

FIRST DRAFT SUMMARY FEBRUARY 2008

SUMMARY
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mousehold Heath

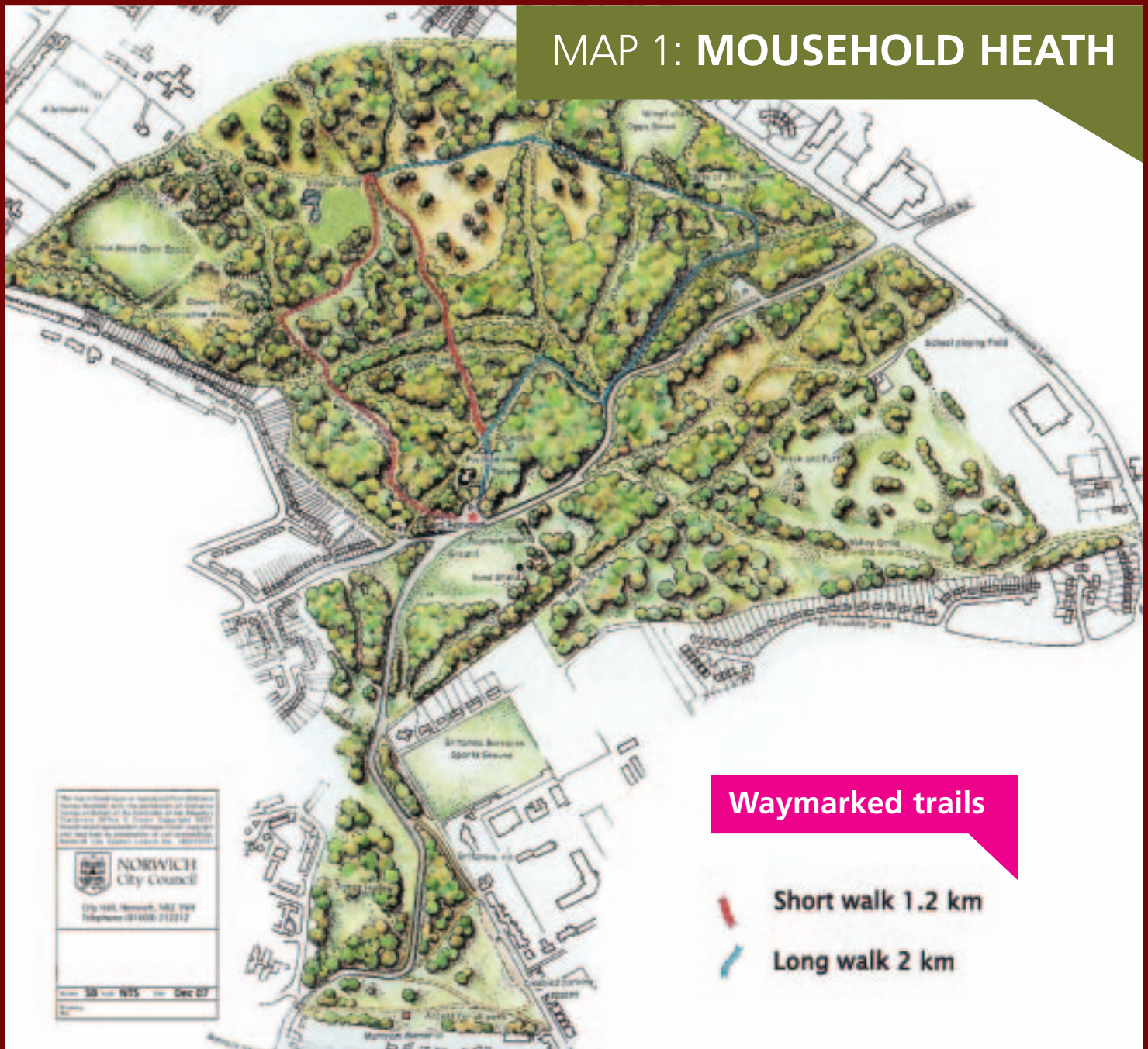
2008 – 2013

Mousehold Heath Conservators



NORWICH
City Council

MAP 1: MOUSEHOLD HEATH



Mousehold Heath is a unique 88 hectare (184 acre) area made up of woodland, heathland and recreational open space within Norwich. The site has played an important part in the history of Norwich and it is a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR)*. It is important both for its wildlife and as a place where people can unwind from the pace of city life.

Mousehold Heath is managed by the Mousehold Heath Conservators and Norwich City Council on behalf of the people of Norwich. A new draft management plan for Mousehold Heath has been produced on behalf of the Mousehold Heath Conservators and is available for public consultation until Friday 14 March 2008.

*Local Nature Reserves are places that are protected by local authorities because of their special wildlife or geological features and their accessibility to the public.

SUMMARY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR MOUSEHOLD HEATH

The management plan will try to balance the various demands on Mousehold Heath and provide both a vision and practical guidelines for the future care of the site. Important issues covered by the management plan will include the following:

- Biodiversity conservation and habitat management: key issues will be heathland conservation and restoration and management of the site's woodland and grassland areas.
- Conservation of Mousehold Heath's historic landscape and special features, including the site of St William's Chapel, the Old Tramway, the memorials and the view across the city from St James' Hill.
- Leisure and recreation: use of Mousehold for leisure activities, including dog walking, running, orienteering, cycling, observing nature and somewhere pleasant to sit.
- Visitor facilities: provision of facilities such as refreshment outlets, toilets, car parks and information.
- Misuse and antisocial behaviour: activities that cause damage to the site or its facilities, or which spoil people's enjoyment of it.



THE ISSUES

Biodiversity

Mousehold Heath is a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and a County Wildlife Site (CWS), because it is one of the best sites for biodiversity, or wildlife, in Norwich as well as being an important site in Norfolk as a whole. It is especially important for its surviving heathland, an internationally rare and threatened habitat. Heathlands are found on areas of poor, infertile acid soil, and they are made up of low growing shrubs, such as heather, gorse and broom, along with grasses and bare open areas. Heathlands like Mousehold are an important habitat for many specialised and often rare animals, some of which are found nowhere else. They are also attractive places to walk, especially in summer when the heather and other shrubs are in full bloom.

Heathlands need management, such as grazing or regular vegetation cutting, to stop them turning into scrub and eventually woodland. At Mousehold Heath, much of the original heathland area has been lost as bracken, scrub and trees have taken over due to lack of management. Some heathland restoration work has taken place, including selected tree removal, cutting back scrub and soil scraping to encourage new heather plants and other heathland vegetation to grow.

Heathland restoration work can, initially, seem very destructive, especially as it often requires the removal of trees and scrub but at Mousehold, and many other areas in Norfolk and elsewhere, heathland has been successfully restored using these methods.



One of the key proposals of the Mousehold Heath management plan is to keep all the existing heathland at Mousehold, and to restore it on some of the areas where it was lost in the late 20th century. A regular annual management programme will be introduced to ensure that the heathland is kept in good condition.

The management plan proposes that the majority of Mousehold Heath will remain wooded, and suggests management measures for improving the existing woodland areas for both wildlife and people. Notable trees – such as very old ones or those important for their interest or contribution to the landscape – will be safeguarded.

It is proposed by the management plan that all the existing grassland areas at Mousehold will be kept, and managed to improve their wildlife value. The Vinegar Pond will also be reprofiled to prevent it from drying out so often and to remove invasive vegetation.

Landscape and special features

The management plan stresses that Mousehold Heath is a unique, historic landscape which has played an important role in the history of Norwich and should remain free from unsuitable development. The plan proposes that all features of historical interest, such as the St William's chapel site, the Old Tramway route, the memorials, the pavilion (currently Zak's restaurant) and the Fountain Ground bandstand will be safeguarded and, where necessary, measures taken to improve their upkeep.



Leisure and recreation

Mousehold Heath is used for a wide range of mostly informal leisure and recreational activities. These include walking (with or without a dog), running, cycling, outdoor play and observing wildlife. There are way-marked nature and orienteering trails but, apart from team games on the Fountain Ground, organised leisure activities are limited to occasional events such as band concerts.

The management plan consultation will seek people's views on what types of recreational activities they feel are appropriate at Mousehold Heath. Views will also be sought on whether there is a need for more organised events or activities at the site, or what sorts of events and activities should be catered for.

Visitor facilities

Current visitor facilities at Mousehold Heath include car parking, refreshment outlets (Zak's restaurant and an ice cream van concession), toilets, information signs and seating. Site information is available on Norwich City Council's website and in a leaflet available from public libraries and other local outlets.

The management plan puts forward some suggestions for improvements to visitor facilities at Mousehold. Many people will have their own opinions and suggestions about the amount and quality of visitor facilities at Mousehold Heath, and these views are sought as part of the management plan consultation.



Antisocial behaviour

Like many similar sites, Mousehold Heath does suffer from some problems caused by antisocial behaviour. Some examples include arson (the deliberate setting fire to vegetation), litter and flytipping, dog fouling and the unauthorised use of vehicles, especially motorcycles, on the site.

Some recent measures taken to address antisocial behaviour problems at Mousehold Heath are mentioned in the management plan. The consultation will aim to find out more about concerns regarding antisocial behaviour, and what more could be done to address these problems.



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