HADLEIGH FARM & COUNTRY PARK
OLYMPIC LEGACY PROJECT

Introduction
Essex County Council, in a unique partnership with The Salvation Army, is seeking planning permission from Castle Point Borough Council to provide new and improved recreational trails and visitor facilities on land at Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park.

The proposals are at the centre of the project’s exciting vision for expanding and enhancing Hadleigh Country Park, providing opportunities for people to more fully access, enjoy and appreciate the area’s natural and historic environment assets.

The project will deliver substantial benefits both for local communities and visitors, and help secure the long term future of Hadleigh Country Park as a valuable green space for communities in Castle Point and throughout South Essex.

Summary of Proposals
The Hadleigh Legacy Project will bring together and bring to life the heritage of Hadleigh Farm and Country Park alongside the legacy of the Olympic Mountain Bike course by:
- Retaining and adapting the Olympic Mountain Bike course for use by the public
- Protecting and enhancing and improving the wider network of trails and paths for a range of users
- Protecting and enhancing projects to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment
- And improving facilities for the community and visitors to area.

The next stages of the project will involve continuing to work with the local community to develop opportunities for them to stay involved in the activities and opportunities that the project will create.

Essex County Council and Hadleigh Country Park
Hadleigh Country Park is managed by Essex County Council, and provides one of the largest publically accessible natural greenspaces in South Essex. The Park is used by around 125,000 visitors every year for a range of informal recreational activities such as walking, cycling, picnicing, kite flying and bird watching.

The Salvation Army and Hadleigh Farm
The Salvation Army has been part of the Hadleigh community for more than 100 years, since William Booth first established a Farm Colony to rehabilitate destitute and homeless people. This vision has developed into the present day. The Salvation Army now provides unparalleled opportunities for vulnerable people to serve the community and reach their full potential through training and work experience placements on its farm, Rare Breeds Centre, Tea Rooms and Training Centre.

These proposals have been developed following extensive consultation with the local community and other stakeholders, which showed strong support for providing improved access and facilities at Hadleigh Farm and Country Park.
THE RECREATIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

At the heart of the proposals are plans to improve and enhance the network of existing paths and trails across Hadleigh Country Park and Hadleigh Farm, improving access for walkers, cyclists, mountain biking, runners and horse riders. The trail network will include the adapted Olympic Mountain Bike course. This will be connected to the Country Park and the wider area by a network of multi-user trails for walkers and cyclists. New walking trails with interpretation panels, enhanced horse riding trails and cross-country running trails, within the Country Park will also be provided. The vision for the improved trail network includes enhancements to walking and cycling access between Benfleet and Leigh-on-Sea stations. A comprehensive Management Plan has been developed to manage user conflicts and protect sensitive environmental features from harm.

THE OLYMPIC MOUNTAIN BIKE LEGACY

The London 2012 Olympic Games Mountain Bike event will be held on a specially designed course at Hadleigh Farm adjacent to Hadleigh Country Park on the 11 and 12 August.

Essex County Council together with The Salvation Army, have long been committed to bringing forward legacy proposals for the post-Games use of the Olympic Mountain Bike course.

The legacy project includes proposals to retain and adapt the London 2012 Olympic Mountain Bike course to make it suitable for use by riders of a range of ability levels. Additional sections of trail and the appropriate measures to manage recreational mountain biking (eg. signage) will be added. The area of the course on Hadleigh Farm, which is currently private farm land, will also be opened up to walkers and other users.
IMPROVED FACILITIES

The Hub
Existing buildings on land at Sayers Farm will be replaced with purpose built facilities or a ‘Hub’ providing a primary gateway to the network of recreational trails for walkers, cyclists and other users. The Hub will also offer a range of local community and business opportunities, including the provision of replacement workshop units.

The new Hub will include:
• Ranger facilities
• Community space
• Toilets/changing rooms
• Café
• Equipment hire/shop.

Within the Hub, The Salvation Army will provide more life skills and employment training opportunities for the people it currently supports, such as adults with learning difficulties, as well as assisting local families experiencing difficulties, all with strong links to the benefits of the natural environment.

Parking and Access
The existing Country Park car park at the end of Chapel Lane will be expanded to provide adequate parking spaces for the anticipated increase in numbers of visitors to the area. Parking charges will continue to apply, and ‘fly parking’ in local residential areas will be discouraged through appropriate measures.
Design
- The proposals involve the replacement of existing buildings on previously developed land in the Green Belt at Sayers Farm.
- The new Visitor Centre and Workshop Units will not be larger than the existing buildings. The buildings have been carefully sited and landscaped to be less obtrusive than the buildings they replace in order to maintain the appearance of the rural setting.
- In response to comments from the consultations the form, layout and appearance of the new buildings and parking areas are sensitively designed to be sympathetic to the rural character of their surroundings, and to minimise impacts on the amenity of local residents.

Sustainability
- Sustainable energy, water and waste minimisation measures are incorporated into the scheme
- Opportunities for sustainable travel options by visitors and staff will be encouraged through a green travel plan.

NATURAL AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
Integration of the proposals with the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid is the wider context for the project’s vision. In addition to improvements to recreational facilities, a wide range of environmental enhancements will be delivered as part of the proposals.
- Grassland habitat creation and restoration in the Country Park, including opening up views of the Thames Estuary
- New heritage interpretation panels, signage and seating throughout the trails network
- New and improved interpretation of World War Two historic features on the site
- New/improved traffic-free linkages between Hadleigh town centre, Leigh-on-Sea Rail Station and the Site
- Substantial wildlife habitat connectivity enhancements on land linking to Hadleigh Country Park and Hadleigh Farm.

The Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid
The Green Grid is a project linking all the open spaces throughout South Essex from Thurrock to Southend, joining together numerous greenspaces, cycle ways, footpaths, nature reserves, heritage sites and marshlands. It includes a number of high profile environmental projects such as restoration of the Central South Essex Marshes by RSPB, creation of the Thurrock Thameside Nature Park in Mucking by the Essex Wildlife Trust and the opening up of the former petroleum refining site at Canvey Wick by the Land Restoration Trust.

new heritage interpretation panel
CONSULTATION PROCESS

Summary of Consultation

Throughout the planning process, Essex County Council has been fully committed to liaison with The Salvation Army, the local community and other stakeholders. This will continue up to and during the construction phase, and after completion.

- Website set up for enquiries from the public.
- Regular newsletters distributed around Castle Point and other interested parties that registered online or by post.
- Questionnaire surveys seeking the public’s views on what improvements were important to them and how they currently use the Country Park and surrounding area.
- Public consultation workshops attended by local user groups and residents to help identify opportunities, challenges and solutions for the future management of Hadleigh Country Park.
- Opportunities to participate in themed walks (‘Heritage’, ‘Cycling’, ‘Access’ and ‘Visitor Facilities’) to explain the recreational trail proposals on site.
- Drop in sessions for the public to view the recreational trails and visitor facilities proposals prior to submission of the planning application.
- Presentations and meetings with key stakeholders including:
  - Castle Point and County Councillors
  - Castle Point Planning officers
  - Local residents, businesses and community groups
  - Sports and recreation groups
  - Statutory bodies (e.g. Natural England, English Heritage, Environment Agency)

Summary of Consultation Responses

Responses from the public consultation process indicated that there was strong support for the provision of improved access and facilities at Hadleigh Farm and Country Park. A clear message was that a ‘zoned approach’ to management of different levels and types of recreational activities should be adopted to protect environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife.

“Questionnaire Survey Headlines”

- 87% see improved visitor facilities as important
- 53% currently visit for its historic environment
- 79% say important to improve the historic environment
- 38% visit for its natural environment
- 73% say important to improve the natural environment
- 81% say important to improve signs, trails and wayfinding.
CONSULTATION PROCESS

Responding to issues raised
• A comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment involving a wide range of technical studies, surveys and consultations with environmental bodies has been undertaken by independent consultants.

• The Environmental Impact Assessment has identified a range of measures for ensuring that the proposals do not have unacceptable effects on the area’s landscape, ecology or heritage.

• A Construction Environmental Management Plan has been developed to control and monitor the risk of harm to environmentally sensitive areas/features, including measures for minimising impacts on the amenity of local residents and visitors during construction works.

• An Operational Environmental Management Plan has been developed to control and monitor the risk of harm to environmentally sensitive areas/features based on a ‘zoned approach’ to management of different levels and types of recreational activities.

• A Transport Assessment (which includes a draft Travel Plan) has identified a range of traffic management/parking measures for ensuring that the proposals do not have unacceptable effects on local traffic, access and parking.

• Footpath 28 (a Right of Way) will be permanently diverted to avoid conflict between walkers and mountain bike trails.

STAY INVOLVED – GET INVOLVED

Please sign up to our email newsletter to stay informed on the consultation process.

Next issues we’ll be working with the local community to develop include;

1. Heritage projects – opportunities for local people to learn and engage.

2. Local parking and access – questionnaire to be circulated to local properties.

3. Cycling and Mountain Biking – opportunities for local people to form a club based in Hadleigh

See essexlegacy.org for more details of these and ongoing updates on the project.
Please sign up to our email newsletter for more frequent updates:
Log onto www.essexlegacy.org

Key Dates
London 2012 Olympic Games

11 August 2012   Women’s Mountain Bike Cross-Country: race and Victory Ceremony
12 August 2012   Men’s Mountain Bike Cross-Country: race and Victory Ceremony

All events at Hadleigh Farm will be ticket access only. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

This newsletter is issued by
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and/or made available in alternative formats, on request

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