on these key equality objectives and the things that matter to the people of Coventry. This will enable the Council to continue to make a very real difference to people's lives and help to increase equality of opportunity in our city.

[www.coventry.gov.uk/equalitystrategy](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/equalitystrategy)

### **3.6 Site of Special Scientific Interest and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation**

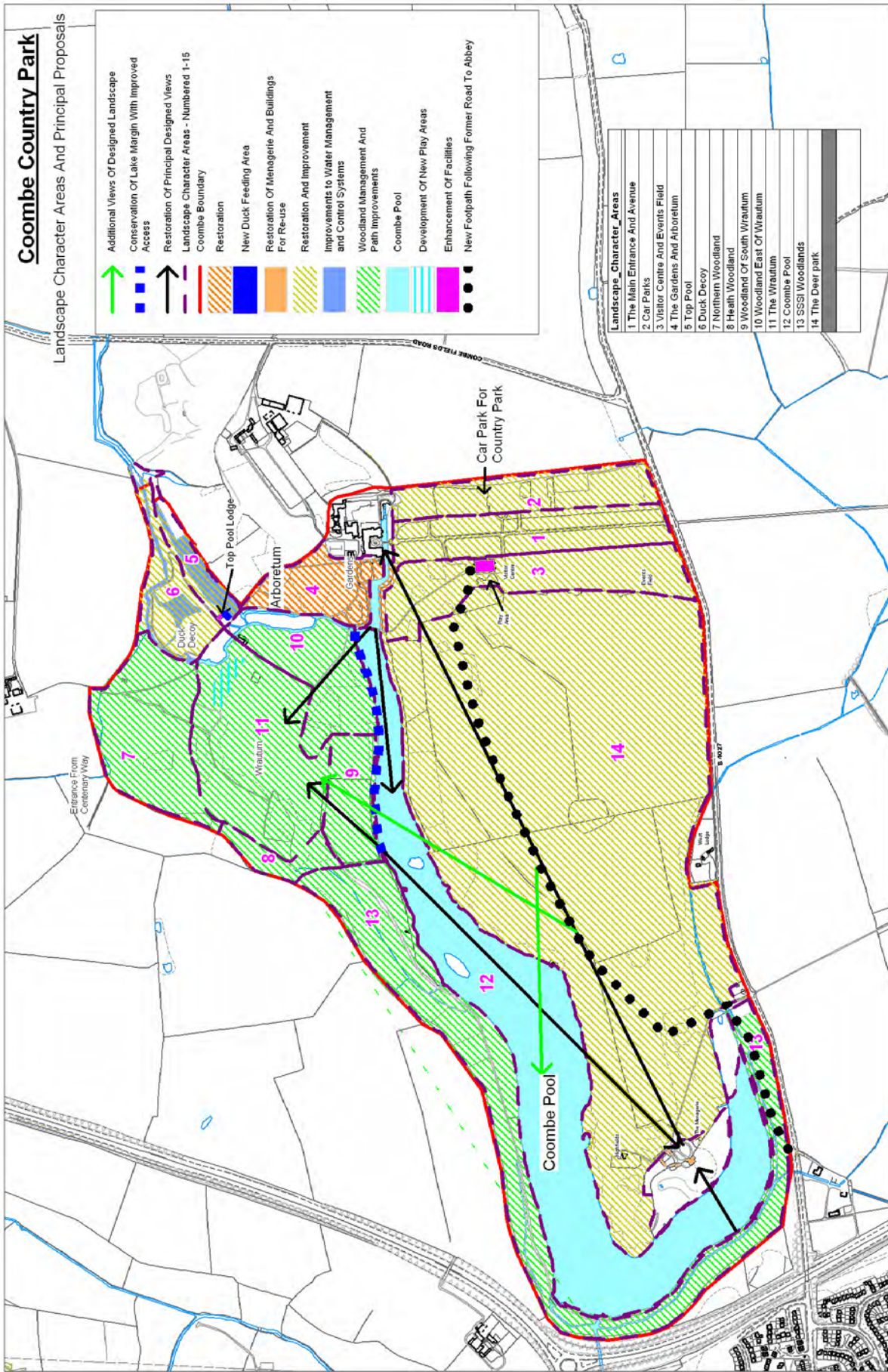
As the subject of centuries of agricultural change and three major phases of ornamental landscape design, there is very little natural about the Coombe Park landscape. However, both in spite of and because of its designed nature, the park has a wide range of semi-natural habitats which support a wealth of floral and faunal interest.

This diversity is a result of the combined effects of Capability Brown (naturalistic design, permitting nature to take its course) and of subsequent landscapers together with the site's physical determinants (geology, soils, hydrology) and the management regimes, or lack of them, through the centuries.

Much of the site is covered by two wildlife designations Site of Special Scientific Interest and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The site is managed by detailed Action Plan for each of 14 Character Areas and is subject to a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement, details of this agreement can be found in the supporting paperwork.

The site also works to Local Biodiversity Action Plans for the following: Barn Owl, Bats, Black Poplar, Crayfish, Farmland Birds, Great Crested Newt, Otter, Polecat, Song Thrush and Water Vole. Coombe Abbey Park has huge historical significance in the local area. Richard de Camville founded St Mary's Abbey at Cumba just outside the village of Smite in 1150. The Cistercian abbey comprised a complex of buildings arranged in a standard formation around a cloister with the church unusually situated on the south side of the cloister due to the location of the Smite Brook. The monastery was relatively wealthy and by the 13th century had enclosed the adjacent villages of Upper and Lower Smite to create sheep pasture.

The monastery, accounted the richest in Warwickshire, was dissolved in 1539 and then for forty years passed through a succession of owners and tenants. The site was first granted to



Date : Dec 2011 Scale :NTS  
Status: Final Figure 21

Produced By: Coventry City Council, City Services & Development Directorate.

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Mary, Duchess of Somerset and Richmond, who in turn conveyed it to John Dudley, later Duke of Northumberland. It then passed into the hands of the Earl of Warwick, reverted to the crown in 1557 and was sold to Robert Kelway, Surveyor of the Court of Wards and Liveries, who until 1578 let it to a Leicestershire merchant, Sir William Wigston. Robert Kelway died in 1581 and the property passed to his daughter who married John Harrington of Exton, Rutland.

Although it is likely that conversion of the monastery to a residence began in the 1550s, it was John Harrington who undertook major building work creating one of the most substantial houses in the county. He also laid out the first formal gardens in the late 16th century. John Harrington was created a baron in 1603 and from 1603 to 1608 served as a guardian to the daughter of James I, Princess Elizabeth, who was accommodated at Combe. During her stay Harrington foiled an attempted kidnap of the Princess as part of the Gunpowder plot. She later married Prince Frederick, Elector of the Palatinate on the Rhine, who became monarch of Bohemia for a short time giving rise to Elizabeth's popular title, the Winter Queen of Bohemia.

When Harrington died in 1613 Coombe descended to his son John, who died only six months later whereupon it passed to his sister Lucy, Countess of Bedford who sold it in 1622 to Elizabeth, widow of former Lord Mayor of London, Sir William Craven. Combe passed to her son William who in 1627 became Baron Craven of Hampstead Marshall, Berkshire and Protector of the widowed Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia. In 1634 Lord Craven obtained a licence for emparkment from Charles I to enclose 650 acres of demesne land. The Craven estates were sequestered under the Commonwealth but following their restoration in 1662 Lord Craven was created an Earl. Combe was occupied by Lord Craven's agent and godson, Sir Isaac Gibson, and then by the Earl's cousin and heir, Sir William Craven. In 1682-9 William Winde rebuilt portions of the house for Lord Craven and throughout the century modifications and extensions were made to the existing formal

gardens, work recorded by Kip's engraving c1707. The property descended to the sixth Lord Craven who in 1771 commissioned Capability Brown to landscape the 17th century park around Combe Abbey. His work included the formation of a large serpentine lake, boundary belts and tree groups and buildings designed by him or his son-in-law Henry Holland with whom he had recently gone into partnership. These comprised East and West Lodges at new entrances to the park, a Menagerie near the lake, a boathouse, dog kennels and possibly Pump and Dove Cottages. The sixth Lord Craven's wife gained notoriety by absconding to Europe with the Margrave of Anspach, whom she married in 1791 on the death of Lord Craven. In 1791 the seventh Baron Craven inherited 'Combe', and in 1801 was re-created Earl of Craven. The second Earl, who inherited 'Combe' in 1825, had a duck decoy created on the estate and may have been responsible for establishing a pheasantry on the Wrautums. He commissioned William Eden Nesfield to build a new east wing in 1866-72, while at the same time Nesfield's father, William Andrews Nesfield, designed formal gardens to the south and west of the house. Lord Craven's gardener William Miller was responsible for the design of the north and east gardens and the walled kitchen garden.

The third Earl Craven inherited 'Combe' in 1866, died in 1883, and was succeeded by the fourth Earl Craven who with his wife Cornelia, a wealthy American heiress, undertook some modernisation of the house and elaboration of the gardens. The gardens are recorded in two series of photographs for Country Life and through photographs taken by Lady Craven, herself a keen photographer. The fourth Earl Craven died in a yachting accident in 1921 and in 1923 the fifth Earl, in debt and unable to maintain the Abbey, put the property up for auction. The house contents were sold in a sale that lasted eight days and the estate was parceled up into lots for auction, with the house and 120 acres of land going to John Gray, a Coventry builder. Gray proceeded to gut and demolish two thirds of the Abbey selling off many architectural items. Coventry businessman acquired various parts of the site, renaming the Menagerie the Woodlands and building Highfield, a

a private residence near the Menagerie. In 1952 the abbey itself was leased to the General Electric Company for a residential and training centre and during their tenure a swimming pool and tennis court were constructed in the gardens west of the house.

When Gray died in 1962 the property was sold to Coventry City Council who put in hand plans to create a public park. In 1966 Coombe Abbey Regional Park officially opened. The Countryside Act of 1968 allowed Coventry City Council to apply for designation as a Country Park, which was endorsed in 1970. Initially the abbey was empty

and unused but in 1971 it was leased to a company called Historic Productions on a 21-year lease. On the termination of the lease the building was in a serious state of dilapidation and in order to save and restore the property it was offered publicly for expressions of interest in 1989. Coventry City Council in partnership with No Ordinary Hotels developed the Abbey complex as a hotel with a new visitor centre and access to the gardens and park north of the lake via a new causeway across the moat.

See Appendix 4 for detail of historical landscape significance and development.

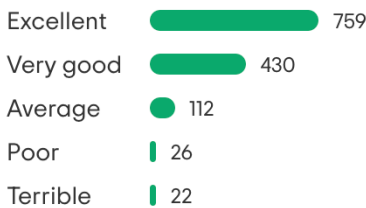
### 3.7 Rewards and Recognition

Coombe Abbey Park has retained a Green Flag Award since 2005 and Green Heritage Award status since 2022.

We continue to participate in Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme which is assessed annually by Visit England as a quality assured visitor attraction and have consistently been awarded accreditation as an assured visitor attraction.

Visitors on leading customer travel review site TripAdvisor have also offered their seal of approval with consistently high scoring reviews, continuing to earn a Certificate of Excellence since 2016.

**4.5** ●●●●● 1,349 reviews



### 3.8 Other relevant policies Carbon Management Plan Climate Change Strategy

Coventry’s carbon dioxide emissions based upon fossil fuel and electricity consumption by

business, public sector, domestic housing and road transport are reported each year by the Government.

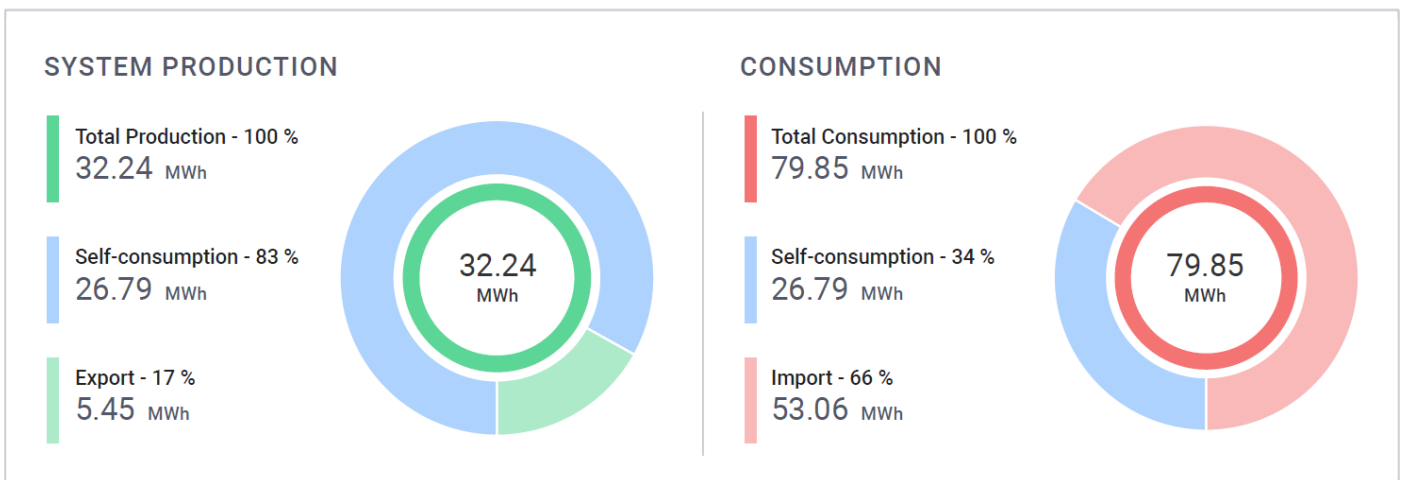
The published figures demonstrate that Coventry is well on its way to meeting our carbon dioxide emission reduction target.

In 2005, the carbon footprint baseline year, the city emitted just over two million tonnes of carbon dioxide. The latest figures show that the city emitted just over 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. A reduction of 28% since 2005. This is equivalent to the carbon dioxide emissions for each Coventry resident falling from 6.6 tonnes to 4.4 tonnes.

The Climate Change strategy published in 2012 set a target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 27.5% by the year 2020.

34% of our annual power comes from solar power produced by panels on the roof of the Visitor Centre.

The solar will generate 26,790 kWh p.a. X £0.32p/kWh = £8,572.80 in annual savings. 83% of the solar power produced will be consumed on site.



## 4.0 Legal issues

### 4.1 Ownership

Coombe Abbey Park is wholly owned by Coventry City Council (CCC) however, due to its location sits within the administrative boundary of Rugby Borough Council (RBC). CCC manage the park and land and strategic direction of the site, but conform to RBC local legislation for hygiene rating, waste disposal, business rates, licensing, planning etc and Warwickshire County Council for highways.

### 4.2 Byelaws and the Control of Dog Faeces

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 and the Dog Control Orders Regulations 2006 allow Coventry City Council to require owners to clean up after their dog in areas designated under the order. The Council has designated all highways (including roads, footpaths, school playing fields, woodland, sports fields and parks). All dogs are excluded from entering the fenced children's play areas at Coombe and there are designated 'Dogs on Leads' areas. Work is in progress with Rugby Borough Council to further educate out visitors around dogs on leads and dogs under control and in addition control of dog faeces.

### 4.3 Concessions

The café in the Visitor Centre 'Café in the Park' is operated by Coombe Abbey Hotel as is, the "Kiosk in the Park" and in August 2020 the same operator opened an ice cream kiosk facility and offers a financial return to the site matching, and it is hoped will exceed that of the former mobile ice cream concession in the future. New to the Visitor Centre in November 2021 came The Abbey Artisan Market and The Sundae Club Dessert Diner both attracting a financial return to the site and breathing new life and revitalisation into these under used units.

### 4.4 Licenses

Go Ape Coventry opened in 2019, and other leisure offers continue to be explored to increase dwell time and income.



A complete refresh of the existing play area at the Visitor Centre took place in early 2022 and was completed in June 2022. A new pay and play facility opened in July 2023.

### 4.5 Listings and Designations

Buildings are listed by Historic England to help protect the best of our architectural heritage. When buildings are listed, they are placed on statutory lists of buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest' compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, on advice from English Heritage.

Listed buildings are graded to show their relative importance:

- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest.
- Grade II\* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

The Park is listed Grade II\* in the English Heritage Register of Parks & Gardens. The Park contains a Scheduled Ancient Monument, a tumulus which is considered to be a prehistoric burial mound (Warwickshire No. 26) and is located to the west of the main drive, north-west of the Visitor Centre. Coombe Abbey is a prestigious country hotel which has been developed from a historic grade I listed building.



## 5.0 Site description



## 5.1 Overview

**Name of Site** Coombe Abbey Park

**Address** Brinklow Road, Binley, Coventry, CV3 2AB

**Ownership** Coventry City Council

**Management** Coventry City Council Site Area 150 hectares

**Map Reference** Latitude 52.410, Longitude -1.417

**Ward** Earl Craven and Woolston

**Local Hierarchy** Country Park

Coombe Abbey Park occupies a gently rolling landscape bisected east to west by the valley of Smite Brook. The Smite enters the site in the north east corner. Via a network of channels and pools it reaches a lake created by the damming of the Smite, and Southern tributary, above its confluence with the River Sowe at the western end of the site. The lake effectively divides the country park into two elevated areas each reaching less than 10m above the water level of the lake; to the north the broad flat-topped hill of the Wrautum and to the south a broad flat topped ridge running parallel to the valley. The lake, dam and associated woodland effectively disguise the site's overall fall from east to west.

The elevated areas are created by the deposition of Pleistocene sands, gravels and boulder clay over the underlying Mercia Mudstone (Keuper Marl). The sands have given rise to light soils, acidic and well drained, most apparent in the areas to the north of the Wrautum. At lower elevations the soils are less acidic, well drained and contain a high proportion of humus. In low lying area north of the lake waterlogged conditions occur at times due to the alluvial clay soils present around the original course of the Smite Brook, soils that are nearly neutral.

Various pits north and south of the lake indicate past excavation of sand, gravel and clay.

## 5.2 Site of Special Scientific Interest

The importance of Coombe Pool and a large part of the woodland which envelopes it is illustrated by its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Its total area is 51.3 hectares (126.8 acres); Coombe Pool is very important in Warwickshire for its herons, other breeding waterfowl and wintering wildfowl. The woodland is also important supporting a wide range of breeding birds and providing winter roost for several species. The SSSI was first notified in 1972 under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) and was then renotified in 1986 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

The citation for the SSSI is included in appendix 4. As an SSSI, all management operations undertaken within its boundaries must have prior approval from Natural England. A copy of the current agreement is included in appendix 5. Non-statutory designations at a county level much of the area under consideration is designated by Warwickshire County Council as Warwickshire Biological Record Centre (WBRC) Ecosite 7137 which includes within it the SSSI: the ecological value of the Ecosite is not consistent across the designated area. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has also designated the site as County Wildlife Site 1725. It is also one of Warwickshire Counties – Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation Ref SP37Z2.



## 5.3 Habitat

The varied soils and land use have given rise to a rich variety of habitats. These include woodland, scrub, grassland and water. Coombe Pool, its reed beds and associated historic woodland have been designated as a SSSI by Natural England.

### 5.3.1 Woodland

The woodlands are all secondary habitat and managed under the Forestry Commission woodland grant scheme. They comprise predominantly mixed broadleaf woodland with some early 20th century coniferous plantations on the edge of the Wrautum.

The acidic sandy soils, occurring largely north and east of the Wrautum and along the northern edge of the SSSI, support Oak, Sycamore and Birch often found in single species stands, with some Ash and conifers. There is a small remnant of oak and hazel coppice near the north boundary. The understory and ground flora are generally poorly developed due to the heavy shading of the Sycamore and to rabbit activity. There are areas of bracken associated with stands of birch, rhododendron and bramble. Natural regeneration is taking place where trees have been felled and there are some stands of young broadleaf planting. Within the woodland east of the Wrautum there are some ancient oak and sweet chestnut trees.

The well drained acidic soils with humus occur predominantly in the area now designated as a SSSI woodland planted by Capability Brown.

Species are Oak with Hornbeam and Hawthorn, Ash, Sycamore, Birch and a considerable number of Lime with some Horse Chestnut Sweet and a few Beech and Norway Maple. The shrub layers are more varied but includes areas dominated by rhododendron, bramble or ivy. The herb layer is diverse in more open areas and north of the lake there are areas of ferns and bluebells.

There is a wet woodland around the duck decoy and south of the Wrautum where Alder, Poplar and Willow species thrive together with Ash, Oak, Sycamore and Birch in the drier locations.

The shrub layer is limited, elder and bramble predominating, though there are species such as Box around the duck decoy.

The ground flora in shady areas is often dominated by nettle and in lighter areas by Himalayan Balsam, but also includes a rich variety of marsh flora – Yellow Flag Iris, Pendulous Sage, Great Willowherb, March Thistle and Figwort. The decoy woodland contains a more diverse flora.

In the north west of the deer park there are several small plantations planted in the late 19th century. Species include Horse Chestnut, occasional Scots Pine, Sycamore, Pedunculate Oak, Hornbeam and Norway Maple. The plantations have no understory, and the ground flora consists of rank grassland dominated by nettles.

The country park includes several ancient/ veteran trees, some planted by Capability Brown and some preceding his work. These are found largely in the deer park but also include the previously mentioned Oak and Sweet Chestnut east of the Wrautums. Tree groups within the deer park are predominantly Oak, some stag headed and some former pollards, providing valuable roost sites for owls and bats and vantage points for Kestrel and Sparrowhawk. The old trees also provide valuable standing and falling deadwood habitat.

### 5.3.2 Scrub

There are some areas along the southern edge of Coombe Pool, associated with the former quarries and clay pits of the deer park and within one of the woodland compartments south of the Wrautum. Beside the lake are a variety of Willow species providing cover for waterfowl. Scrub adjacent to the fishing pegs on the dam is maintained by coppicing. Elsewhere species commonly include Bramble, Field Rose and Dog Rose with Hawthorn associated with areas of excavation.

### 5.3.3 Grassland

A grassland survey conducted in 1998 identified 7 grassland types in the Country Park of which the most diverse and species rich occur around the northern fringe of the deer park and part of the

southern deer park between the menagerie and West Lodge.

Considerable work has been undertaken in the last ten years to move away from a municipal style of grassland management on site and return to more traditional and ecologically sympathetic management practices. The key areas of work have been restoring parkland pasture and various other grassland communities within the Deer park; and acid grassland in area 11. This work has had a significant positive impact on the biodiversity of these areas of the park whilst still maintaining recreational interest and reducing maintenance bills.

### 5.3.4 *Standing Ground*

Part of area 14 is an integral part of the herons breeding life cycle. This area is known as the heronry standing ground, it has been fenced off and protected from public disturbance as part of the ongoing management of this area.

### 5.3.5 *Water*

Coombe Pool contributes to the mosaic of habitats that make the site attractive to birds and to its importance for ornithology. As the County's second largest water mass (totaling approximately 80 acres) the Pool supports Warwickshire's largest heronry and the reed beds of Coombe Pool and Top Pool are an unusual and important habitat in the county. The Pool is a reservoir and as such is governed by legislation accordingly. (See appendices 4 & 5).

The SSSI has a wide diversity of waterfowl and woodland birds. (For further details see appendix 3). The pool supports a fishery with 140 pegs, 100 of which are situated on the north and west banks. Fish stock succession is a problem due to a variety of factors, not least of which are cormorants. Refuges have been installed in the lake to provide shelter for the juvenile fish.



## 5.4 *A brief history of Coombe Abbey Park*

Coombe Abbey lies in the ancient parish of Smite, now called Coombe Fields, the recorded history of which dates back to AD1066. An Abbey was founded on the site in 1150 and a Cistercian monastery developed and flourished for some 400 years. With the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Coombe passed into secular hands and the formerly religious buildings were converted into a noble residence. It fulfilled this function for a further 400 years, but in the 1920s decline set in with the departure of the Craven family who had long resided at Coombe.

The house was purchased by John Gray, a local builder, who embarked on a savage campaign of asset stripping. All removable fixtures were sold and several sections of the house were demolished. When Coventry City Council purchased Coombe in 1964 the remaining buildings were in poor condition. Efforts were made to stabilise the situation, but it was not until the joint venture project of the 1990s that the structure of the main house was once again brought into good condition.

While the buildings were evolving at Coombe so also was the landscape. Successive generations modified or added to the landscape handed on by their predecessors. Today the landscape incorporates park and garden features from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, overlaid in some parts with recent 20th century developments. Figure 2 illustrates how the boundaries of the park have changed dramatically through the centuries.

One of the foremost figures of English landscape design, Capability Brown, was to leave his imprint firmly on the Coombe landscape. Working between 1771 and 1776 for Lord Craven, he converted the 17th century park into a new style "landscape park". It was he who dammed the Smite Brook to form the beautifully shaped Coombe Pool which elegantly and naturally stretches out west from the Abbey buildings. At the same time as he created a new parkland landscape he abandoned the old formal landscape south of the B4027.

Many of the earlier formal gardens near the Abbey were swept away in Brown's plan but in the 19th century Nesfield and Miller adapted part of the Park around the House to create a series of new gardens.

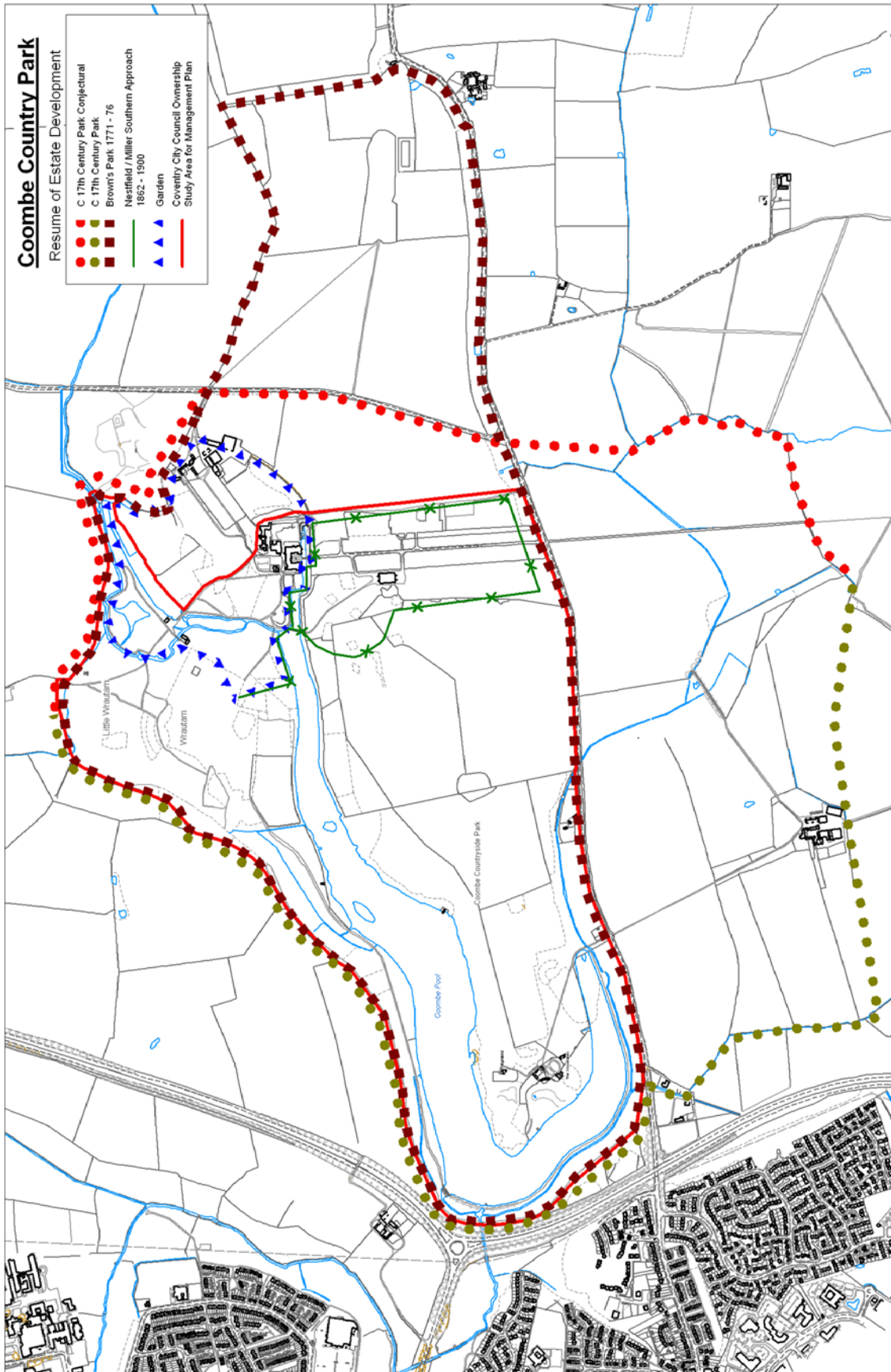
Together with the house, the Park and Gardens suffered degradation in the 20th century, and it is only in recent years that this process has begun to be reversed.

2009 saw the start of the restoration of Browns Deer park, this will continue during the life of this plan.

## 5.5 *Present day use and ownership*

Compared to the days of the Cistercian monastery or the private noble residence, land use and ownership is now more complex.

Coombe Abbey is a prestigious country house hotel. The country park was purchased by Coventry City Council in the 1960s as an area for recreational use by the people of Coventry, and since then has become a major visitor attraction within the Coventry area and a very successful country park. Coombe Pool is not only a wildlife refuge with SSSI status due to a heronry of regional significance but also its waters attract substantial numbers of anglers. The expanse of land south of Coombe Pool, Brown's former Western Deer Park, lies under improved grassland.



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Date : Dec 2011 Scale : NTS  
 Status: Final Figure 2  
 Produced By: Coventry City Council, City Services & Development Directorate, Not To Be Reproduced

Figure 3

Figure 3 overlays the boundary of the 18th century park, the key park building period relevant to present-day Coombe. This reveals that the primary area covered by the Management Plan, i.e., the land within Coventry City Council ownership, does not include a significant stretch of 18th century parkland east of the Great Avenue and Abbey. Since this land was important to both 18th and 19th century layouts, consideration has been given to its relationship with the Management Plan Study Area. Today it is in private ownership and let out for agricultural use.

## 5.6 Restoration and Maintenance

“To conserve and repair the historic designed landscape or, where appropriate, sympathetically adapt to new uses”

This will be achieved by the following:

- Conserving and repairing surviving elements of the historic design.
- Restoring some important features of the designed landscape which have been lost.
- Where appropriate, restore lost views.
- Ensuring that any modern use being considered for the Coombe Estate is carefully and sensitively integrated within the historic framework, to give unity to the whole designed landscape.
- Encouraging visitors to understand and enjoy the design of the Estate and how it has evolved, through interpretation and education.
- Ensuring that the archaeological resource is understood and carefully conserved.
- Maintaining an effective management record system that enables future managers to understand any changes made, and restoration undertaken.

## 5.7 Significant features and compartments

The site has been divided into 14 management compartments based on landscape character and vegetation. Each compartment is described, recent management work outlined where

relevant, management objectives indicated and management proposals made in Appendix 3.

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Area 1:  | Main Entrance and Great Avenue                   |
| Area 2:  | Car Park and Picnic                              |
| Area 3:  | Visitor Centre, Quadrant and Events Field        |
| Area 4:  | The Nesfield / Miller Gardens and Arboretum      |
| Area 5:  | Top Pool   |
| Area 6:  | The Decoy Spinney                                |
| Area 7:  | Northern Woodland                                |
| Area 8:  | Heath Woodland                                   |
| Area 9:  | Woodland south of Wrautum                        |
| Area 10: | Woodland east of Wrautum                         |
| Area 11: | The Wrautum Hill                                 |
| Area 12: | Coombe Pool including lake bank south of Wrautum |
| Area 13: | SSSI woodland                                    |
| Area 14: | The Deer Park                                    |

The work delivers a balance between restoration and renewal, combining facilities for local park users from Coventry and Rugby with those for visitors from further afield, including hotel guests and event attendees.

## 5.8 Education and Interpretation

Formal education programmes are now delivered on-site by Coventry City Council’s Outdoor Education Service based at Coombe Abbey Park’s Visitor Centre.

Formal Education activities were established at Coombe during the early 1980s. Since that time a regular customer base has been built up with some schools visiting every year. Although most of the schools that use the service are from the Coventry LEA Area there has been a significant increase in those from surrounding areas such as Warwickshire and Leicestershire as well as Northamptonshire and Birmingham and even London. The park employs one full time

Visitor Experience Officer and a pool of casual employees whose responsibility is to develop and deliver informal educational events and activities. The majority of education programmes continue to be delivered to primary schools and are developed and designed to hit key elements of the National Curriculum and schemes of work, as well as developing key skills such as communication and listening. The most popular programmes for the primary school age are River Study, Habitat Studies, orienteering and (for the younger children) First Nature.

## 5.9 Who are the users?

The existing audience is drawn principally from three sources:

- Local residents living within close distance to the park
- Less local residents who visit the park from across the city, in particular during the summer months
- Those attracted by the programme and events held within the park

The park is situated close to the urban conurbation of Coventry and a 1 km radius from the park would encompass approximately 27,000 residents, 9% of Coventry's population.

The site is located in the Earl Craven and Woolston Ward of Rugby Borough Council with a population of 5,552 but is close to the Wyken Ward of Coventry with a population of 16,818.

Within 1-km radius of the park there is just one primary School, Clifford Bridge, but the site hosted visits from 52 Primary Schools and 17 Secondary Schools in the academic year Sept 2016 to July 2017.

The park's immediate catchment area is largely rural; however, parking facilities, large open spaces, unique historical and wildlife features means that the potential audience is considerable.

## 5.10 Stakeholders

The list below details of bodies and organisations, in addition to service users, that have a vested interest in the successful management of Coombe Abbey Park. Each stakeholder has different degrees and levels of interest in the Park however each is important in the management of the site.

- Historic England
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- British Trust for Orthinology
- Warwickshire Police
- West Midlands Police
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
- Coombe Abbey Wood Turners Association
- Coventry Ethnic Minorities Active Partnership
- Coventry Youth Service Democracy Project
- Disabled People's Advisory Panel
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
- Rugby Borough Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- Council for Learning Outside the Classroom
- Coombe Abbey Park Limited (Hotel)
- Go Ape
- No Ordinary Hospitality Management
- Coventry Outdoors

The following City Council officers also have an interest in the park:

- Cllr. Kamran Caan, Cabinet Member, Public Health and Sport & Coombe Abbey Park Shareholders Panel
- Andrew Walster, Director, Streetscene & Greenspace, City Services & Development
- Emma Cosgrove, Coombe Abbey Park Manager and Visitor Experience Manager



## 6.0 Current maintenance arrangements

### 6.1 Overview

Ground's maintenance works are carried out by site based Estate Officers, under the direct instruction of the Senior Estate Officer and Park Manager and with assistance from other site based and Park Service officers. Existing operations are largely based on a schedule of works, detailed in the action plans, although there is a 'static allowance' that enables staff to undertake non-scheduled works as necessary. This provides the budget holder with a degree of flexibility and cost effectiveness to maintain a large site cost effectively. Some operations are carried out by Streetpride (the councils maintenance team), these include playground inspections and side arm flail cutting of the perimeter hedging. Litter bins are emptied by on site staff to a skip, which is then collected and expands to two skips in high season. Most of the arboricultural work is undertaken by the councils external Arboricultural Contractor under the supervision of the Council's Trees & Woodlands Officer, the onsite staff carrying out some tree maintenance work also.

#### Grass cutting

Amenity grassland cut by on-site staff using various types of pedestrian and ride-on mowers at various frequencies, as per action plans.

The wild flora areas are cut after seeding has been completed using a flail collector and tractor, usually September/October. The arisings are commercially composted off-site. Strimming is carried out as necessary, varying in different areas of the park.

#### Play area and climbing forest

Daily visual inspection by on-site parks staff, visual weekly safety inspections are undertaken by Streetpride play area inspectors. Operational inspection undertaken quarterly, and an annual inspection undertaken by an external company. Inspections are electronically recorded for audit purposes.

#### Go Ape

It is the responsibility of Go Ape to ensure that the course and associated features are inspected as part of their daily visual checks by staff, furthermore, more thorough course inspections are carried out quarterly throughout the year. There is also an annual tree inspection undertaken by Go Ape's internal Tree Officer.

#### Site furniture

Boundary fencing, lighting columns, notice boards, signage, benches and bins are inspected regularly by park staff and repairs and maintenance carried out as necessary.

#### Buildings and structures

All buildings and structures in the park are formally inspected quarterly any repairs are recorded and orders placed to rectify these and on a reactive basis if necessary.

#### Leaf collection

Fallen leaves are cleared and removed during the autumn in areas such as the formal gardens and arboretum. Larger open areas are cleared using a flail behind a tractor, which mulches the leaves and twigs into a material that is left to compost.

#### Fly tipping

Fly tipping on the park boundary is either reported by staff or members of the public. Any such occurrences are reported directly to Rugby Borough Council via their website [www.rugby.gov.uk](http://www.rugby.gov.uk) or by calling 01788 533533.

#### BBQs site ban

The city-wide BBQ ban was introduced in 2019 following a period of extreme hot weather and associated fire risk. This has reduced waste and infrastructure repair costs significantly allowing us to divert budgets to enhance the site.

## 6.2 Inspections - infrastructure

Infrastructure items such as the fences, gates, benches, bins, etc. are covered by a general visual inspection carried out by the park staff to identify any basic hazards. Most are generally reactive repair works (see Site Furniture above).

### Emergency Services Unit (ESU)

Coombe Abbey Park is open 365 days per year and our normal operating hours are from 7.30am until 4.30pm daily. Outside of these hours a telephone answer service is currently available. ESU operates the out of the Communications Centre on a city-wide basis and have comprehensive communication network. Most mobile staff are connected through this network which provides fully integrated communications and safety support at all times. Should any incidents occur they provide a manual or electronic logging facility. During any 24-hour day, 365 days a year ESU provide a communications link for any person, including other local authorities, that may require contact with Coventry City Council.

Call 024 7683 2222. Out of hours 024 7683 2222  
Help desk (normal office hours) 024 7683 2960.

## 6.3 Health and safety procedures

Coventry City Council has produced a Corporate Health and Safety Policy that sets out the duty of care by the council to its employees and citizens.

In addition to this document each service provider has a specific health and safety plan covering that area of work.

The Parks Service Management Team discuss health and safety issues monthly with each other and discuss with Teams at their regular meetings. The section below is a guide to how we address both the physical safety of the park’s infrastructure and the safety of people in the park.

## 6.4 Safety of equipment and facilities

Coombe Park contains a range of facilities that require regular inspections due to their potential hazard to parks users. Different agencies take responsibility for items as follows (see also monitoring regimes below):

Children’s play areas including the climbing forest – the play facilities are checked visually daily by parks staff. In addition, a weekly recorded (PSS Live) inspection is undertaken by parks staff. A quarterly operational inspection is undertaken by Streetpride staff, who record all inspections on the PSS Live play area inspection recording system. In addition to this an independent playground inspection is carried out annually identifying compliance with appropriate EU standard risk assessment. Both inspection processes are complementary and identify “findings” that require rectification within a pre-set timescale depending on the issue identified.

| Management             | Specific element | Park Services responsibilities  | Partner responsibilities   |
|------------------------|------------------|---|--|
| <b>Risk Management</b> | Play area safety | Daily visual inspections by on site staff. Weekly recorded inspection by parks staff. Annual independent inspection commissioned by Parks Development team. | Quarterly operational inspection and repairs undertaken by Streetpride.  |
|                        | Building safety  | Monthly and quarterly buildings inspection by Park’s Services staff and reported through defect management process.   | Overall building safety examined by internal Building and Consultancy Services department including compliance checks to ensure building and equipment safety. |



## 6.5 Safety of users and staff

The site-based staff operates on a shift system to ensure that regular monitoring of the park is undertaken. These staff are trained in basic health and safety awareness, first aid, safeguarding and customer care as part of the Parks Services training and development programme. All estate staff are provided with uniforms so that members of the public can clearly identify them when needed. They are equipped with radios and operate seven days a week.

All accidents or incidents are reported according to Council procedures entitled “The reporting of accidents, near misses and incidents”. These are recorded on Alcumus. Copies of all non Alcumus occurrences are kept within the departments electronic files. The Parks Services Management Team monitor accidents/near miss & incidents on a quarterly basis.

## 6.6 Tree safety

A new approach to Hazard Tree Surveys was implemented by the Parks Service covering parks, woodlands and open spaces. An external consultant assisted in preparing our Tree Risk Management (TRM) strategy (see Appendices) which moves away from the compulsion to tag and survey every tree and moves towards a hazard and target driven approach. Individual

sites are assessed on usage level in the proximity of large trees and then categorised into red, amber or green zones with red equating to high risk, down to green, low risk. The professional surveyor makes this assessment which is logged on a handheld data collector using MapInfoGIS linked into the council’s Asset Management System, Confirm. The nature of the zone dictates the frequency of inspection and during the inspection process tree defects are noted and corrective orders raised through Confirm with the instruction going to City Services and Development to complete work in an agreed time frame.

Coventry City Council manages the risk from falling trees under the Tree Risk Management Plan and at Coombe Abbey Park, the formal areas are designated as a red zone with a frequency of a 42 months rolling inspection programme. The remainder of the park is either an amber zone with a 60-month inspection rolling programme or green zone with hazards assessed as they are discovered.

## 6.7 Hazard identification and risk management

This is set out in the table overleaf:

| Management              | Specific element                          | Park Services responsibilities  | Partner responsibilities   |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Risk Management</b>  |   | Fire risk assessment is undertaken and reviewed quarterly by Park's Services staff  |  |
|                         | Water safety                              | Risk assessments for water safety undertaken by site staff and approved and reviewed by site manager                        | A Parks city-wide water safety policy is currently in development with Drainage, Highways and Health & Safety colleagues.  |
|                         | Infrastructure safety                     | Infrastructure bins, benches, gates, barriers footpaths and fencing inspections are undertaken by the site staff            |  |
| <b>Site maintenance</b> | Grounds maintenance                       | All grounds maintenance operations apart from some gang mowing, flail hedge cutting is undertaken by site-based staff       | Estate Officers undertake some gang mowing and flail hedge cutting   |
|                         |   | Operational Risk assessments are undertaken by site staff and approved and reviewed by site manager                         |  |
|                         | Tree maintenance                          | Tree hazard management system in place. Inspection coordinated / inspected by the Trees and Woodlands Officer               | Majority of tree maintenance is undertaken by an external company, through tender contract   |
|                         | Play area and climbing forest maintenance | Inspection, fault reporting and some repairs and maintenance undertaken by on site staff<br>Daily cleansing by onsite staff | Inspection, fault reporting and some repairs undertaken by Streetpride staff. Annual inspection undertaken by independent contractor.  |
|                         | Building maintenance                      | Minor repairs undertaken by parks staff<br>Minor graffiti removal undertaken by parks staff                                 | Major building repairs undertaken by internal Building and Consultancy Services through the Property Maintenance Account, including compliance checks to ensure building and equipment safety. |
| <b>Facility Use</b>     | Event bookings                            | Smaller events are delivered by the Park staff  | Bookings and administration of all outside events undertaken by the Events Team; events booked via the Council's "Book a park" web site.   |

## 6.8 Monitoring regimes

Coventry City Council sets out a clear system of responsibility for monitoring regimes within key parks including Coombe Abbey Park. This is set out in the table below:

| Name of site/<br>building | Type of<br>inspection  | Frequency              | Responsible officers   |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| <b>Visitor Centre</b>     | Building & Facility Checks                                   | Weekly                 | Estate assistants, hard copy filed.<br>Electronically uploaded by retail and information staff |
|                           |  | Quarterly              | Facilities Management  |
|                           | Fire Risk Assessment   | Annually reviewed      | Undertaken by independent contractor Manager   |
| <b>Maintenance Block</b>  | Building & Facility Checks                                   | Weekly                 | Estate assistants, hard copy filed.<br>Electronically uploaded.                                |
|                           |  | Quarterly              | Facilities Management  |
| <b>Top Pool Lodge</b>     | Building & Facility Checks                                   | Weekly                 | Estate assistants, hard copy filed.<br>Electronically uploaded by retail and information staff |
|                           |  | Quarterly              | Facilities Management  |
| <b>Water Quality</b>      | PH conductivity, dissolved oxygen and temperature monitoring | Weekly or as necessary | Senior Estate Officer  |



## **Part 2**

***Where do we want to get to?***

## 7.0 Management analysis

### 7.1 Environment, sustainability, community engagement, structures

The [Climate Change Strategy](#) for Coventry and the Green Space Strategy will impact on current management practices in Coombe Abbey Park. In terms of adapting to climate change, there are implications for grounds maintenance and other landscape management activities. New ways of working will be developed, ranging from species choice in landscape planning reflecting the changing conditions, to rescheduling of mowing regimes to reflect longer growing seasons. There are no peat-based substances used on site, herbicide use is kept to a minimum and only used when there is no effective or practical alternative e.g., in spot treating thistle on Acid Grassland. Chemical free methods are now used for pest control, which includes squirrel and mole control in sensitive areas. Where practicable all waste generated through grounds maintenance regimes are re-used on site or disposed of using the next best alternative e.g., selling of felled timber for firewood to park users or meadow cut for animal bedding.

The maintenance and provision of facilities in public open spaces, especially parks, may have resource implications in our future climate. Keeping areas litter free, supplied with shade and water, and absorbing the impact of increased visitor numbers may require a review of service provision.

#### 7.1.1 Arboriculture and Woodland Management

The tree management at Coombe has three driving features: tree survey, restoration and veteran tree management.

A typical arboricultural tree survey was carried out in 2010, categorising the trees at Coombe in line with the city's tree management and inspection, into Red, Amber and Green areas.

The trees are managed within their character areas (see individual plans in Appendices) and follow the restoration of the original Capability Brown planting as applicable. The veteran trees are mainly to be found in the Western Deer Park: many years old and some may be more than 400 years old planted as part of the landscape design preceding Brown's work. The majority are Oak trees - some are stag headed and some have hollow boles. Other important trees include some ancient Sweet Chestnut in the woodland to the north of Wrautum Field and two Yews in what was the 17th century Great Garden. The veteran tree management is managed based on a spreadsheet of trees found by Treework Environmental Practice (TEP) some years ago, plus those which the Tree Preservation Officer has identified under the newer classification system. Initial minor pruning works, linked to the Dunsmore Living Landscape project, have been undertaken. This will continue and will mainly be installing fencing around the veteran trees that don't have any and need protection e.g. the group of Limes by the visitor centre play area.

#### 7.1.2 Conservation of landscape features

As the subject of centuries of agricultural change and three major phases of ornamental landscape design, there is very little natural about the Coombe Park landscape. However, both in spite of and because of its designed nature, the Park has a wide range of semi-natural habitats which support a wealth of floral and faunal interest. This diversity is a result of the combined effects of Capability Brown (naturalistic design, permitting nature to take its course) and of subsequent landscapers together with the site's physical determinants (geology, soils, hydrology) and the management regimes, or lack of them, through the centuries. Much of the site is covered by two wildlife designations Site of Special Scientific Interest and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

We seek to achieve the conservation of overlays, i.e., the conservation and repair of the historic character, features and buildings of the Park as it was in the 1920s when the features of the 17th century park had been overlaid with the additional features of Brown, Nesfield and Miller whilst maximising benefits for biodiversity and visitor enjoyment.

### **7.1.3 Conservation of buildings and structures**

The buildings on site comprise Visitor Centre, Hotel, Highfield, Menagerie, two cottages (Dove and Pump), Top Pool Lodge, Maintenance block, two lodges, East and West lodge (East lodge is now outside the boundary of the park and two boathouses (one being associated with the Menagerie). The boathouse on the South shore of the lake has been restored and is available for use for events and so on.

A rare remnant from the 17th century is the eastern part of the Great Garden east of the Abbey. This lies within the grounds of the hotel. While the archaeological feature has been protected from damage, there has been no

attempt, as part of the Abbey redevelopment, to restore the Great Garden.

The Menagerie is a very important historic feature and is in private ownership. It has been restored as closely as possible to its original form and can be viewed by the public from the Deer Park.

Miller's great Victorian kitchen garden, of which only the walls now remain, lies outside Coventry City Council's ownership as do the lodges and cottages.

The Park contains a Scheduled Ancient Monument, a tumulus considered to be a prehistoric burial mound (Warwickshire No. 26) which is located to the west of the main drive, north-west of the Visitor Centre. The new Visitor Centre building opened to the public in 1993.

The Grade II listed Abbey Building, Coombe Abbey Hotel, was purchased by CCC and the country park now works closely particularly with respect to the hotel grounds and for commercialisation opportunities. The 'summer house' near the formal garden has been restored and is now available for hire as a backdrop for weddings and special occasions.



***Coombe Abbey West Lodge. The principal entrance to Brown's Parkland.***

Source - Maria Johnson Watercolor Collection, The Herbert, Coventry.



#### 7.1.4 Community involvement in management and development

Coventry City Council recognises that community involvement in public parks is essential for long-term sustainability. By involving local people, it is possible to clarify their needs and aspirations for the park. The resourcing issues for such engagement must be considered, as must the development of an appropriate methodology by which the communities can be identified and included in moving the site forward.

In recent years this has taken the form of Focus Groups to look at key areas of the site's operation e.g., historical restoration, children's issues, disability access, wildlife conservation. It is the intention to try and establish a 'Friends of Coombe Abbey Park' with a variety of subgroups with a particular interest such as wildlife, family, dog walking or history.

Community engagement online is active and growing daily, with social media and web sites being the main communication tool for the majority of our service users and it is hoped to harness this growing engagement for future consultation and development opportunities. Both our Facebook and Instagram pages prove to be increasingly popular.

There is a whole range of opportunities for the local community to get practically involved with the management of the country park, from estate management to wildlife and visitor surveys.

#### 7.1.5 Marketing and Promotion

As stated above, electronic media plays a major role in the promotion of the park in terms of facilities and events and at peak times the site is often to capacity with car parking managed by an external contractor. There is good take up for events and activities and no additional marketing or promotion appears necessary currently. Feedback is regularly collated with hard copy slips provided at events and activities and these are used to further improve the experience.

However, it is thought that Coombe Abbey Park would benefit from a dedicated website and

events page to provide clarity of information and online booking and conversations continue with the wider council teams on this.

#### 7.1.6 Service Structure see also Ch1.5

The Parks Service was restructured in 2017 to provide increased efficiency and to meet the increasingly demanding local and central government requirements and at the time of reviewing this document (December 2022) is undergoing a further review.

The Parks Service Management Team is currently as follows:

- Manager - City Centre Streetpride & War Memorial Park
- Coombe Abbey Park and Visitor Experience Manager – Emma Cosgrove
- Parks Service Manager - Mark Yates
- Arboricultural Services Officer - Tim Wetherhill

Each manager, in addition to delivering site/ area specific outcomes, will also have a strategic role in assisting to manage the service. These roles cover health & safety, property asset management, community engagement and managing the city's tree stock.



## 7.2 SWOT analysis

| Strengths   | Weaknesses   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On site supervisor</li> <li>• 5-year management plan</li> <li>• Clear action plans</li> <li>• Historical significance</li> <li>• Environmental significance</li> <li>• Varied facilities and attractions</li> <li>• Strong partnerships e.g. Woodturners, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Coombe Abbey Hotel, Go Ape, No Ordinary Hospitality Management, Outdoor Education Service</li> <li>• Good outdoor venue</li> <li>• Committed staff and volunteers</li> <li>• Basic infrastructure</li> <li>• Large user base</li> <li>• Large supporter base</li> <li>• Higher Level Stewardship</li> <li>• Destination park</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing budget pressures</li> <li>• Site capacity</li> <li>• High visitor wear and tear of facilities</li> </ul>   |
| Opportunities   | Threats  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploitation of commercial opportunities</li> <li>• Further improve relationship with Coombe Abbey Hotel</li> <li>• Stronger community involvement</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in policy towards park status and management</li> <li>• User needs versus heritage and SSSI needs</li> <li>• Balancing commercial opportunities with the needs of the visitor and biological and heritage conservation.</li> </ul> |

## 8.0 Vision

### 8.1 Vision

A vision for parks in Coventry as a whole has been set within the Green Space Strategy developed in accordance with PPG17 and states:

*'To provide attractive, high quality, accessible green spaces that are well maintained, safe, clean and are important to local people. This will be achieved through clear, open and robust planning policies that ensure green space contributes to local character and plays an important role in everyday life of residents whilst supporting the regeneration of the city.'*

The vision for Coombe Abbey Park has been set as:

*'Integrate our management of the country park as an integral part of the Coventry and Warwickshire landscape while achieving the conservation and repair of the historic character, features and buildings on site and maximising benefits for biodiversity and visitor enjoyment and articulating the historical significance of its origins.'*

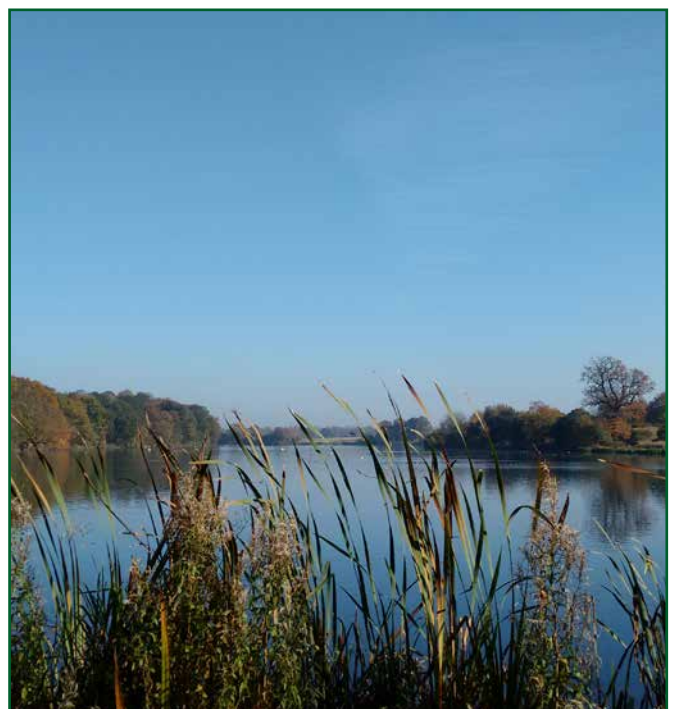


## 9.0 Aims and objectives

### 9.1 Management aims and objectives

The following management aims identify how the management vision for Coombe Abbey Park will be met.

The aims unite Coventry City Council's corporate policies with the criteria set out by Green Flag, and which are recognised as an up-to-date agenda for public open space management.



## Coombe Abbey Park; Aims and Objectives

| AIM | OBJECTIVES  | ACTION  |
|-----|---|---|
| MA1 | Ensure that Coombe Abbey Park is accessible and welcoming to all members of the public  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rebrand and Review and update maps, plans &amp; leaflets, website</li> <li>Refurbish Discovery Centre</li> <li>Keep entry signage on car park current</li> </ul>   |
|     | Better understand baseline data that informs how Coombe Abbey Park should be managed  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out regular user surveys</li> <li>Collate and analyse comments</li> <li>Form 'Friends of Coombe'</li> <li>Continue and extend collection of Biodiversity data</li> <li>Contribute to city-wide Parks Commercialisation Strategy</li> </ul>                                   |
|     | Be aware of current best practice   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend professional membership organisations</li> <li>Benchmark</li> <li>Encourage and facilitate staff PDP</li> </ul>   |
| MA2 | Provide a safe environment for all users and staff  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out regular user surveys</li> <li>Collate and analyse comments</li> <li>Form 'Friends of Coombe'</li> <li>Continue and extend collection of Biodiversity data</li> <li>Contribute to city-wide Parks Commercialisation Strategy</li> </ul>                                   |
|     | Be aware of current best practice   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend professional membership organisations</li> <li>Benchmark</li> <li>Encourage and facilitate staff PDP</li> <li>Ensure site is working in line with current policy</li> </ul>   |
|     | Be aware of current best practice   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend professional membership organisations</li> <li>Benchmark</li> </ul>   |
| MA3 | Maintain the highest standards of horticulture, cleanliness, grounds and building maintenance   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend professional membership organisations</li> <li>Benchmark</li> </ul>   |
|     | Reduce 'first use' only resources used to run Coombe Abbey Park   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce use of Chemical solutions to issues</li> <li>Recycling waste on site from 2020 – installation of new bins on site.</li> </ul>   |
| MA4 | Continue and develop sustainable management methods   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce 'first use' only resources used to run Coombe Abbey Park</li> <li>Reduce use of Chemical solutions to issues</li> <li>Recycling waste on site from 2020 – installation of new bins on site.</li> </ul>  |
|     | Ensure that management operations reduce the impact on the environment or operate to the highest environment standards that are practicable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce 'first use' only resources used to run Coombe Abbey Park</li> <li>Reduce use of Chemical solutions to issues</li> <li>Encourage recycling of waste materials – visitors and staff</li> <li>Recycling waste on site from 2020 – installation of new bins on site.</li> </ul> |

| AIM   | OBJECTIVES   | ACTION  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>MA5</p> <p>Protect and enhance the built heritage of Coombe Abbey Park</p>   | <p>MO1</p> <p>Allow all users to interpret the site to their own desired level</p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update maps, plans &amp; leaflets – updated heritage trail</li> <li>Refurbish Discovery centre</li> <li>Keep entry signage on car park current</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p>MO2</p> <p>Better understand baseline data that informs how Coombe Abbey Park should be managed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake meetings with Historic England</li> <li>Work with Arboriculture Team</li> <li>Develop links with Hotel in line with Commercial Strategy and Partnership Working</li> <li>Work with newly established Friends of Group to establish priorities</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p>MO3</p> <p>Be aware of current best practice</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update existing and develop new interpretation</li> <li>Installation of new signage in formal gardens and Duck Decoy as part of whole site rebranding project.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>MA6</p> <p>Protect and enhance the natural and ecological heritage of Coombe Abbey Park and its' place in the wider Warwickshire context</p> | <p>MO1</p> <p>Allow all users to interpret the site to their own desired level</p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Natural England</li> <li>Work to agreed HLS (High Level Stewardship) Agreement</li> <li>Work with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on Dunsmore Living Landscape Project</li> </ul>  |
|   | <p>MO2</p> <p>Better understand baseline data that informs how Coombe Abbey Park should be managed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with newly established Friends of Group to establish Priorities</li> <li>Carry out regular user surveys</li> <li>Collate and analyse comments</li> <li>Continue and extend collection of Biodiversity data</li> <li>Investigate Cormorant control</li> <li>Create links with new CCC Ecology Officer</li> </ul> |
|   | <p>MO3</p> <p>Be aware of current best practice</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Natural England</li> <li>Work to agreed HLS Agreement</li> <li>Work with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on Dunsmore Living Landscape Project</li> <li>Attend Warks Recorders Annual Meeting</li> </ul>  |
|   | <p>MO4</p> <p>Continue and develop sustainable management methods</p>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Natural England</li> <li>Work to agreed HLS (High Level Stewardship) Agreement</li> <li>Work with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on Dunsmore Living Landscape Project</li> </ul>  |

| AIM   | OBJECTIVES  | ACTION  |
|---|---|---|
| <p>MA7</p> <p>Encourage community involvement in Coombe Abbey Park through regular communication, consultation, events, and management activities</p> | <p>MO1<br/>Allow all users to interpret the site to their own desired level</p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form Friends of Coombe Abbey Park group</li> </ul>   |
|   | <p>MO2<br/>Better understand baseline data that informs how Coombe Abbey Park should be managed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial data gathering and feedback meetings</li> <li>• Continue User Surveys and informal feedback sweeps of Social Media</li> <li>• Management Plan Consultation</li> <li>• Invite Friends of reps to Coventry Greenspace and Heritage Forum Meetings</li> </ul> |
|   | <p>MO3<br/>Be aware of current best practice</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking visits</li> <li>• Liaise with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust</li> <li>• Manage social media interaction</li> <li>• Benchmarking of events and activities</li> </ul>  |
| <p>MA8</p> <p>Provide a flexible, proactive and high quality management service.</p>  | <p>MO1<br/>Allow all users to interpret the site to their own desired level</p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate 'Friends of' comments/actions into Management Plan</li> </ul>  |
|   | <p>MO2<br/>Better understand baseline data that informs how Coombe Abbey Park should be managed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue user surveys and informal feedback sweeps of social media</li> </ul>  |
|   | <p>MO3<br/>Be aware of current best practice</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking visits</li> <li>• Attend West Midlands Park Forum</li> </ul>  |



## **Part 3**

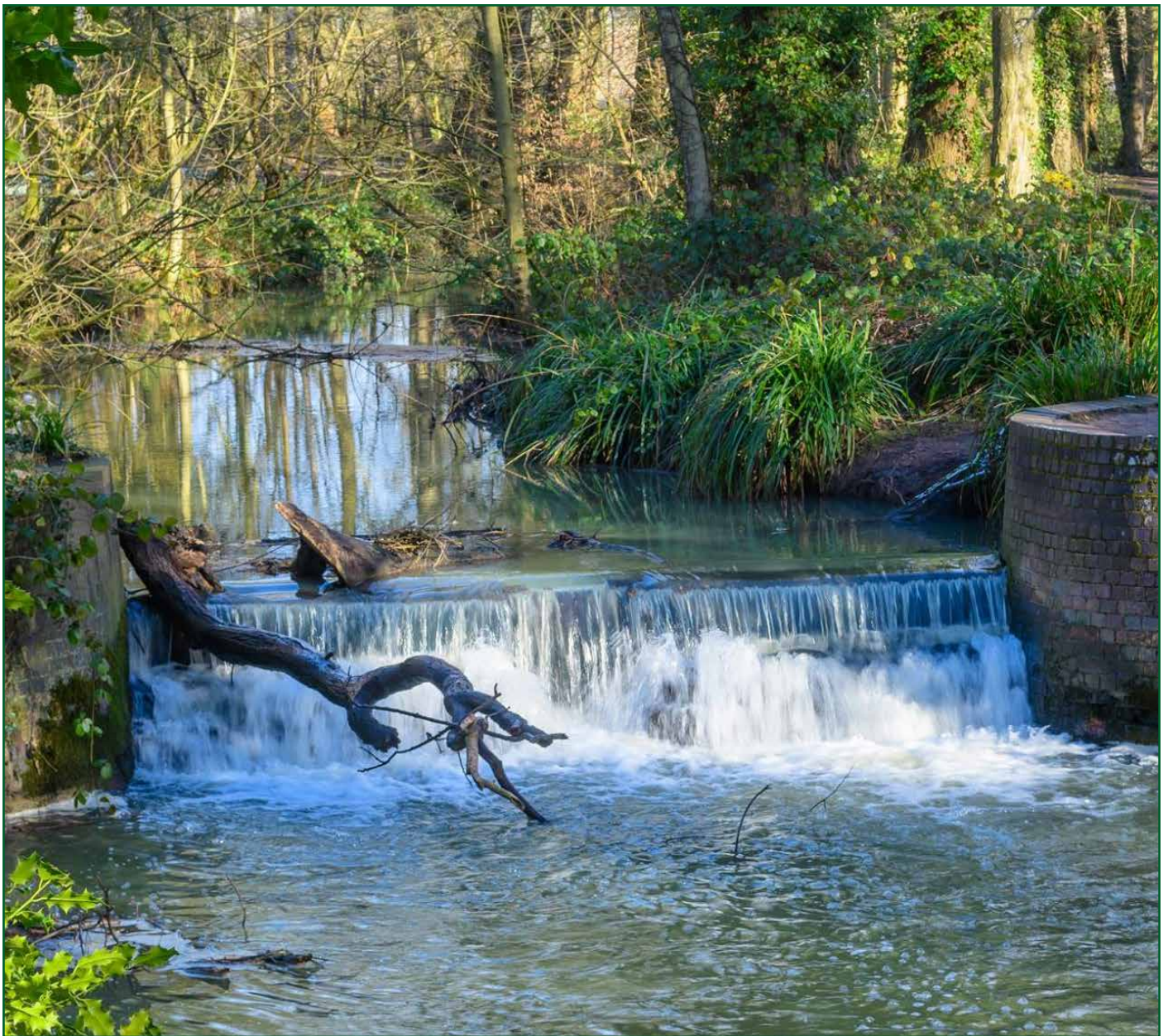
***How will we get there?***

## **10. Finance and resources**

### **10.1 Park Action Plan 2023-2028**

This section provides more detail for the tasks that are programmed to take place in coming years. This section will need reviewing on an annual basis, to enable the management team to bid for finance to carry out the tasks in the forthcoming year.

An action plan for the formal gardens and example action plans can be found in Appendix 5.





## Coombe Abbey Park Action Plan Update January 2022

### Ongoing / annual actions

| Aim                           | Objective      | Action  | Responsible officer     | Finance      | Date   | Complete  |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---|-------------------------|--------------|--|---|
| MA1 MA2<br>MA3 MA5            | MO1            | Keep signage on site current                    | EC                      | Core budget  | Annual review / in line with changes                 | Rebrand completed in 2021. Signage will be reviewed and updated regularly in line with identified changes or enhancements.                |
| MA3 MA4<br>MA5 MA6            | MO3            | Meet with Natural England Attend                | EC, MThack, WM          | Nil cost     | Annually   | Been in contact with NE re HLS payments. Staff also meet with Forestry Commission to discuss felling license.                             |
| MA3 MA4<br>MA5 MA6            | MO3            | Attend Park Forum meetings and APSE             | EC, MThack              | Nil cost     | Annually   | Midlands Park Forum annual and APSE training for Parks Management   |
| MA3 MA4<br>MA5 MA6            | MO3            | Work to agreed HLS Agreement                    | All Estate Staff and EC | Grant funded | Annually (see Estate Action Plan)                    | Claim submitted annually - remittance received in November each year. HLS extension agreed to 2028. Reduced grazing regime - Summer 2023. |
| MA1 MA2<br>MA3 MA4<br>MA5 MA6 | MO1 MO3<br>MO4 | Work to restoration Action Plan                 | All Estate Staff and EC | Core Budget  | Annually (see Estate Action Plan)                    | See individual Area Action Plans for dates  |
| MA1 MA2<br>MA3 MA4            | MO2            | Carry out regular user surveys                  | All operational staff   | Officer time | 24 per month<br>April-Sept 12 per month<br>Oct-March | Visitors per car survey conducted annually.<br>Updated visitor survey produced in 2023.   |
| MA1 MA2<br>MA3 MA4            | MO3            | Collate and analyse user survey data/ benchmark | EC                      | Officer time | Quarterly  | Data discussed at team meetings and at Park Project Board meetings (monthly).<br>Benchmarking with Leicestershire parks October 2021.     |

| Aim                           | Objective          | Action   | Responsible officer                | Finance                     | Date                                  | Complete   |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| MA1 MA2<br>MA3 MA4            | MO1 MO2            | Meet with key stakeholders                             | RE & wider Visitor Experience Team | Officer time                | Quarterly/<br>Project based           | On-site and on-line promotion through face to face meetings and awareness. Partnership working with Coombe Abbey Hotel/No Ordinary Hospitality Management.   |
| MA1 MA6                       | MO2                | Continue and Extend Biodiversity Data                  | MThack, Estate Staff               | Officer time/<br>Volunteers |                                       | Butterflies (Butterfly Conservation), hedgehogs, grassland, bat, reptile surveys by on site staff or by volunteers.  |
| MA1 MA2<br>MA3 MA4<br>MA5 MA6 | MO1 MO2 MO3<br>MO4 | Continue review and develop Commercialisation Strategy | EC, GMcK, Finance                  | Officer time                | Monthly WEBS Surveys<br><br>Quarterly | Site staff conduct surveys to include annual Heron census, breeding bird surveys.<br><br>Go Ape continues to thrive at Coombe Abbey Park, with additional activities mini landrovers progressing.<br>Outdoor Cinema events in May, August and October 2023.<br>The Abbey Artisan Market, and Sundae Club dessert diner opened in tDecember 2021 located within the Visitor Centre.<br>Annual Illuminated trail "Luminate Coombe" November to January to 2026.<br>Play area redevelopment - new visitor centre play area opened in June 2022, followed by Hermit's Hollow pay/play facility opened July 2023. |

| Aim            | Objective | Action  | Responsible officer   | Finance                   | Date   | Complete   |
|----------------|-----------|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| MA2 MA3<br>MA4 | MO 2, MO4 | Continue Staff Training and development   | EC, MThack            | Officer Time, Core Budget | Health and Safety/ Mandatory Training as required (see Divisional Training Matrix) | Recruitment training x2 new and refresher x2 Mandatory Training refresher; whole team 2021.<br>Chainsaw refresher training 2021.<br>Chipper training 2021<br>Water rescue training 2021.   |
|                |           |   |                       |                           | Staff Induction  | X3 Inductions of agency staff due to resignations.   |
|                |           |   |                       |                           |  | Interviews for fixed term contracts – Estate Assistant role 2023.  |
|                |           |   |                       |                           | Staff Appraisals   | Completed  |
|                |           |   |                       |                           | Team Meetings  | Monthly as recorded  |
|                |           |   |                       |                           | Staff 1 to 1s  | Monthly as recorded  |
|                |           |   |                       |                           | Attend Midlands Park Forum   | Quarterly (with wider Park Service)  |
| MA3 MA4        | MO4       | Reduce 'first use' only resources used to run Coombe Abbey Park<br><br>Reduce use of chemical solutions to issues | EC, MThack, all staff | Core Budget               | Adhere to CCC carbon reduction strategy ongoing                                    | On site catering provision continue to use sustainable (plastic free) take away cutlery and packing.<br>Reduction in use of paper – electronic filing system and file sharing.<br>Electric gator fleet progressing through negotiations. |
|                |           |   |                       |                           |  | Hand pulled Ragwort as part of DLL<br>Addition of 'Paradise' solution to reduce amount of chemical treatment required.   |

| Aim     | Objective | Action   | Responsible officer | Finance                     | Date                       | Complete  |
|---------|-----------|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| MA3 MA4 |           | Reduce amount of general waste and educate visitors and staff that recycling is an everyday normal activity. | All staff           | Officer time<br>Core budget | November 2020 and ongoing. | Recycling unit installed near the visitor centre adjacent to Café in the Park to promote recycling in November 2020.<br><br>Recycling units for offices.<br>Paper already recycled and collected by Rugby Borough Council.<br><br>These measures have reduced the spend on the waste budget significantly some of which is down to banning BBQ's and recycling practices.<br><br>Recycling has been reviewed with commercial waste and a more cost-effective solution to its disposal was agreed. Public recycling bins require improved interpretation. Glass recycling has been quite unsuccessful. |
| MA2     | MO3       | Be aware of current best practice  | EC/MThack/<br>WM    |                             |                            | Reservoir S10 and new flood study for state directive compliance 2021/2022 and ongoing.   |
| MA5     | MO2       | Undertake meetings with Historic England<br><br>Work with Arboriculture team                                 | EC/MThack           |                             |                            | Constructive meeting with HE regards the restoration of terrace walls and parterre footpath 2021 and ongoing.<br>Regular communication with Urban Forestry Officer for garden plan development, hazardous trees, dam wall monitoring and introduction of new play facilities 2022/2023.   |
| MA6     | MO2       | Investigate Cormorant control  | Estate Team         |                             | Ongoing                    | Cormorant numbers monitored through the winter and a laser is used as a bird scarer.  |
| MA7     | MO3       | Liaise with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust  | EC/MThack           |                             | Ongoing                    | DLL - Network for Nature projects on Heronry island and siltation study.  |

| Finite Actions          |                     |  |   |  |  |   |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Aim                     | Objective           | Action   | Responsible officer                       | Finance  | Date   | Complete  |
| MA1 MA2                 | MO1                 | Rebrand and review and update maps, plans & leaflets, website    | EC MThack & Comms                         | Comms routine budget   | Summer 2018  | Signage update first phase completed; second phase completed April 2021.  |
| MO3 MO4 MA5             | MO3, MO4            | Dunsmore Living Landscape (DLL) Quarterly Project Board Meetings | EC, MThack                                | DLL  | 2016   | 2021 and ongoing.   |
|                         | MO3 MO4             | DLL Acid Grass land restoration                                  | MThack, EC, WM & PH                       | Dunsmore Living Landscape  | 2016   | 2019, 2020, 2021  |
|                         | MO3                 | Meet with Natural England  | EC, M Thack, GMcK                         | Nil cost   | Ongoing discussions regarding plan of events at Coombe Abbey Park. | Ongoing discussions around potential for events to ensure communication between partners.   |
|                         | MO1 MO2             | Form Friends of Coombe Abbey Park                                | RE & EC and wider Visitor Experience Team | Officer time   | Summer 2018  | Ongoing although proving difficult. Impacted by Covid-19.   |
|                         | MO1 MO2             | Incorporate Friends of Comments/Feedback in Management Plan      | RE, EC                                    | Core budgets   | Autumn 2018  | See above   |
| MA1 MA2 MA3 MA4 MA5 MA6 | MO1 MO2 MO3 MO4     | Form Commercialisation Strategy                                  | EC, GMcK,                                 | Officer time   | Autumn 2018  | Benchmarking visits or online discussions with CCC Commercial Director ongoing.   |
|                         | MO1 MO2 MO3 MO4 MO5 | Set up Go Ape business venture at Coombe                         | EC, GMcK                                  | Officer time, Go Ape staff, Finance officers, Natural England & Historic England | Ongoing  | Project complete April 2019, however additional activities added such as axe throwing 2020. More activity suggestions being discussed although these have been impacted by Covid-19. Additional activities include mini 4 x 4 adventure for children launch anticipated 2022. |



## **Part 4**

***How will we know when  
we have arrived?***

## 11.0 Monitor

### 11.1 Introduction

Part two of this management plan sets out clearly the vision for Coombe Abbey Park and the aims and objectives which will deliver this Vision. The actions and associated plan in Part 3 then set out in detail for how the objectives will be delivered in the context of the site.

The Parks Service will be responsible for ensuring that the actions and work plans are delivered, and the Head of Service will take overall responsibility for this. The manager will also review progress in achieving the actions and work plans on a regular basis. To enable them to do this, a monitoring framework will be put in place and this is described in this part of the management plan.

The monitoring framework seeks to ensure that:

- Service standards are met
- Outputs and timescales identified in the action plan are achieved
- Financial control is maintained

Monitoring itself is categorised into three main areas:

- Service Standards
- Achievement of action plan
- Green Flag Assessment

### 11.2 Service Standards Monitoring

This includes routine health and safety checks, which are done on a daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly basis according to inspection sheets developed as part of preparing the risk assessment.

Cleanliness, grounds maintenance and other maintenance checks are made on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, with occasional spot checks and results recorded.

The results of these inspections are discussed at monthly team meetings and one to one meetings. Health and safety is a standing item on the agenda of Management Team meetings and service Management Team meetings.

### 11.3 Achievement of Action Plan

All of the actions have been designed to be SMART (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed) and the outputs have been clearly identified.

Review of progress will be made with the lead officers through the half-yearly appraisal process and monthly one to one meetings.

Monthly budget monitoring takes place, between the cost centre manager and the head of service.





## 12.0 Review

It is intended that this document is adopted by the City Council as a management plan for Coombe Abbey Park, providing a clear statement for our management of the site, within agreed parameters, both shared and supported by partner organisations. It will then be the responsibility of the site manager and/or Senior Estate Office to draw up an annual action plan based on the principles and priorities within the plan.

The onsite manager should engage and consult with representatives of Rugby Borough Council planning authority, Natural England, Historic England to seek views on priorities and keep them updated on progress of projects.

The site manager and/or Senior Estate Officer will also meet the reservoir panel engineers to inspect the reservoir six monthly and action any works

highlighted within the report.

The site manager and/or Senior Estate Officer will engage and consult with The Environment Agency to seek advice around water quality and management.

Annual independent assessments of the site using recognised national quality standards (Green Flag and Visit England) will be undertaken, and subsequent reports along with visitor surveys will provide the Management Team, with key information that will help to guide the future decision-making process and prioritisation of workload.

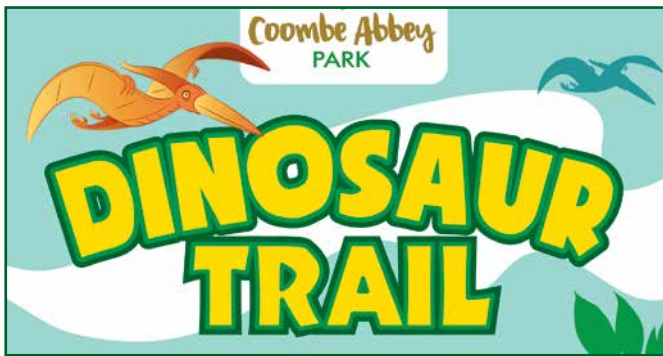
The action plan will be monitored by the site manager and Senior Estate Officer and the Head of Streetscene & Greenspace, on an annual basis linked to the fiscal year.



## 13.0 Events, Activities and Projects 2022 - 2023

### Events & Activities

We had plenty of events planned during 2022 and 2023, from food festivals, funfairs, outdoor cinemas, running events and each year culminating with Luminare our enchanting, illuminated trail.



#### Children's trails

We had several of our favourite children's trails around the park. Families have had lots of fun trying to find Easter eggs, dinosaurs, devils and skeletons!



#### Coombe Abbey Artisan Markets

Coombe Abbey Park is home to a new monthly Artisan Market. Open from March through to October the market offers a wide range of arts, crafts and local produce from around the region.



#### Swan Challenge

The Swan Challenge is back at Coombe Abbey Park Run as many 5k laps of the stunning Coombe Abbey Park in the 6 hour time limit. You might be looking for your first 10k or training for a 50 miler, either way expect a warm friendly welcome and some great views.

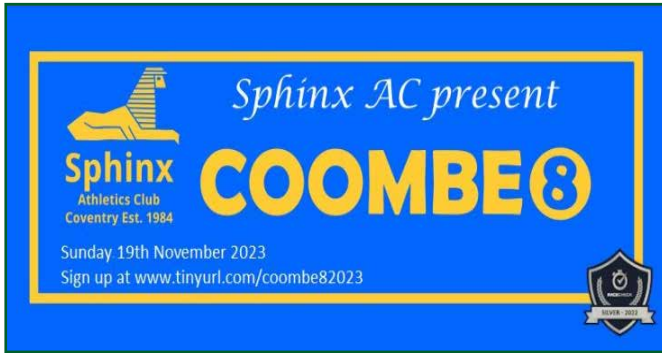
Full details can be found at [bigbearevents.net](http://bigbearevents.net)



#### Coombe 10K

A new event at the glorious Coombe Abbey Park. Run 10K after work against a setting sun through mature woodland, grassy meadow and formal gardens. A truly awesome place to run!

This event is canicross friendly.



### **Sphinx AC – Coombe 8**

The popular annual Coombe 8 multi-terrain race with a mixture of wooded trails and undulating farmland at the historic site of Coombe Abbey on the outskirts of Coventry. Held annually in November.



### **Adventure Cinema**

Outdoor cinemas are an extremely popular event. Screenings for all ages and differing genres for everyone to enjoy. Screenings such as Dirty Dancing, Grease – sing a long, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Encanto, Spice Girls the Movie, Harry Potter and the Philosophers stone, Mamma Mia, The Greatest showman, Bohemian Rhapsody, The Lost Boys and Elvis to name but a few.



### **Luminate Coombe – Coombe Abbey Winter Light Trail**

A spectacular, illuminated trail, full of wonder and intrigue, to delight and enthrall your senses.

As darkness descends, join us on our enchanting journey, as we weave a captivating light trail through the stunning, historic grounds of Coombe Abbey Park. Immerse yourself in our mesmerising mile long trail, with stunning lighting elements and fabulous light play, all set to ambient music.

A Timeless experience to be enjoyed by all, young and old alike.



### **Coronation Garden**

Coombe Abbey Park hosted a Garden Party on Sunday 7 May 2023. Taking place around the formal garden, the event brought together music, team games, Victorian ribbon games, street food, stalls and more. This special event was inspired by photos representing previous Coronations being discovered from Lady Craven’s time at Coombe.



### **Wreath Workshop**

Come along and join us to create a wonderful Christmas wreath for you to take home.

This is a hands-on workshop using natural seasonal materials sourced from within the park. Suitable for 15 years plus.

Limited spaces. Booking is essential.

For more information and to book please go to: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/.../christmas-wreath-workshop>



### **We Tree Kings**

To compliment the Luminare Coombe event in 2023, we have “We Tree Kings” operating a Christmas tree pop up market on site. We Tree Kings work with Christmas tree farms all over the UK whom they visit regularly, and have relationships with local growers in England, as well as growers in Scotland, Wales and even Ireland.



### **Funtopia**

The big day out for little kids is coming to Coventry for the first time ever! We'll be offering three incredible Funtopia events on three different dates over the summer!!!

Our fun-filled festival is packed with Bouncy Castles, Obstacle Course, Inflatable Slide, Bungee Run, Human Wrecking Ball, Inflata-Bull, Nerf Wars, Driving School, Circus Skills, Sumo Suits, Giant Games, Space Hopper Races, Crafty Corner and more - all included in the price of your wristband! We even have an amazing Under 5s area for our mini guests, filled with Bouncy Castles, Soft Play, Ball Pool, Ride On's, Giant Piano Mats and more.

Funtopia is designed especially for younger visitors (Up to 10 years of age) and we encourage all grown-ups to play too!

Visitors can enjoy unlimited play on the activities and inflatables as many times as they like during their stay!



### **Barkers Family Funfair**

Barkers annual funfair took place again in August 2023, hampered slightly by the glorious summer weather! Barkers have operated at Coombe for many years and prove very popular attracting a good audience.

## ***Midlands Park Forum***

In June 2023 we hosted the Midlands Park Forum at Coombe.

The day involved a presentation from the Coombe Abbey Park and Visitor Experience Manager (CCC) a short tour of the grounds and a presentation from No Ordinary Hospitality Management (NOHM) with regards to private/commercial organisations working seamlessly with a local authority.

The learning outcomes for the day were to provide an understanding of biodiversity and habitats, protected landscapes, visitor management, partnerships and collaborations, strategy, income and performance, landscape and garden design and an overview of the Green Flag Heritage Award to include an outdoor tour. Participants gained an understanding of Green Flag Heritage Award judging criteria, such as site condition, use, enjoyment of historic features, maintaining historic character and appearance, and came back indoors to discuss scores given to the site by delegates.

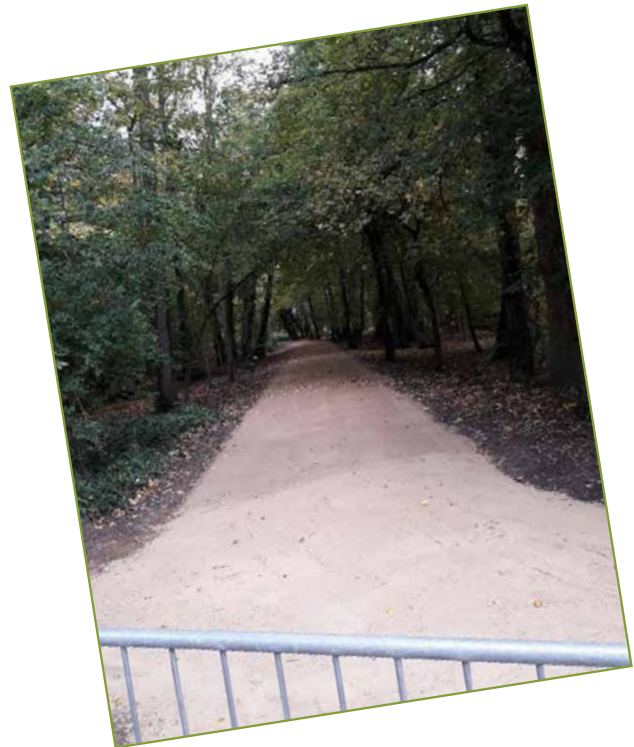
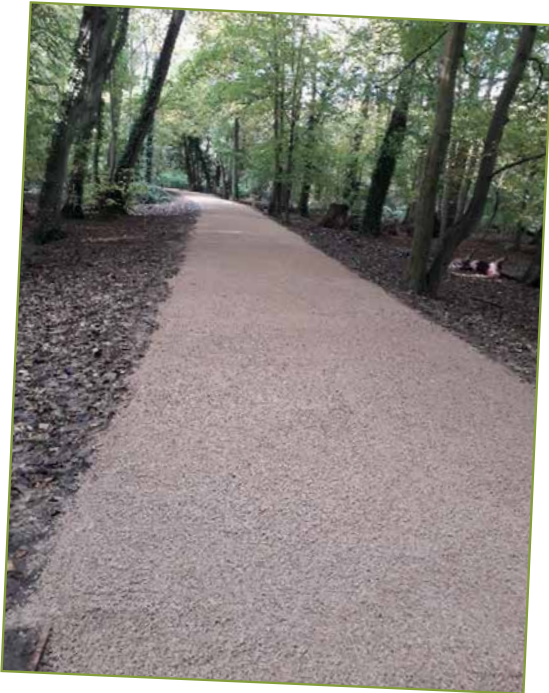
## ***Arboricultural Association***

Coombe Abbey Park and Hotel were host to day three of the Arboricultural Association's annual conference on the 13th of September 2023 providing an overview of the park's history and its specimen trees. Experts from CCC's Urban forestry department guided delegates around some of the parks best exotic and veteran trees to look at their specific management.

## **Projects**

### ***New Footpath – Top Pool Lodge to Metal Bridge Weir***

In the Autumn of 2023, we set about replacing a path from Top Pool Lodge to metal bridge weir. The new path is accessible to everyone and in all weathers. The new path was funded by Luminata Coombe as part of their investment into the site n the back of a 5-year contract to run the Luminata event into 2026.



### ***New Bridge – Duck Decoy***

In the Autumn of 2023, the bridge at the Duck Decoy was replaced and now enables vehicle access. These works were also funded by Luminata Coombe as part of their investment into the site.

## **Memorial trail**

Our memorial trail is made up of four carved posts situated around the park. Each post has space for a number of memorial leaves.

These beautiful leaves, each individually cast from an Oak leaf from Coombe Abbey Park can be inscribed with an inscription of your choice (up to 30 characters). Each leaf measures 16 cm long.

The cost for each leaf is £350 inclusive of VAT.



## **Formal garden restoration**

Reduction of rhododendron beds in line with Millers plan of the formal gardens, the plants had spread to almost 3 times the size of the intended bed. The self-set plants were removed, the ground reprofiled and level ground seeded with grass.





**Hedge planting – rose and yew – December 2022**

Planting of new white rose hedge to act as a backdrop to the herbaceous bed below and as a barrier to limit visitors climbing on the new restored terrace wall.

**Grass parking area before and after repair works**



Yew hedge reinstatement with failures replaced.



### ***Hermit's Hollow opens***

A brand-new play area based on a key period of Coombe Abbey's history has opened for the school summer holidays.

Hermit's Hollow, a new fun and engaging play area set deep within the woods of Coombe Abbey Park, has been created by Coventry City Council and is the latest new attraction designed to enhance the visitor experience.

Managed by No Ordinary Hospitality Management (NOHM), which also operates Coombe Abbey Hotel and The Avenue at Coombe. Hermit's Hollow offers a wide variety of adventure play features incorporated into the play structures, allowing visitors young and old to navigate the Hollow's various bridges, walkways, ramps and tunnels.

Visitors will also find the Hermit's talking tube to send secret messages to friends, clamber high amongst the treetops on the upper level of the Canopy Spire, or whizz back to the ground on the spiralling tube slide or the accessible-to-all companion slide.

Toddlers have their own mini-adventure to enjoy and accompanying adults or caregivers - when not climbing in the play structures themselves - can enjoy a tasty treat and hot drink from Hermit's Cafe, which is located within the woodland playground.

The theme of the new play facility is based on a notable period of Coombe's nearly 900-year history when it was the residence of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of King James I in the early 1600s.

During her time there, the princess was gifted an 'island' within the grounds where she ordered the creation of a cottage for a widow and her children, where fowls would be kept, and it was given the appearance of a type of building known as a hermitage.

The new play area has been created by the team at Creating Adventurous Places Ltd (CAP.Co) and is inspired by the natural setting of the woodland and the nearby Smite Brook.

Tickets for timed slots for Hermit's Hollow are £3.95 and can be booked online in advance or at the on-site kiosk. Online advance bookings are encouraged to avoid disappointment. This new facility will complement the newly refurbished play area at the Visitor Centre and the Climbing Forest, which are both free to use.





Hermit's Hollow also benefits from its own catering unit "Hermit's Café" and toilet facilities, including disabled toilet and baby changing facilities.

One of our Estate Officers constructed the entrance signage for Hermit's Hollow using surplus timber and the results were astounding:



### **Changing Places**

In the spring of 2024, Coombe will benefit from a changing places facility on site. The facility will be located adjacent to the existing public toilet facilities at the Visitor Centre.

"Coventry City Council have been awarded more than £140,000 of government funding to install two new Changing Places toilets in the city to help improve lives of severely disabled residents.

The Council are one of 64 local authorities across the country to have secured the funding for the second time from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to install two modular Changing Places Toilets at Coombe Abbey Park and War Memorial Park by March 2024.

It consists of £7 million government funding to build 120 new Changing Places toilets in England where they are most needed as part of the wider Changing Places scheme worth £30.5 million. The scheme is providing more than 600 new facilities, bringing the total of Changing Places toilets across England to 1,900.

Changing Places are toilet facilities for people with profound and multiple disabilities. They are fitted with specialist equipment such as a hoist and changing bench. They provide sufficient space for up to two carers to support the person with a disability to use the Changing Place. These toilet facilities will ensure that people with severe disabilities and their families or carers will not have to worry about whether there are adequate facilities for them to use.

The commitment to installing more Changing Places Toilets in the city is part of the Council's commitment to improving the accessibility and inclusivity in our city for people with disabilities and their families. We know from what these communities have told us that access to parks and open spaces is so important for their physical and emotional well-being that providing adequate toilet facilities in these venues is a top priority".



### **Reservoir – MIOS (Matter in the Interests of Safety)**

Coombe Pool Reservoir, owned by Coventry City Council is situated in Coombe Abbey Park. The reservoir is inspected regularly under Section 10(2) of the Reservoirs Act 1975.

The report following this inspection included several recommendations as to measures to be taken in the interests of safety (“MIOS”). MIOS recommendations are enforceable by the Enforcement Authority (Environment Agency) and require supervision by a Qualified Civil Engineer (“QCE”) within the meaning of the Act.

Atkins Realis are the inspectorate for Coombe Pool, and the requirements identified are enforceable by the Enforcement Authority (Environment Agency) and must therefore be undertaken:

- Works should be undertaken to improve the profile of the downstream slope between the outlet structure and main spillway.

Atkins’ scope of services will also cover tasks to address the following further MIOS recommendations as made by the QCE in a partial certificate under Section 10(6) issued on 26th September 2022:

- Works should be undertaken to ensure that: the dam crest level from Chainage 0m to Chainage 400m is not less than 74.44mAOD (1,000yr still water flood level + 50mm); the dam crest level from Chainage 500m to Chainage 950m is not less than 74.73mAOD (1,000yr still water flood level +340mm); the dam crest level from Chainage 975m to Chainage 1080m is not less than 74.91mAOD (1,000yr still water flood level + 520mm); and the dam crest level between these section given should be not less than that of the graded line (matching the levels either side).
- Works should be undertaken to improve the transition from the spillway chute to the Smitte Brook by protecting the downstream channel (the extent of the channel protection to be determined and agreed with the QCE).

In addition to the above, repairs to Bellmouth Weir/downstream watercourse/overflow/Spillway are required.

These works will involve damming the lake to prevent water overspill whilst the repairs are undertaken.

The above matters are in hand with Atkins Realis.



## **Bridge Assessment**

Coombe Abbey bridge is a single span masonry arch bridge located in Coombe Abbey Park, built c. 1771-1776. The bridge has been identified as requiring an assessment to identify the safe weight limit of the structure. The bridge currently supports 40t traffic, with no special vehicles, which is to be maintained. There are no previous drawings or inspections available for the bridge. The country park is a listed park and garden, and the bridge is located within a woodland area. The bridge carries a road used as a footpath open to members of the public, and for vehicular use by park staff.

The aims of this assessment were to:

- Identify the safe weight limit of the structure
- Identify repair and improvement works required to the structure to support in achieving a 40-tonne loading capacity and for the replacement of a failed red-brick balustrade.

Due to the lack of previous inspections and drawings, it was necessary to undertake a principal inspection of the structure to determine its condition and identify the repairs required. The results would then support the assessment to determine the safe weight limit.

Overall, the bridge was in poor condition, despite the arch being in fair condition. The wingwalls and spandrels were in poor condition.

The assessment found that the bridge structure assessed as part of the scope of works has a loading capacity of 40 tonnes.

The above matter is in progress between Coventry city Council and Atkins Realis.



## **Biodiversity at Coombe**

### **Hedgehogs**

Hedgehog surveying continued on the site and has demonstrated that Coombe is home to some very healthy individuals along with rescued hedgehogs which were released back into the park.

The most recent survey (undertaken in September 2023) identified a total of 48 hedgehog sightings over three nights of 17 individuals, 14 were new, and 3 were hogs previously tagged in the past two years. The smallest was 449g and the biggest was 1.152kg. All but the smallest were over 600g already (and 6 were over 1kg), so really good weights heading towards winter hibernation, with plenty of invertebrate prey for them.

All were generally healthy looking; a few had a couple of ticks and fleas but nothing major.

Most sightings were along the west side of the driveway, with quite a few round the visitor centre and trees/long grass to the immediate east of it. They seem to really like the long grass under the trees on both sides of the drive, and the edges where the long and short grass areas meet. Also found were

2 individuals on the arboretum side of the site this time, one being a recapture first seen in April 2022 right by the causeway.

Other sightings/notes included a couple of common toads, 2 wood mice, a fox, a badger, Daubenton's bats foraging over the pool, couple of muntjac, plenty of rabbits, the usual tawny owls calling and a barn owl screeching nearby.

We had a lot of new and returning volunteers (15 people in total over the 3 nights!), so all in all a successful weekend with lots of useful data collected.

### **Butterflies**

Butterfly Conservation Trust volunteers continued to survey Coombe showing butterfly populations to be on trend with Warwickshire averages. Through recent consultation with BCT a planting list has been developed to create a connection corridor of wildflowers beneath the trees of the main drive increasing wildflower coverage by 3ha

### **WeBs Surveying**

WeBs (wetland bird survey) and the Heron census continue to be completed at Coombe, with records sent to the BTO and Warwickshire biological records office.

### **Natural England**

Natural England visited the site again this year to monitor a new Heron nesting site on the park boundary, they also reviewed the works being undertaken on site under our HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) agreement.

In November 2023, the site was audited by the Rural Payments Agency to ensure we were working in line with the current agreement. The Rural Payments Agency contacted us post visit to advise they were happy with their findings.

The HLS agreement for the site has now been extended to 2028.

### **Notable sightings**

#### **Birds**

Great White egret continuing to overwinter here and seems to be roosting on the heronry with the 37 little egrets. Little egrets are still breeding on the heronry and nest numbers are increasing which is encouraging. There was a pair of cattle egrets feeding on the Deer park for the 1st time, which is great as these were once a rarity in the UK but numbers have been increasing since 2017.

#### **Fungi**

Golden Bootleg Fungus *Phaeolepiota*, Waxcaps, Pinkgills and Crazy Caps





### **Flora**

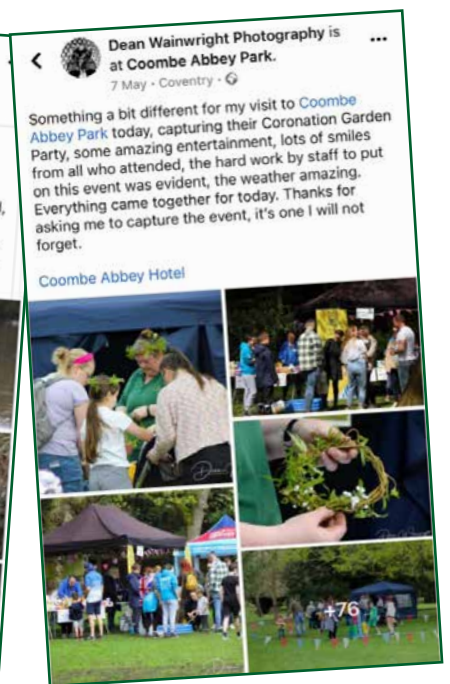
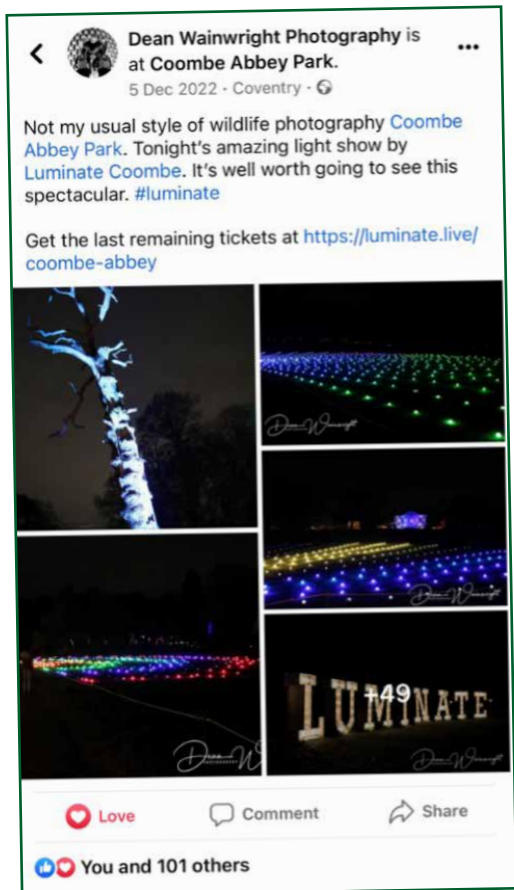
Haresfoot Clovers, Hairbells and Nettle Leaved Bell flowers.

### **Volunteers**

We have benefited from several corporate volunteering groups including, RS Group, Core Highways Group and Jaguar Landrover who have been undertaking a number of tasks including Rhododendron clearance, litter picking and dealing with epicormic growth on the main drive/avenue.



Our volunteer, Dean Wainwright Photography has spent many hours capturing beautiful photos from in and around the park.



If you need this in another language or format  
please contact:  
Telephone: 024 7683 3633  
e-mail: [BSCwhitley@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:BSCwhitley@coventry.gov.uk)