

Little Chalfont Nature Park Recreation, Culture & Heritage

1. Introduction

The human context of the Park is an essential part of our understanding of its value today for recreation, culture and heritage. Learning about how it was created and survived as the land around was developed and its importance in the local community in Little Chalfont helps us understand its value better.

2. Little Chalfont Village

As communities grow, they develop services everyone needs as part of daily life: a church, shop, public house, post office, telephone exchange, garage, school, doctor's surgery, dentist, optician, a village hall, library, playground and a recreation ground. Because Little Chalfont did not exist as a traditional settlement it acquired all of these for the first time as the community grew in the 20th century.

As communities develop, residents want to organise themselves, to provide local leadership and a method for developing the strategy and vision for the community, for leading and managing local issues and services, for decision making and to plan future development in an orderly way. All the things that traditional communities already have, including a way of recording the collective memory or local history needed to be created for the first time in Little Chalfont. Even the artefacts found in local communities such as local street signs and a war memorial, symbols communities expect, had to be created in Little Chalfont. The history of the Nature Park forms part of this community development. The park helps to create a sense of place and defines what a community is: that there is a vision for Little Chalfont a culture and identity, a vibrant place to live and not just a dormitory for commuters into London.

In a living community, there is also popular demand for communal events – for village fetes, to celebrate festivals and social events, for music and drama - and to engage in community action – everything from rebuilding the children's playground to organising floral displays and Christmas decorations. The purchase and development of the Nature Park grows out of this community spirit where people in the local community freely give up their own time to help others and build a thriving and vigorous community, a place with character where people want to live.

A range of community activities helped to create the Park and helps us make sense of it by placing it in its human context, including the vision that led to its purchase and creation, its history, its purpose and the community action that led to its creation and preservation, the management of the Park and the plans for future use and development.

The human geography of the Nature Park has many facets:

The opportunity

was the proposal to sell the land, the desire of the sellers to choose a buyer who would care for the land, one that would want to use it for purposes other than development and to offer it at an affordable price to enable this.

Leadership and vision

The local community collected together to form an action group to lead the project and to preserve the land for a high quality nature park, to raise the money through public appeal for the purchase of park and to make arrangements for its future ownership and management in trust for the local community and eventually all visitors to enjoy.

Appeal, fundraising and purchase

The successful organisation and hard work to launch an appeal, to accumulate funds from local people, business and from charitable foundations and to complete the purchase process.

Restoration

To set out the criteria for the nature park, the development and clearance of the park to restore it, the appointment of specialist contractors and the plans to make it safe for visitors.

Management

The park needs managing, a project plan to make it suitable and prepare it for opening, to arrange publicity, control access and security, but also to prepare for an appropriate future use, for example to commission a baseline biological survey, a history of the park and a learning zone.

Community action

To seek and coordinate volunteering, organise the team work needed to develop the park and to involve the local community in the restoration work.

Development

To ensure the vision for the park is better understood and is achieved – for local residents, for children, and to develop the vital information, communication and education to support the best possible use of the park.

Understanding

The vision is to create a high quality nature park, a place that serves many purposes at many different levels – a haven that brings people close to their natural environment, a sensory place with beauty, colour and fragrances, a place for teaching and learning, for scientific study, to make sense of its history and heritage, and for future creative



and innovative uses of the park, its care and maintenance, and continued observation, study and analysis of the flora and fauna.