



1. Stimulating ideas for the field

When development proposals were rejected in 1997, the Wanstead Society was formed to safeguard this land for Wanstead. It has succeeded in keeping it open, but unused. We have become familiar with the open field, but the land is in limbo: unused, no public access, privately-owned but with planning policy against building, other than where it supports or is ancillary to the purpose of that open space.

What practical use could be made of Evergreen Field, for the benefit of Wanstead? What do we want to see there?

These pages consider a future for Evergreen Field – where research, design, purpose and management could lead to a feasible proposal. You are invited to contribute to this.

Is there a solution that can be achieved by owner and community working together? Our starting point is to maintain the open character and a beneficial use, based on the current planning permission obtained by the Wanstead Society in 2013.

2. Facts about the field

Why it is special

It is part of the distinctive green side to the High Street, giving a remarkable sense of openness. It provides a setting to the listed Christchurch, Wanstead's main landmark. It provides a green link between Christchurch Green and Church Path. It makes a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

A brief history

Originally, the site was home to two houses, one called Framlingham, the other occupied by Dr Boney, damaged during the war and demolished in the 1960s. > *does anyone have old photos of this?* The site was then acquired by the Metropolitan Police for a police station but never brought proposals forward. Furlong Homes owned it for many years and failed to get permission for a dreadful development scheme. > *let's add an image of this.* The Evergreen Trust made a valiant effort to buy the land in the late 1990s, but it was sold on to Gladedale Homes, who sat on it and did nothing, which suited residents fine. When Dalco Developments bought the land in 2012, there was circumspection about their development plans, which are not yet clear. The Wanstead Society obtained planning permission for multi-use open space in April 2013 – but that needs to be translated into practical steps to bring the land into use and to manage it in the future.

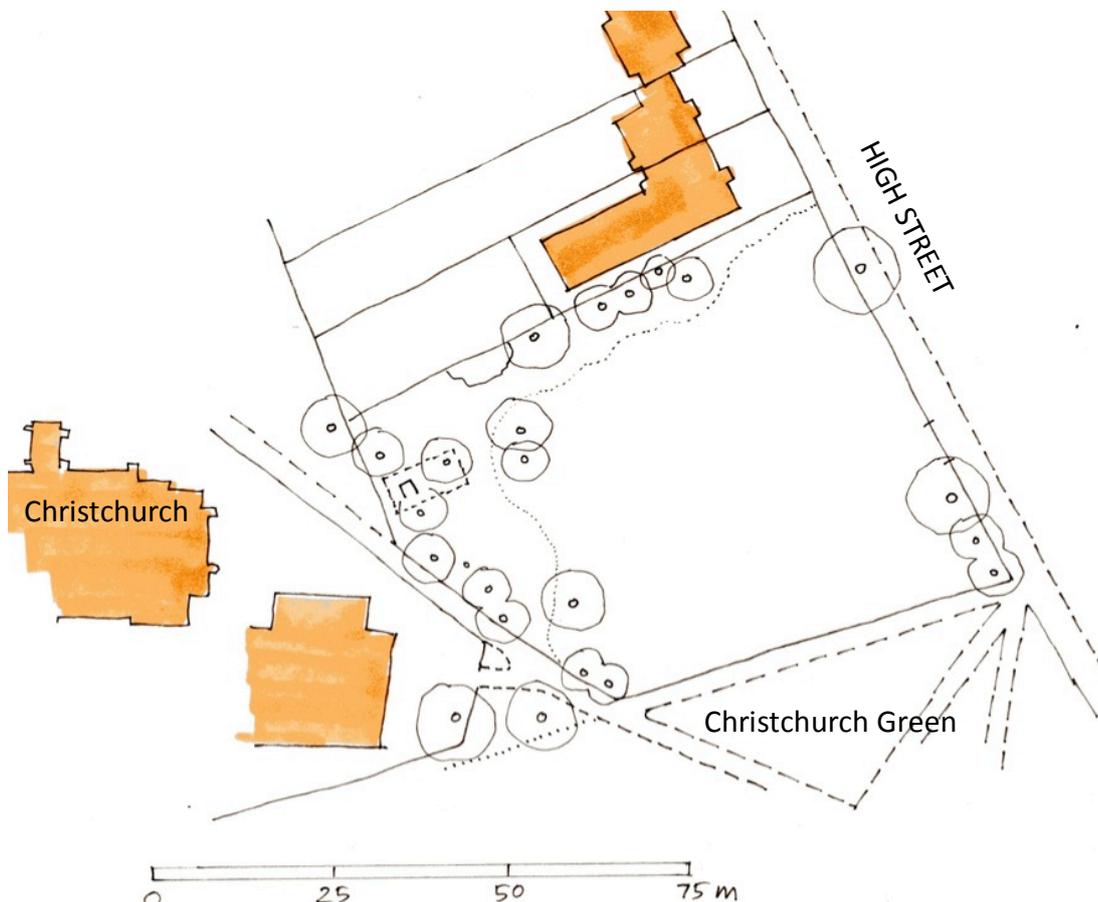
Where we are now

As the land is privately-owned, it makes sense to develop a dialogue with the owner to explore mutually supported options for future use and management of the land. This will not be simple, but an adversarial approach will be less likely to result in the best solution.

There is no justification for Redbridge Council to buy the land without a clearly defined need and informal enquiries with Council officers and Members have confirmed a general reluctance of the Council to exercise its powers in this respect. The owner wants development but understands the public interest and is prepared to allow time to work with the community. To demonstrate this, he has withdrawn an unpopular planning application for fences, removed polythene sheets and consulted public health officials about rat problems.

A plan of the field

This diagram is a plan of the field. It is one acre in size, located on the west side of High Street, adjoining Christchurch Green and Christchurch. It has a rich variety of trees.



Town planning information

- The land has no use in official planning terms. Planning permission is required for any use or development of the land, whether this is related to a recreational use of the land, commercial use or residential use.
- Redbridge Council, the local planning authority, have a policy (reference CR1) in the borough development plan that says the dominant character of the land should be as Open Space and that development proposals for the land should be refused unless they are supportive of or ancillary to the purpose of that Open Space.
- It is in Wanstead Village conservation area, reflecting the special character of the High Street based on its buildings, townscape and green spaces.
- The adjacent Christchurch is a grade 2 listed building.

The condition of the land

It has a very uneven surface, probably containing buried foundations and filled-in cellars. There is an overgrown air raid shelter near the Christchurch path. Over the years, the Wanstead Society has made sure the owners keep the field tidy.

Ownership information

The land is owned by Dalco Developments, who bought the land in 2012 from Gladedale Ltd – a housebuilder who had owned the land for several years.

Transferring ownership

The land has been offered for sale, but at an inflated price. Compulsory purchase by the Council would be hard to justify and the Council would be unwilling to exercise its powers in this respect. The valuation of the land is about £60,000 in its current condition but any buyer would have to agree a price with the owner and of course meet fees for legal services. The buyer would also need to have the proper standing to hold a legal interest in the land (e.g. freehold); this could be an individual or properly incorporated company or trust.

A community trust

If ownership of any land is transferred for public use, it could be held in trust for the benefit of the community by a charitable organization. A trust would plan the future management of the community land and raise funds for all the work needed to bring it into use.

Local opinion

The Furlong Homes proposal for a building facing the High Street with parking behind and a blank end wall facing the Green stimulated the setting up of the Wanstead Society. There has been resistance to development since, reflected in the Council's policy protecting the open land.

Planning permission

The Wanstead Society made a planning application for multi-use, community open space, with new fencing, planting and access. No planning permission was granted for permanent fixed structures. This was granted in March 2013 and is the only formal status the site has; it will expire in March 2016 if it is not implemented in that time. The permission however requires surveys and landscape design before use can commence.

Bringing the land into use – the basic steps

These are basic tasks whatever the final use might be, whoever owns the land, all of which have potential cost implications:

- Design of a proposal, even for completely open land.
- Whatever the proposal, planning permission is needed.
- A professional tree survey is needed.
- Ground works including removal of air raid shelter and exposed masonry, formation of new land form, planting, construction of path access, drainage, fencing, etc
- Drafting a management regime and costing the annual maintenance.

4. A shared vision for the land

An exciting vision is the essential catalyst for success.

- What is our shared vision for the how the field would be used and how it would look?
- Who would own and manage it long term?

What do you think?

5. Ideas for the land

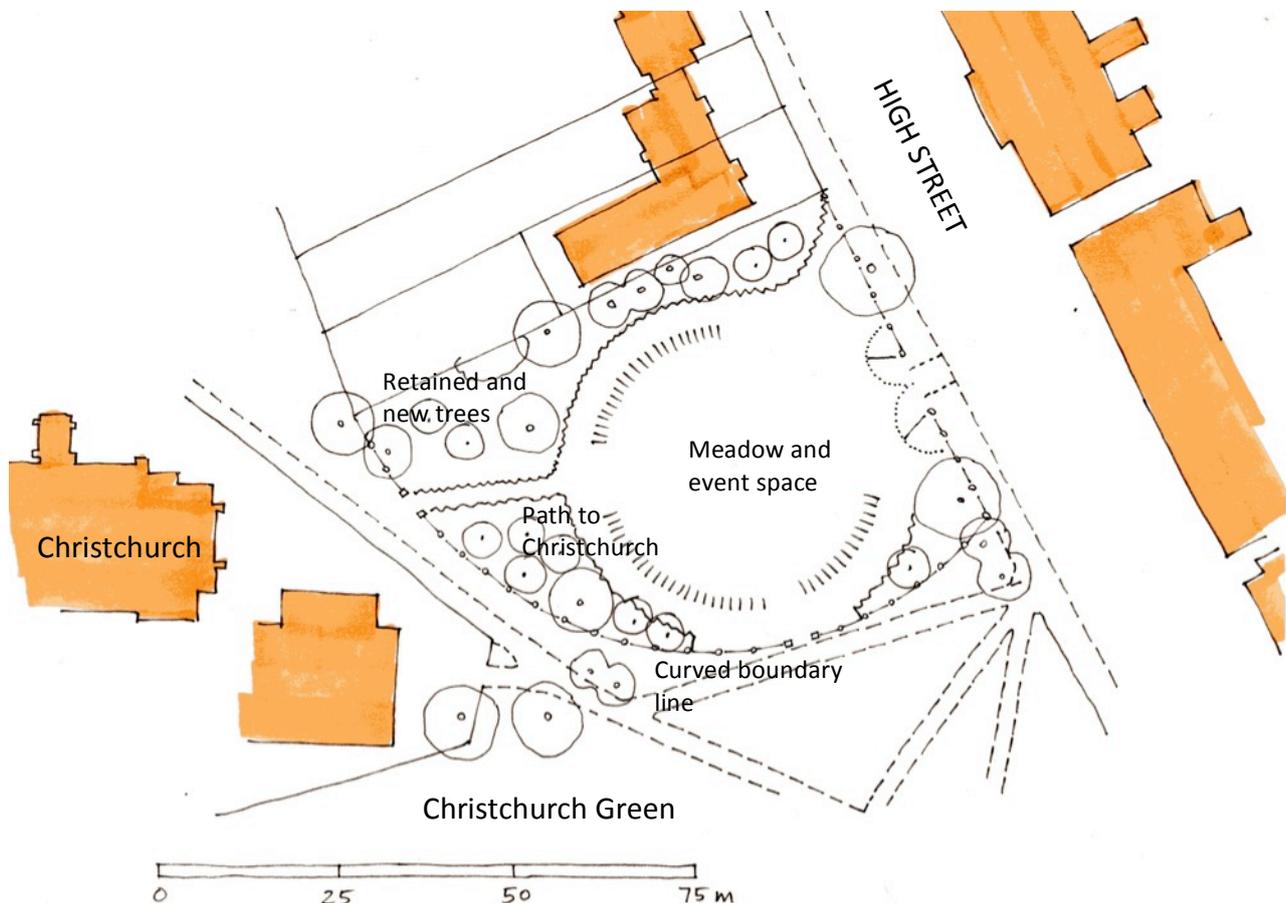
We have only one proposal at present – this is the scheme that has planning permission. This is described below as Idea 1, along with some possible variations. Idea 2 is the possibility of some building, on part of the land supporting open use and a landscape design-led approach.

In each case we would have to understand how feasible the idea would be:

- to get planning permission,
- to fund, and
- to manage in the long term.

Idea 1. Entirely open space for recreation and community activity

A multi-use community open space, for a wide range of formal and informal activities. The central meadow would be available to rent for some temporary events.



This approach is based on a free space for a variety of activities and new kinds of recreation, different from what we have in Wanstead already, and intended to appeal to the whole community. This could be a managed space for a calendar of organized activities. With support from community groups, nearby places of worship, local schools, Scouts and Guides who meet close by and local businesses.

Here are some ideas about how the space would be used:

'I think that making it into an outdoor venue for plays, concerts, music, comedy festivals would be a great use of the space. It could be kept very natural – grass and maybe either a picnic area and benches arranged in a graceful semi-circle. Performances could be mounted during festivals such as the Wanstead Festival, the Art Trail. In between times, it would be just a natural outdoor venue that invites casual public use.' Ginnette Benedict Carty

'Perhaps some provision could be made for a small performance space/projection wall on the side of the land which abuts the doctors surgery? Public events could be screened there using temporary projection kit.' Nick / Wansteadium

'A small amphitheatre sculpted out of the landform would turn the area into a performance space and a meeting place. It would also contribute to a bustling High Street.'

Variations on Idea 1

- **An all-weather event room**

A simple building for shade and shelter would enable a wider range of all-weather activities including meetings and exhibitions.

'A splendid pavilion once stood in Wanstead Park close to the Temple – the ground floor had a generous overhang to the roof for seating and protection from the weather. It had tea rooms, kitchen etc on ground floor, fully glazed upper level topped by a belvedere.' Rob Maitland

- **Natural Play**

One approach to getting the best recreational benefit from the land.

Natural play sites' consist of natural and manufactured structures to stimulate creative and imaginative play.

'This is seen to be the way forward in terms of play in urban areas. Most natural play features are mounds, tree trunks, boulders. The formal equipment associated with this type of play, such as nest swings and climbing frames, are not restricted in terms of age, we would welcome anyone to use them - age restrictions are avoided these days in terms of play. In South Park we have a very inclusive playground in the north end of the park and also in Seven Kings park (Aldborough Road South) a playscape which is a landscape based playground.'

Ian Shepherd

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/>



Nature play activity recipes are tried and tested activities with children on three adventure playgrounds the team has worked with in North Tyneside, Haringey and Torbay.

Natural England's Access to Nature programme, provides funding

In Ray Park South Woodford, a woodland was planted and includes a natural play zone. This was undertaken with Trees for Cities



- **Active recreation and alternative sports**

A more structured approach to recreational value

The Adizone at Ray Park has fitness equipment, a climbing wall, and basketball hoop. The gym is free to use during park opening hours and aims to give young people an opportunity to meet socially while being encouraged to play sports.



Adizones are permanent installations measuring 625sq metres, with sporting facilities inspired by Olympic and Paralympic sports. They are devised by Adidas. They feature a number of activities including a climbing wall, basketball ring, outdoor gym and amphitheatre for dance, aerobics and gymnastics. Each activity has instructions on how the equipment is to be used properly and safely plus details on local clubs and how to get involved.



‘A smart bowling green would be a welcome addition to the village high street. A club house with facilities to hold functions could form part of this set up. Perhaps a place that can be booked for barbecues in the summer months.’ **Amar Singh/ W+W Guardian comments**

- **Food growing**

Much of the land could be devoted to raised beds for cultivating food, or an orchard. There is an history of nurseries in Wanstead.

> *Do you know of any examples of other sites that have successful community-led open uses?*

Idea 2. An open area as above, but combined with some buildings

Dalco Developments have been open about their hopes to develop at least part of the land. The owner naturally wants to achieve some return for their investment. Dalco are the first owner that has sought to engage with the community, to find a workable approach.

Although the current Local Plan designation of this land seeks to safeguard the land as Open Space (Policy CR1), as is clear in the Local Plan, built development on the land may be acceptable in principle where it is “*supportive of and ancillary to the purpose of that open space*”. In any application for development on all or part of the land, the Council would have to consider what purpose this open space meets in its current state as private land with no rights of public access, as against how the proposal would help to contribute to the purpose of the open space especially if it guarantees future rights of access and use for the public.

Accordingly, a small amount of development next to existing buildings, with the majority of the land kept open and used for community purposes, may be an option. Whilst it is acknowledged that many residents may have strong opinions regarding such an option, the following examples have been assembled to help consider what might, or might not, work at Evergreen Field.

We will include diagrams, plans and images of examples. The key principle is that the landscape design of the open land should come first and that any other development for Dalco would help to facilitate public access to the site, compliment its appearance as open land through a high quality design, would be environmentally sustainable and would help to fund the long term care and use of the remainder of the site as open land.

Diagrams, plans and images of examples will be added as they emerge. All examples are welcome for helping the discussion. The key principle is that the landscape design of the open land should come first.

Images / plans / sketches

> *please provide examples*

These pages will be added to and amended over the coming weeks, and updates will be publicised on Wansteadium. Please use the Wansteadium comments to make contributions. Depending on how it develops, it may develop into a community brief, setting principles for future use.