

Evergreen Field, 28-30 High Street Wanstead E11

Planning application submitted by the Wanstead Society
Design and access statement

Reference WS5
22 October 2012

Introduction

The Evergreen Field is an established part of Wanstead's character but has remained neglected and unused for about 50 years.

It contributes to sense of place but it needs to be brought into active use for the benefit of the community.

The Wanstead Society propose an active use as a community open space accommodating a variety of activities throughout the year.

Our objectives are usefulness of the land and enhancement of the centre of Wanstead.

In this statement we address the land use, landscape and access issues relevant to a planning permission

What the planning application is for

Use of the land – a multi-purpose open space for community activity

Physical works – a vehicle crossover to support the use, fences

The applicant

The Wanstead Society is the only small charity dedicated to the promotion and protection of Wanstead, Snaresbrook and Aldersbrook.

The Society aims to protect the historic and architectural heritage of the area by examining planning applications and working with developers to ensure good quality, sympathetic, design.

The Society also seeks to invest in the local area through initiatives such as paying for trees and bins within local amenity spaces, maintaining some garden areas within the High Street and lobbying those in government, local, regional or national, for investment within the Wanstead area.

THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Location

On Wanstead High Street, adjacent to Christchurch Green and adjacent to Christchurch and the church hall.

Description of the site

A field, fenced in wire mesh and concrete posts, untended, unkempt. The land slopes gently towards the High Street and the grassed area is uneven. There is a pair of gates on the High Street pavement boundary, but no dropped kerb for vehicle entry. There is a variety of trees, and sycamore saplings which have formed a rough hedge on the south side.

Character of the surrounding area

The High Street is a busy shopping and service centre with the majority of businesses along its east side. The unique character of the High Street is that it is one-sided, with the majority of the west side between Woodbine Place and New Wanstead green open space, woodland and a school. The buildings between Evergreen Field and The Church Primary School constitute the only High Street buildings on the west side, of which only six are shops or services.

The open space on the west side provides a changing character from south to north – Christchurch is a formal Victorian-style public gardens, Evergreen Field is rural, the school provides a thick screen of evergreen trees to the street and the triangular green is lawn with white Newmarket-style paddock fencing flanked by thick deciduous woodland.

The character of Christchurch Green and Evergreen Field is defined by the presence of Christchurch, a listed Victorian parish church with an imposing spire glimpsed through trees from all directions.

High Street is an important route for pedestrians going to and from residential areas, business and transport at Woodbine Place bus terminus as well as Snaresbrook and Wanstead tube stations. The east side of the High Street has a broad pavement which acts as a pleasant boulevard for shoppers, residents and workers. The wide pavements and the open parkland on two other sides makes Evergreen Field highly visible. Over the years it has become a fundamental part of the character of Wanstead.

Protection of character in planning policy

The site lies within Wanstead Village conservation area
Christchurch is statutorily listed grade 2* in recognition of its architectural and historic significance



Location of Evergreen Field in Wanstead High Street

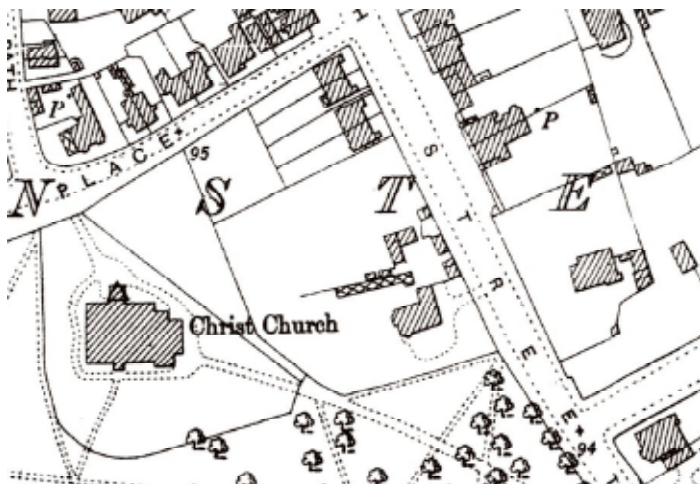


Evergreen Field to the north of Christchurch Green

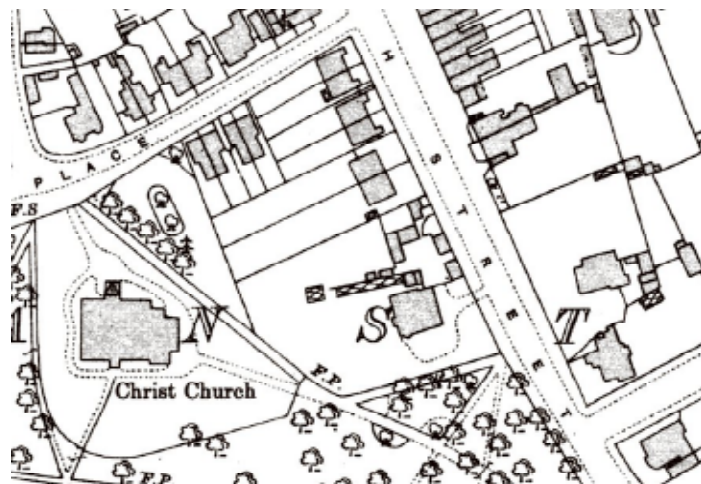


Aerial photograph of Evergreen Field

Previous buildings on the field, long demolished

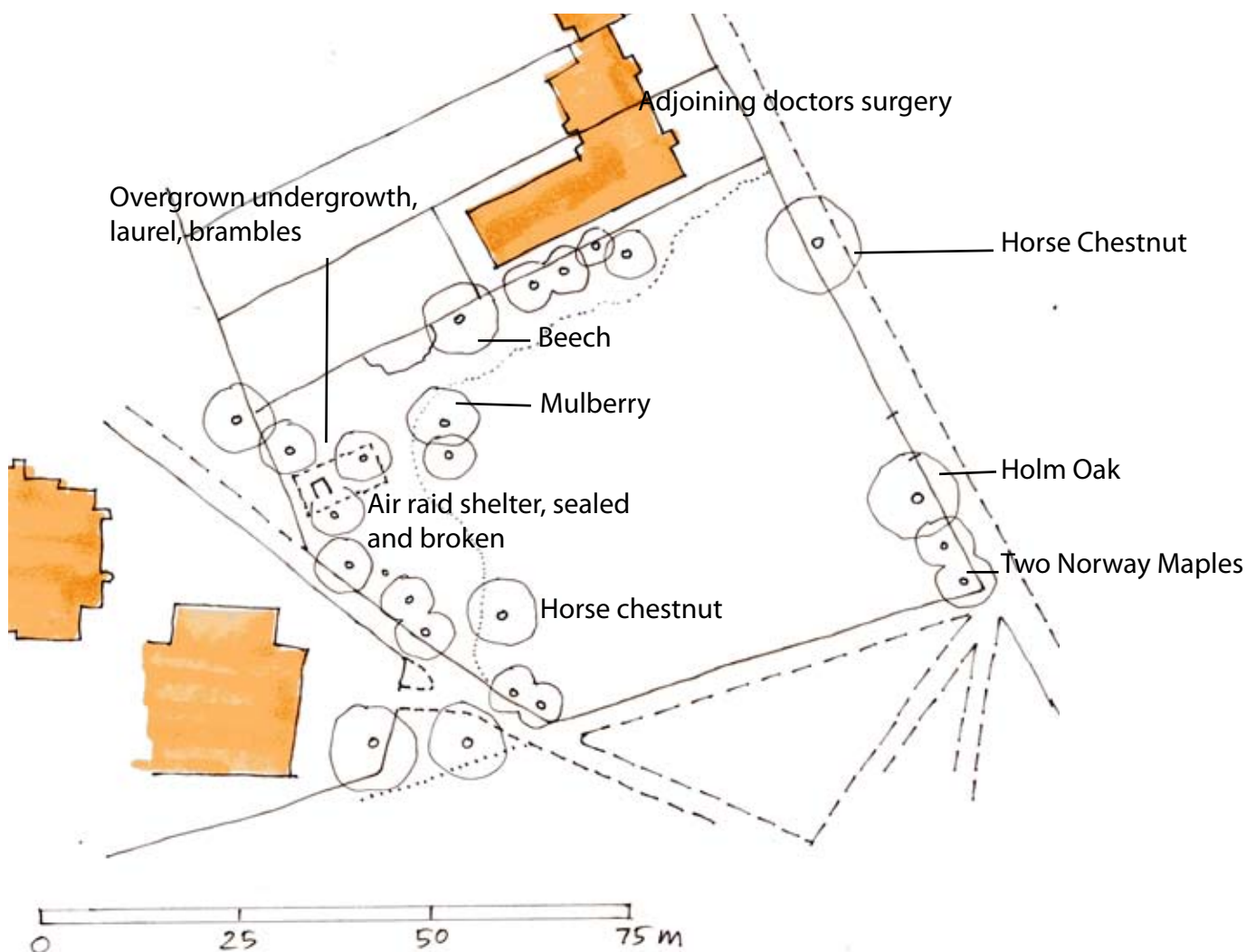


1894: a large house and yard within a field, perhaps a small-holding, stables or workshops



1915: the house is extended, and the pair of semi-detached houses appear in northern part. The buildings were demolished in the 1960s

Evergreen Field as existing



The field contains three trees at the southern end of its eastern boundary - one of which is a large Holm Oak. There is a large horse chestnut on the public footway just outside the field. On the northern boundary there is a large Beech tree and two other mature trees next to the adjoining building.

On the west side of the field there are several Sycamore trees close to the fence but deeper within the field are a Mulberry and a Horse Chestnut tree. All the old trees are covered in ivy which threatens the health of the tree. On the far west side is a filled-in air raid shelter.

Current use

The land has no use. The last use ceased when the buildings were demolished in the 1960s and the land has not been used for any purpose since. The successive owners have each failed in turn to determine a suitable active use. There has been no investment in the site and its boundary fencing, and only scrappy repairs to the mesh fencing.

Ownership history

Owned by the Metropolitan Police for many years, sold to Furlong Homes in the 1990s and sold on to Dalco Developments Ltd in early 2012.

There are restrictive covenants placed on the land by previous owners which may act as a constraint to future use.

Planning history and policy

An outline planning application was made in 1998 for a development of six commercial units with three storeys above containing residential accommodation. This was refused permission and an appeal dismissed in January 1999.

The appeal was dismissed because the scheme would harm its sensitive setting.

Development was not rejected in principle because at that time the site was allocated in the Redbridge development plan for development.

As the inspector suggested, the protection of the open space was a matter for the review of the Redbridge development plan - initially in the review of the UDP, then in the adoption of the Local development framework. These statutory development plans went through a rigorous consultation and adoption process and superseded all previous plans and briefs. The policy now states a presumption against development. .

The current policy position is as follows:

- Policy CR1 - Protected Open Space - the land is designated as open space to be retained, within which built development will not be permitted.
- Policy R1 - Wanstead District Centre – the site lies outside the designated town centre area.
- Wanstead Village Conservation Area

The applicant believes that the proposed use of the field as community open space will meet the objectives of the planning policies in the adopted development plan.

THE PROPOSALS

The Wanstead Society objectives

- Bring the neglected space into available, beneficial use for the local community for organised events and informal activity;
- Improve the environment of the High Street, improve the park entrance, and improve the safety and appearance of the west side;
- Enhance the character of the conservation area and the setting of the listed building
- Secure long term community management of the field and its activities.

The proposed use

Multi-use open space for community activities.

This would be space available for booking for different kinds of outdoor events and able to be secured for safety, for paid entry events and for management of private hire receptions or classes. In between booked events, the land would be capable of being open and accessible for informal public enjoyment.

The widened margins of the field would be extensions to the adjoining public park space.



The proposed works

Landscape works

Groundworks would make the field safe and even. Existing trees would be retained and overgrown vegetation cleared away from the boundaries and all existing fences removed.

The outside boundary line would be realigned to widen the constricted space on the west side, to improve visibility between north and south park spaces and enhance the setting of the church.

New trees would be planted in broad areas on the west and north sides, complementing existing trees, with related understorey and ground planting. A gap in the trees would keep a vista towards the church.

A roughly circular meadow about 50m diameter would be created. This would be surrounded by grassy banks for sitting and to assist in managing levels. The grass land and woodland would allow improved bio-diversity.

A vehicle access

A new vehicle access point with a vehicle crossover and dropped kerb on the public footway is proposed in order to enable essential servicing of the land.

This would be:

Vehicles bringing equipment for events being held on the field, such as stalls, marquee, temporary seating, temporary ball netting, bouncy castles, water tanks, electricity generators etc, refuse collecting vehicle.

Installation of new fencing

The site would have timber picket fencing (similar to the park fencing) which would demarcate the west, south and east sides, and enable the space to be secured for booked events.

The fencing would be necessary when the land is used for school events for child control, safety and security. It would also be necessary for events organised for paid entry or for private receptions, classes or sports competitions.

The fencing along the High Street boundary will provide an appropriate street edge, in place of the existing wire mesh fence. It would include wide gates.

The fencing on the park sides would be realigned in a sweeping curve opening green margins alongside existing paths.

The fencing would allow an opened-up park entrance on the High Street.

Refuse and recyclables storage

A simple timber enclosure would contain a trade refuse bin for waste generated from use of the field, plus two containers for recyclable materials. This would be accessible for collection from High Street.

Temporary installations associated with the proposed use

The temporary installation of a marquee or structure would be governed by permitted development restrictions for temporary uses.

Incorporation of seating and play equipment would all be ancillary to the permitted use.

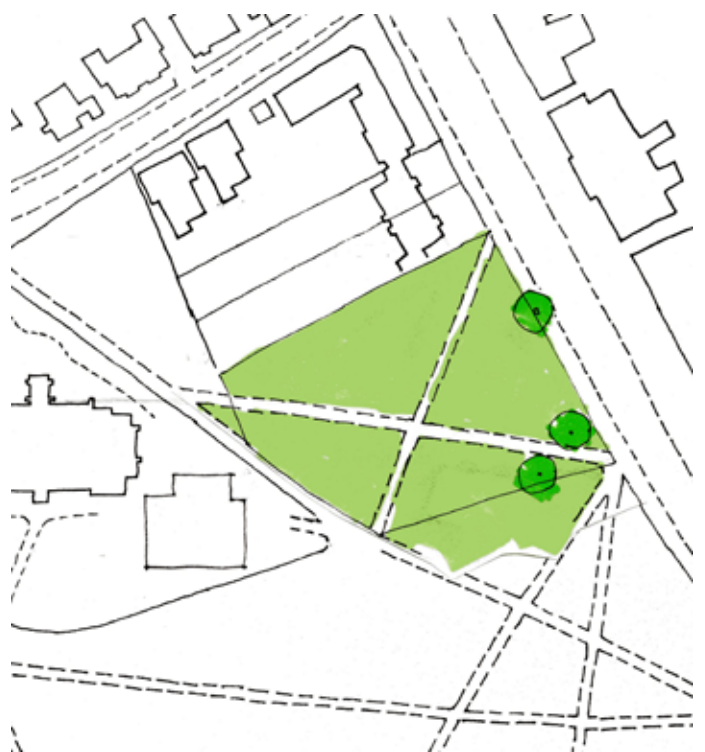
The removal or alteration of trees would be subject to applications for works to protected trees within the conservation area.

Options considered

A range of options have been considered as follows:



Community orchard or other food growing, within walled garden



Extension to Christchurch Green



Tennis courts



Large meadow merging with existing park, removing a path, surrounded by diverse planting

Explanations

The thinking behind an active multi-purpose space

The concept for the space is to enable a wide range of active uses within a green environment, for open public enjoyment, for organised community events, for private hire and for commercial activity complementing the High Street.

It is therefore not simply an extension to Christchurch Green nor simply left as a wild space. It will enable some activities which may not be possible in a public park.

The space would be usable throughout the year.

It would be a flexible space adaptable for different space demands

Capable of accommodating a temporary marquee, demountable ball fencing or stalls for shelter when required, maintainable and sustainable.

Examples of organised community uses

Education – primary school sports, country games, nature visits

Worship - open air services and meetings

Markets – craft and food

Classes – secure space for teaching fitness, day groups

Formal recreation

Arts – exhibitions using marquees

Entertainment – music and dance performance

Examples of private hire uses

Fetes

Receptions

Commercial product launches, demonstrations and shows

Access considerations

Pedestrian access would be made available.

Three pedestrian gates would be created - on the west (Christchurch) and south (park) sides, and a gate next to an improved park entrance.

Each gate would be level and accessible for all. The field would however have limited paved surfaces, but not preclude wheelchairs.

The existing footpath on the west side would be opened out to be more visible, safe and pleasant.

Vehicle access from the High Street would be enabled by means of a new dropped kerb and gate, for minibuses with less mobile people as well as essential service access.

Refuse vehicle would have easy access to refuse and recyclables containers on the High Street side.

Implementation and management

An implementation strategy would be negotiated with the current owner. The Wanstead Society will in the first place establish a long term management plan for the Evergreen Field. Implementation depends on practical and resourcing matters being addressed in a step by step manner with community support. However the detail of these matters are not necessary for planning permission. A planning permission would provide the starting point for achieving local community benefit.

Site conditions

The existing trees have been neglected and require urgent attention for their health and safety. The ground surface is very uneven. A bricked up air raid shelter on the west side near the boundary fence has been broken by tree roots.

Not brownfield land

Apart from an air raid shelter there are no remaining signs of the previous buildings which were demolished over forty years ago, since which the land has returned to nature.

Cleaning up the land

The owner has cooperated with local requests to tidy up the land and has cleared undergrowth and small trees to help address issues with vermin.

Selected existing trees



Holm Oak near High Street



Horse Chestnut within the field, covered in ivy



Mulberry



Large Beech inside the northern boundary

Photographs of the Evergreen Field



The central High Street entrance to Christchurch Green is diminished by the post and wire fencing at the corner of the feild.



The Evergreen Field seen from High Street, adjacent to the surgery at no 27. The large Horse Chestnut on the public footway, outside the field is to the left.



The fence next to Christchurch Green overgrown with neglected Sycamore and Ivy



The constricted path next to the listed Christchurch. The boundary of Evergreen Field is a dense wall of Holly, Ivy and Sycamore trees, harbouring rats.



The existing trees within the south east corner of Evergreen Field have a very significant effect on the character and appearance of High Street, creating a continuous green edge and a strong sense of openness.



Makeshift fence repair