



CIWEM Living Wetlands Award  
January 2012

LADYWELL FIELDS, LEWISHAM

ARUP BDP. 

## Background to the project, funding and management



This scheme is an enhancement of an existing green space incorporating the restoration and naturalisation of the River Ravensbourne. The scheme has created new river channels, backwaters, pools and riffles, and greatly improved habitats within the river corridor along with better access and educational benefits.

The Department of Communities and Local Government proposed the concept of the Thames Gateway Parklands Programme following discussions with key partners including the GLA Group. A £35 million programme was announced in the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan in November 2007. The programme aims to retain and restore the unique natural environment of the Gateway's landscapes, to secure a high quality built environment, and to protect, promote and celebrate the historic environment and heritage of the area.

The main objectives for Ladywell Fields were established as follows:

- Increase the value of the park to the public and raise its overall profile
- Reconnect the river with the adjacent park, improving access and visibility along its length
- Increase biodiversity of the river channel, corridor and wider park
- Increase flood capacity as part of the Ravensbourne catchment area
- Improve signage, orientation and education
- Create attractive and inviting gateways to the park
- Improve safety and security within the park

The overriding concept has been to build upon the park's greatest natural asset – The River Ravensbourne and to create an attractive place in which people want to dwell. The project has revived the river by uplifting its parkland setting through re-graded banks and the creation of a new waterscape of backwaters, pools and riffles. Improvements also provide better access to the waterside and enriched habitats and natural biodiversity.

The park has been transformed in two phases, the first phase was completed in 2007 through an EU Life project - QUERCUS (maintaining Quality Urban Environments for River Corridor Users and Stakeholders) and the second phase completed in April 2011 was funded through the London Development Agency and forms part of the east London Green Grid - part of the network of green corridors leading into the 2012 Olympic site.

Ladywell Fields has become not only an inner city haven for people, but also a haven for wildlife. The design of the park has been based on an understanding of the existing and potential users. Extensive consultation and analysis took place prior to agreeing a design which has ensured that the scheme is appropriate and loved by those who use it.

The regeneration of Ladywell Fields has raised the profile of the River Ravensbourne hugely. Once a hidden and forgotten channel on the perimeter of the park, the river has now become the focus and key attraction of the open space.

The design interventions have dramatically varied the experience and perception of the park users. The park is welcoming, pleasant to

spend time within and one would not imagine that this green oasis is directly adjacent to town centres and dense residential areas – this is what makes it outstanding.

Community involvement has been a key aspect of this project and much of the activity has revolved around the river. Weekend clean ups, volunteers removing Himalayan balsam from the river banks, and regular environmental education sessions focusing on habitats, life cycles and biodiversity in the river, have all ensured that local people begin to feel an ownership of the park, and are enthused and more informed about the river.

Lewisham in partnership with the Creekside Education Trust have been successful in securing funding from English Nature and the Big Lottery for an Access to Nature Project called Rivers and People, the aim of the project is to provide a series of free events to discover unexpected and hidden green gems and help to reconnect people of all ages with Lewisham's waterways and natural environment. Events have included walks (daytime, evenings, mornings and weekends), talks, river walks, nature awareness sessions, bird/tree/wildflower identification sessions, river clean ups and a programme of events with schools.

The Environment Agency have been working in partnership with Lewisham for a number of years developing the Ravensbourne Corridor Improvement plan (RCIP), a strategic document looking at opportunities within the Ravensbourne River catchment area to make improvements to the rivers and surrounding land and how this relates to and is affected by development opportunities. Out of this piece of work the EA commissioned a new Tu-flow flood model for the Ravensbourne River. Ladywell Fields had been identified within the RCIP as a key site and the Parklands project became the first project to be delivered using the new tu-flow model and the aspirations of the RCIP. The process required close collaboration between all key stakeholders within the project to ensure that the aspirations of the project team could be delivered within the technical constraints of the Tu-flow model.

Ladywell Fields forms part of the wider East London Green Grid (ELGG) a network of open spaces whose aims are to create, improve, manage and maintain high quality green infrastructure for people and wildlife within the eastern region of London. A key route through the fields is the Waterlink Way part of the RN21 Cycle Route that provides links to the south coast as well as links to a number of key green walking networks, most notably the Green Chain Walk and the Capital Ring.

Design for London who are responsible for the ELGG are currently working on the next stage of the project, to establish an All London Green Grid (ALGG) part of the project is looking at areas of deficiency to various types of open space. Lewisham sits in an area of deficiency of access to a regional park, Ladywell fields along with a network of other open spaces has been identified as part of a potential new Regional park for this area of London.

Part of the Parklands project funding also included a small project to help Lewisham promote the Waterlink Way, the route within the borough has now been re branded and new way finding has been installed along its route with new finger posts and pavement markers. Along with this a new free to download map of the route has been put onto the council website along with two versions in hard format, standard walking map size along with a credit card/wallet version.

Evidence of the Lady Well, shown on maps as far back as 1592, was likely to have been dedicated to the Virgin Mary and located somewhere near Ladywell Station and Ladywell Road. Ladywell was considered a wasteland or squatter village until the late 1700s following ad hoc enclosures. A wooden footbridge linked Ladywell to Lewisham High Street and the church followed by the construction of a brick bridge in the 1830.

The railway reached this town by 1857 which encouraged further development. Ladywell experienced a boom during the late 1880s witnessing wasteland cottages and farmland cleared to make way for shopping streets and new housing.

Ladywell Fields, formerly called (and still well known locally as) Ladywell Recreation Ground, was purchased for a public open space in 1889, to serve the growing population of Lewisham and Catford. The land had been water meadows, and much work on flood prevention had to be done before the park could be opened to the public.

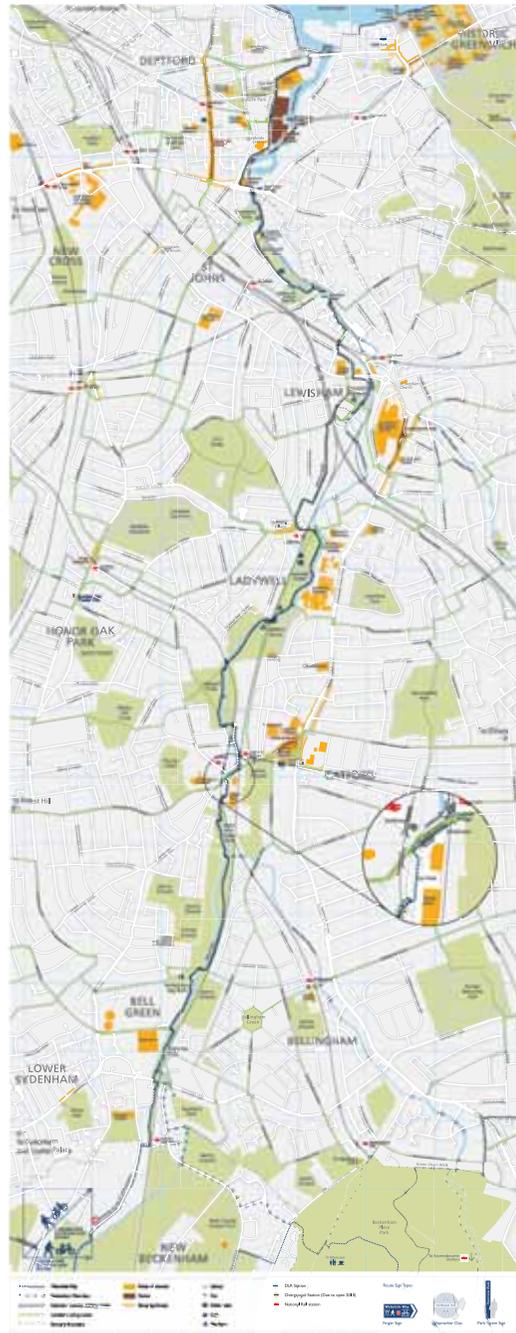


C1889 - six of these rustic bridges were built across the Ravensbourne to link the two sides of the park

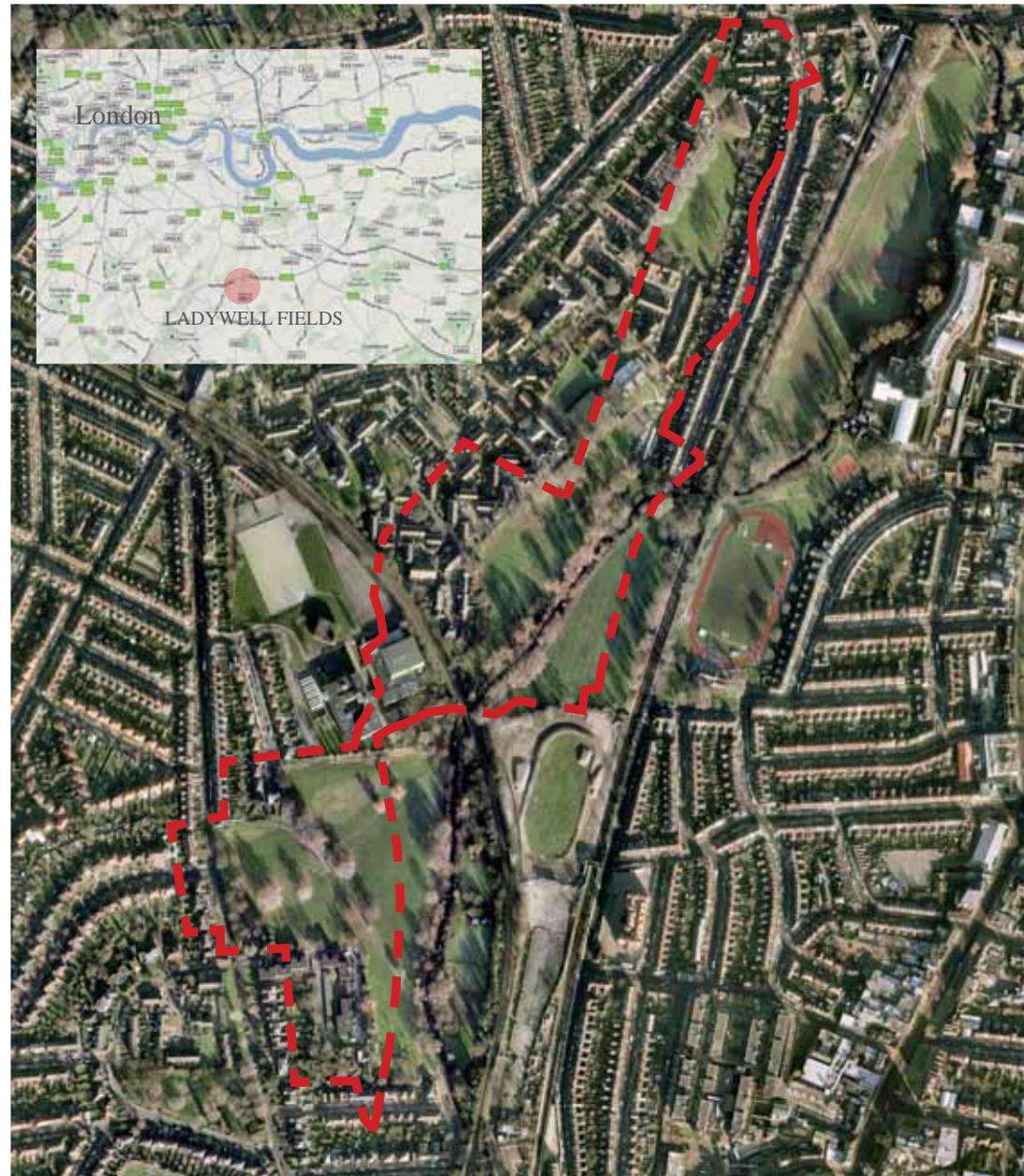


C1960 - the river banks

The Waterlink Way which passes through a number of parks and open spaces linked to the Ravensbourne



The site location



## Project team

### Client

London Borough of Lewisham  
Regeneration  
Programme, Management &  
Property  
5th Floor Laurence House,  
1 Catford Road,  
Catford, London, SE6 4RU

Contact: Martin Hodge  
T: 0208 314 7583  
E: martin.hodge@lewisham.gov.uk

### Lead Design Team & Project management

BDP.  
16 Broomfield Yard  
Clerkenwell  
London, EC1V 4LJ

Contact: Mehron Kirk  
T: 020 7812 8155  
E: mehron.kirk@bdp.com

Consulting Hydrological Engineer  
ARUP

Contact: Andrew Chalmers  
T: 44 20 7755 1234  
E: Andrew.Chalmers@arup.com

### Main Contractor

Northern field:  
Fergal Contracting Co Ltd  
The Downs Road  
Standlake  
WITNEY  
OXFORDSHIRE OX29 7YP

Contact: Terry Willemite  
T: 01865 300666

Southern field:  
J.Breheeny Contractors Ltd.  
Endeavour Park  
Addington  
Kent  
ME19 5SH

contact: Mark Tooley  
T: 017 3222 3920  
E: m.tooley@breheeny.co.uk

## Community involvement, education and public access

"The rejuvenation of Ladywell Fields means the area is now an oasis of calm for people to socialise and relax in."

Mayor of London Boris Johnson  
(Quote extracted from BD)

An extensive consultation strategy was put in place for both phases of this project. BDP and LBL have been the facilitators of the events and meetings which have continued through from inception to practical completion.

Key to the successful transformation of Ladywell Fields has been the steering group, comprising of the park user group chairman, the Ladywell Society chairman, representatives from the Environment Agency, the local police, Lewisham's parks maintenance contractor, the cafe owner, park keeper, relevant officers from the Council and a local councillor. All major project decisions have been brought to this group for discussion or approval, and it is through this group that such broad local support for the project has grown.

Ladywell Fields has a very active friends group who have been fully supportive of the improvements to the park, organized events, promotion via social networks Facebook etc. The Lewisham Council web site has also been used as part of the on going consultation and promotion of the completed projects.

The Environment Agency were key stakeholders of the project, not only approving the scheme, and providing some capital funding for the phase one delivery, but also in providing ongoing support and advice throughout the design and delivery stages.

The northern field was part of the European Partnership, QUERCUS, Lewisham Council officers involved have also had the opportunity to learn about different techniques and approaches through their partners in Chester and S-Hertogenbosch, as they have invested in their urban rivers.

The consultation strategy included a number of different methods of engaging with stakeholders, interested parties and local community, these included the following :

- Stakeholder group meetings and discussions
- Primary school visits
- Ladywell Assembly presentation
- Organised walks in the park
- Workshops in the parks learning room
- Exhibitions at the local shopping centre
- On line website, forums and blogs

The following groups have been engaged in the process

- LBL Council officers
- Environment Agency
- Environwork Lewisham
- Maintenance team contractor
- Cabinet members and councillors
- Ladywell fields User Group
- Ladywell Society
- Lewisham Disability Coalition
- Local religious groups
- Local primary schools
- TFL Cycling and Sustrans
- The public and people in the park

The comments received were extremely broad and varied, covering a whole spectrum of concerns and 'wants'.

As a general overview the main conclusions are noted as:

- Create a distinctive feel to each 'part' of the park; Northern, Middle Field and Southern Field.
- Physically and visually open up the river to increase its appeal and value to the user.
- Provide connections across the river to physically and visually link the spaces either side.
- Improve the existing facilities; including footpaths, furniture, signage and lighting.
- Increase the facilities to provide for existing users and also to potentially broaden the user group, thereby maximising the park's appeal.
- There is a strong desire to retain the trees.
- There is a strong desire to improve access to the river and to remove railings.
- Enhance the planting within the park, providing variety with designated areas for ecology/wildlife value separate to those accessible to the public.

Since completion the success of the scheme can be seen through its use and the comments received from both previous and former users. The transformation of the park has attracted lots of local, borough and London wide interest as it sets a precedent in the design of urban parks with watercourses. Lots of comments have been made through twitter and local blogs and the local papers have all hosted positive articles showing the park.



Walks in the park



Exhibition in Catford shopping Centre



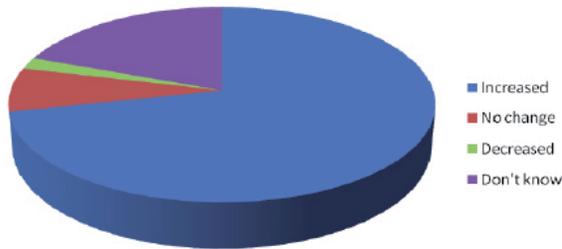
Design workshops

## Following completion

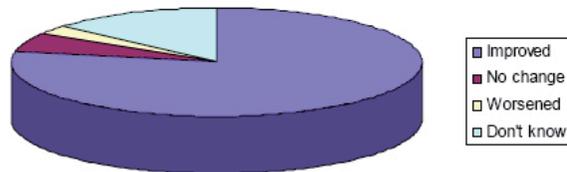
"Whilst chilling out in Ladywell Fields for 3 or 4 hours yesterday afternoon with a cuppa from the cafe, Cynthia reading a book, Daisy paddling in the River (with lots of other kids), it occurred to me, not for the first time, how fantastically Ladywell Fields is becoming what we hoped, a few years back, it might become."

Park User Group secretary

### Perceptions of the use & enjoyment of Ladywell Fields and the River Ravensbourne



### Has the QUERCUS project improved habitats in Ladywell Fields?



As part of the EU Life funding for the northern field a series of baseline information was gathered prior to commencing the design and this was then repeated following completion. These were aimed at responding to the QUERCUS three main aims:

- To increase use and enjoyment of Ladywell Fields and the Ravensbourne River corridor
- To reduce crime and fear of crime
- To improve habitats for wildlife

The achievement of each aim was examined in turn and documented within a report. A summary of findings are represented on this page. The information relies on data collected over July in 2006 and 2008.

## Promoting the park

The success of the scheme has encouraged local groups, the council and others to promote the scheme through events, walks and further funding.

Ladywell fields has a very active friends group who have been fully supportive of the improvements to the park, organized events, promotion via social networks Facebook etc. Lewisham Council web site has also been used as part of the on going consultation and promotion of the completed projects.

The Quercus project web site, works and project outcomes have been disseminated throughout the EU which gives a valuable case study for other areas to use when considering improvements to green space including rivers.

As part of an ongoing programme, river clean ups and Green Gym volunteering continue to be organised within the park – there is lots of ongoing volunteering within the park which is supporting the council in maintaining the facilities and making improvements. Further funding has been secured from English Nature's "Access to Nature fund" which has allowed further education work with local schools and community groups, engaging with the community



Volunteers helping out within the park and river, school children learning about the wildlife and river course.

Community events in the park



## Open House London

Architectural information

### Contrasting Landscapes in Lewisham: Ladywell Fields



The first phase was centered on the creation of a new course for a stretch of the river allowing it to meander naturally through the fields, animating the parkland. The creation of riverside viewing platforms and inviting park entrances encourage people to use and enjoy the park. The second phase removed concrete culverts from the river enhancing the water environment, and introduced new social and engaging play spaces. Hand pumped fountains splash water over boulders in the dry river bed area creating a unique, interactive and educational space. An enhanced lighting network with new lighting, boardwalks and park furniture provides new links to surrounding areas connecting the local community to their parkland.

Native tree planting, wild flowers and self seeding areas have been established both along the river banks throughout the park. While contributing to creating diverse, rich biodiversity habitats the planting establishes the parkland making it an attractive and enjoyable place to be.



A river restoration project within an existing park. The scheme has created new river channels, backwaters, pools and riffles, and greatly improved habitats within the river corridor along with better access and educational benefits.

This riverside park has been transformed in two phases, the first phase part of EU funding in 2007 and the second phase completed earlier this year. The overriding concept has been to build upon the park's greatest natural asset – The River Ravensbourne. The project has revived the river by uplifting its parkland setting through re-grabbed banks and the creation of a new watercourse of backwaters, bays, pools and riffles. Improvements also provide better access to the waterside and enriched habitats and natural biodiversity.



openhouselondon.org.uk Landscape Institute BDP. Open City

## There's a whole new LADYWELL FIELDS



Including:  
New walking routes  
New access to the River Ravensbourne  
New adventure playground and sports courts

Join the celebrations:  
Saturday 28 May, 12 noon-3pm  
by the Malvern Road entrance, near the corksway bridge

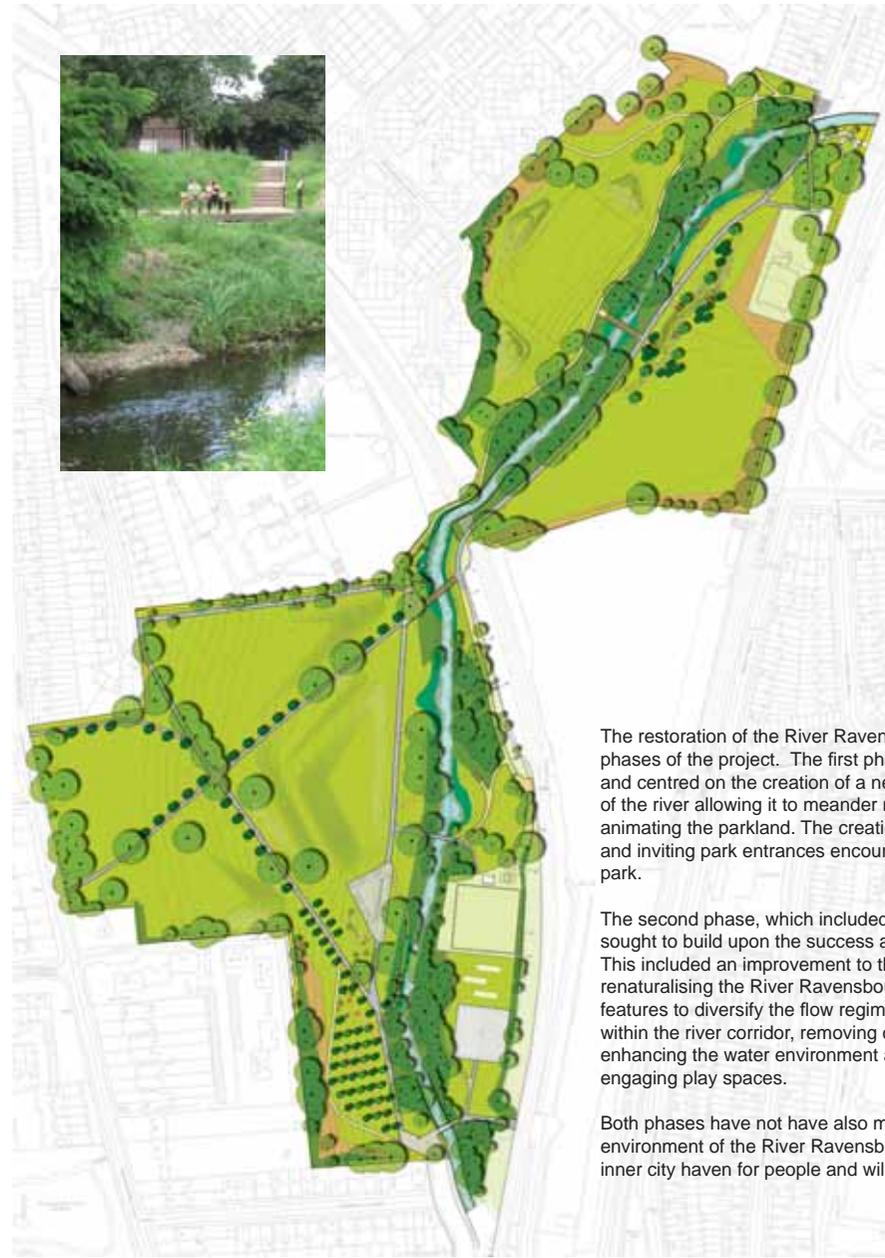
LEWISHAM IS CHANGING  
www.lewisham.gov.uk  
walk4life Lewisham Council

ARUP BDP. Lewisham

## The masterplan and design



The overall masterplan for Ladywell Fields



Middle and Southern Field masterplan



The overriding concept of the project has been to build upon the park's greatest natural asset – The River Ravensbourne and to create an attractive place in which people want to dwell. The project has revived the river by uplifting its parkland setting through re-graded banks and the creation of a new waterscape of backwaters, toes, pools and riffles. Improvements also provide better access to the waterside and enriched habitats and natural biodiversity.

Restoring the river as the dominating feature of the park provides the enjoyment and interest in the landscape and encourages biodiversity. The pre-naturalised river ran through the park and for the majority of its length was hidden from view, had been artificially straightened and was inaccessible. Therefore, it was vital that the Ravensbourne was brought into the park and celebrated as a local amenity.

The restoration of the River Ravensbourne was included in the two phases of the project. The first phase was in the northern most field and centred on the creation of a new offline course for a stretch of the river allowing it to meander naturally through the fields, animating the parkland. The creation of riverside viewing platforms and inviting park entrances encourage people to use and enjoy the park.

The second phase, which included the middle and southern field, sought to build upon the success and benefits of the northern field. This included an improvement to the park as a whole as well as renaturalising the River Ravensbourne by introducing in-channel features to diversify the flow regime and improve the habitat within the river corridor, removing concrete culverts from the river enhancing the water environment and introducing new social and engaging play spaces.

Both phases have not have also massively enhanced the natural environment of the River Ravensbourne and it has now become an inner city haven for people and wildlife.

## Inclusive design



The design of the park has been based on an understanding of the existing and potential users. Extensive consultation and analysis took place prior to agreeing a design which has ensured that the scheme is appropriate and loved by those who use it.

The regeneration of Ladywell Fields has raised the profile of the River Ravensbourne hugely. Once a hidden and forgotten channel on the perimeter of the park, the river has now become the focus and key attraction of the open space.

One of the objectives was to create better access for all to the river. This vision was initially met with some anxiety locally, as some people felt that an open river channel would pose an unacceptable risk to children in a community park. Through detailed design and further consultation we were able to alleviate the concerns and it has been particularly rewarding to see the park thriving following the completion of the project. Access has been provided by re-grading banks, new DDA compliant paths, boardwalks, dipping platforms and bridges across the river.

Prior to the works, many park users were unaware of the river. Often visitors would pass through quickly, simply using the park as a route. Two years later, following completion, the average daily visitor numbers have increased with many staying for over an hour, lingering on the river banks with picnics and nets for river dipping.

We were keen to ensure that the park was not designed in sections and zones relative to individual user groups. We removed lots of railings and fully integrated both formal and informal children's play area into the park so not to create exclusive areas. The result has been a park which is comfortable for all users which encourages social interaction. A new events area has been located in the southern field which has three in ground power supplies suitable for markets and events – again this is looking at encouraging all parts of the community to be using and spending time in the park.

New paths have been installed throughout the park and were necessary these are three metres wide so that can be used as combined pedestrian and cycle paths. One of LBL's objectives is to encourage walking and cycling throughout the borough, therefore this key link between urban centres is vital to be suitable for commuting and leisure purposes. All of the paths are lit to current British Standards and specific attention has been taken to open out and highlight the entrances and nodes.

Community involvement has been a key aspect of this project and much of the activity has revolved around the river. Weekend clean ups, volunteers removing himalayan balsam from the river banks, and regular environmental education sessions focusing on habitats, life cycles and biodiversity in the river, have all ensured that local people begin to feel an ownership of the park, and are enthused and more informed about the river.



## Sustainable design

Sustainability was a main consideration when developing the design of the scheme. Given its location within an urban environment, and the objectives to improve biodiversity and the natural elements of the park, we considered a number of strategies linked to a sustainable approach.

One of the main considerations was excavated material (15,000m<sup>3</sup>) and its relocation within the site. Across the three fields the strategy was not to remove any material from site which meant that precise calculations were required to determine a balance between cut and fill. The excavated material to create the river channel, scoops and backwaters were used to re-profile paths so that they are more accessible, create landform and raise levels to assist in flood attenuation.

Other physical environmental impacts included:

- used timber from certified sustainable sources for all bridges and signage
- used native species for all planting
- used a meadow seed mix of locally appropriate seeds only
- designed the new river channel to maximise biodiversity
- created deadwood habitats to cater for the endangered stag beetle
- improved habitats in the park, reducing the area of amenity grass, and replacing it with running water, still water, marginal habitats and meadow.

Some of the amenity grassland in the park has also been replaced with wildflower meadow, providing, not only a riot of colour in early summer, but also much richer habitat for a variety of birds and insects. As a result, the number of different species present in the main part of the park has doubled since the project was completed.

Native tree planting, wild flowers and self seeding areas have been established both along the river banks throughout the park. While contributing to creating diverse, rich biodiversity habitats the planting embellishes the parkland making it an attractive and enjoyable place to be.

The social sustainable impacts of the park were also considered. One of the aims was to reduce crime and fear of crime in the park. This was achieved largely through the creation of 'self policing space' - increasing use of the park, and improving sight lines. Many of the park entrances were overgrown and it was difficult to see into the park, these were all redesigned and opened up to be inviting and safer.

The involvement of local people throughout the project also helps to safeguard the sustainability of the project. There was lots of participation through volunteer events and activities allowing people to feel a level of ownership of the park, ensuring they will not only use it, but will also care for it and invest in the space.

The economically sustainable effects have also been considered. The ongoing maintenance of the park is paid for by Lewisham Council, and provided within the parks management contract.

## River restoration, flood risk management & wildlife

### RIVER RESTORATION

The pre-development environment of the River Ravensbourne within the park was characterised as an overly wide straightened channel with a semi natural bed substrate (gravels and brick) and minimally vegetated slopes in parts along the reach. Therefore, the main objectives of the project were to increase use and enjoyment of Ladywell Fields; improve habitats in Ladywell Fields and the River Ravensbourne; improve safety in Ladywell Fields; and provide effective flood defence.

Given the significant presence of mature trees on the banks of the channel and utilities adjacent to the top of bank, the opportunity for significant re-meandering of the River Ravensbourne was deemed inappropriate and as such improvements to the habitats, conveyance and flood storage ability of the river were considered within the existing footprint of the channel. As result, the opportunities for habitat improvement of the river were considered to come from in channel works, planting and the inclusion of backwaters; the opportunities for flood storage in the study area were considered to come from the regrading of the slopes of the channel and also reprofiling of the adjacent floodplain (park) areas; and the opportunities for improving the enjoyment of the river were considered to come from providing new access to the channel edge through boardwalks and new bridges spanning the channel.

The restoration opportunities for the channel in order to meet the biodiversity and flood risk objectives of the project were:

**Marginal Planting:** Aquatic vegetation was planted in appropriate marginal areas along the river's edge. This was sensitive to the riverine environment and will encourage habitat diversity within the study reach.

**Regrading at Waters Edge:** Regrading the waters edge in key locations improved both the access to the river and the flood storage capacity of the channel in high flow events, thus benefiting both an amenity value to the river and improving the flood capacity of the channel. The low flow channel of the river was reduced to narrow the low flow channel and enhance flow conditions. This was

completed through a combination of toe regrading and the introduction of gravel bars.

**Swales:** Swales were constructed in landscaped areas to discharge surface water drainage into the underlying geology. Surface swales will intercept and slow surface water down from new hardstanding areas in the Southern Field and will prevent it from entering directly into the river network, thus reducing the volume of runoff from the park area and reducing the flood risk from the site.

**Backwaters:** Backwaters were constructed to provide a still area of water for the refuge of fish in flood periods. In low flow periods they will vary the habitat of the river with marginal planting.

**Pools, Riffles and Gravel Bars:** The gradient of the bed was designed to introduce pool and riffle sequences along the course of the river reach. A riffle is a low weir in the channel which will speed the flow of water and the pools are deepened areas of water slowing the water down. Both are drowned out in high flow conditions. This will ultimately sustain habitat diversity within the channel, specifically with regards to creating habitat suitable for fish. The riffles will be kept in place with wooden stop logs to prevent movement downstream in high flow conditions and provide a natural feature within the channel.

Additional gravel was also introduced to the sides of the channels to develop gravel bars to narrow the channel and improve the low flow conditions and also improve access to the water's edge. The bars will be kept in place with wooden stop logs/ woody debris to prevent movement downstream in high flow conditions.

**Timber Deflectors:** Suitably spaced wooden deflectors were fixed to the concrete bed of the culvert sections in the channel to encourage sedimentation and natural vegetation establishment. Minimal gravel replenishment was placed upstream of these deflectors to encourage the natural establishment to occur.

All these in-channel features provided a significant restoration of the existing environment as well as assisting the public in enjoying the natural riverine and parkland setting.

### FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

Ladywell Fields is at risk of flooding from the River Ravensbourne, which flows from south to north through the middle of the parklands. Significant re-landscaping of the park and River Ravensbourne were completed to improve the environmental sustainability of the parkland setting and as such, it was of specific importance that these works did not increase flood risk on site or to neighbouring areas. Specifically, the works to the River Ravensbourne included in-channel river restoration work in the form of riffle and pool sequences, gravel bars, bank re-profiling and backwaters and out of bank landscaping works, including a new footbridge and dry storage area, all of which had the potential to impact on flood risk elsewhere.

A detailed consultation and flood risk modelling exercise was undertaken to demonstrate that flood risk was not increased in or surrounding the study area and that any impacts from in-channel restoration works were mitigated.

Significant consultation of the proposals was completed with the Environment Agency, local community and River Restoration Centre to ensure that Flood Risk Assessment was an integral part of the project deliverables.

The results of the hydraulic modelling exercise for the design proposals demonstrated that there is no increase in flood risk to people or properties in the catchment when compared to the current situation, including taking into account the effects of climate change. Specifically, the introduction of bank reprofiling mitigated the in-channel works, managing flood risk with habitat creation.

Accessibility in the park has been improved when compared to the existing situation, with new paths and footbridges allowing access away from the areas at risk of flooding and extensive signage will be installed in the park to inform users of the potential for flood inundation. Therefore, safe access and egress to and from the site will be maintained at all times.

In addition, the surface water drainage strategy for the landscaping works ensured that new areas of hardstandings drained to swales and infiltrated into



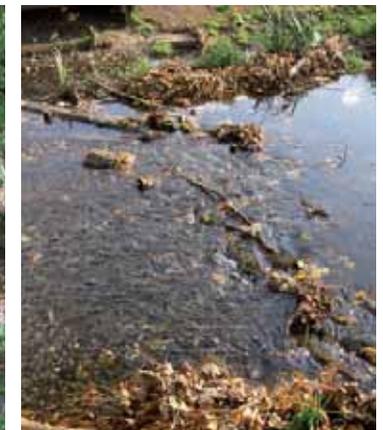
Marginal planting



Swales



Riffles, pools and gravel bars



the underlying geology improving water quality and reducing runoff into the River Ravensbourne.

A large swale in the southern field ensured that overland flows entering the River Ravensbourne were reduced when compared to the pre-development scenario therefore, helping to reduce the flood risk associated with the river downstream.

As result, in accordance with current Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) guidance, the storm water drainage from the park has been managed in a sustainable manner.

#### WILDLIFE, HABITATS & SPECIES

In August 2006 an analysis of this data was done in order to show the composition of Ladywell Fields, in relation to habitat types and species numbers. This information provides a baseline against which the final results of the QUERCUS project can be compared.

The follow up survey was carried out in August of 2008 following the same methodology as the survey in 2005. As there had been no major changes to the southern and middle fields at this time, this assessment focuses on the northern field and the 3 original survey areas contained within it.

Before the QUERCUS project, amenity grassland and scattered trees were the most prevalent form of habitat within the sample area. Following the QUERCUS project, amenity grassland has been reduced by almost 50% of its original area. Semi improved grassland has increased from 2% to 20% of the total area and the area of running water has more than doubled, due to the new naturalised river channel running through the centre of the park.

New habitats present in the park, post QUERCUS, are deadwood and

ephemeral/ruderal. Deadwood habitats have been created by volunteers forming loggeries and lying timber. The 2 pools created adjacent to the new channel and the restored pond in the nature reserve account for the ruderal and ephemeral habitats.

Species: In the species survey carried out by the GLA in 2005 areas containing large amounts of amenity grassland were less biodiverse than other habitat types such as running water and semi improved grass land. Amenity grassland has been significantly reduced in the project area and replaced with semi improved grassland, running water, ephemeral pools and dead wood. This has had a positive effect on the number of species found in the northern field of Ladywell Fields.

Following the scheme there was a dramatic increase in the number of species observed. In areas the number of species found has increased more than three fold. The increase of species is due to the introduction of several new habitat types notably running water and semi improved grassland.

The re routing of the river channel has reduced the flow of the old channel resulting in slightly different habitat conditions in the channel. Small pools and eddies have formed which seem to attract a higher percentage of fishing birds to the channel. Kingfishers, grey wagtails and herons have all been spotted with more regularity since the completion of the QUERCUS project.

The nature reserve has benefited from the increased management made possible through the QUERCUS project. Conservation volunteer sessions run by the Waterlink Way Rangers, have brought the previously overgrown area of trees and scrub into a more formalised management regime. The area still has areas of scrub and trees but now also has a willow coppice, a pond, woodland meadow, mixed hedge and deadwood habitats. The results of the survey clearly demonstrate that the increased variety of habitats and improved management has been effective in increasing biodiversity.

Since the project was completed, herons, kingfishers, mallard and mandarin ducks have all been spotted in the park. Stag beetle sightings have been recorded, however we may not find out the true success of the deadwood habitats created for this red list species for some 4 to 7 years, as any eggs laid will take up to 7 years to develop from larvae to adults.

The river restoration and associated landscape improvements have increased the total variety of habitats contained within the QUERCUS site, and enlarged the running water and semi improved grassland habitats. These habitats are known to support a relatively large number of species. Together with intensive management of the invasive species present, and the more targeted management of the wildlife area, the QUERCUS project has significantly improved habitats for wildlife.

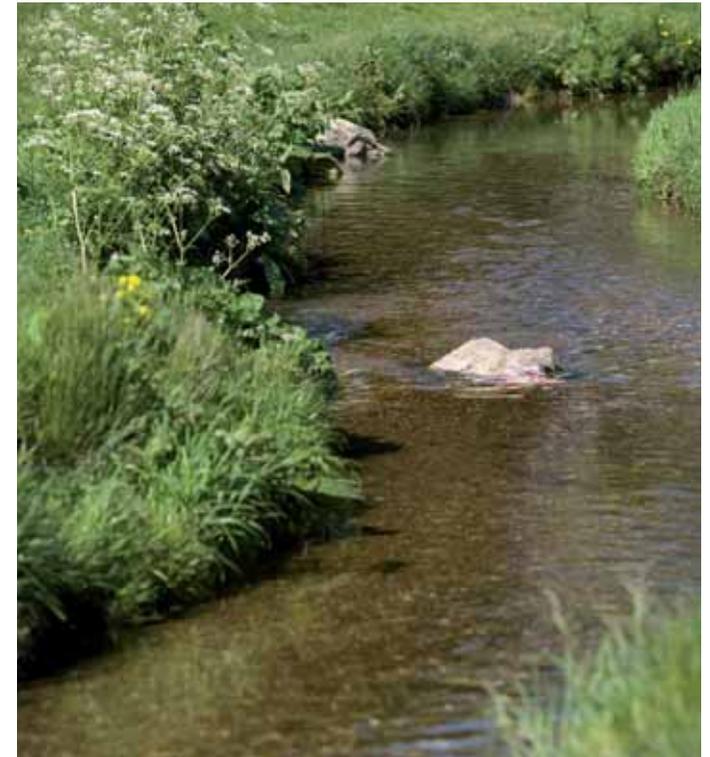
The survey of park users carried out since the QUERCUS project shows that local people recognise and appreciate these changes. These improvements in habitats and biodiversity are particularly encouraging in an inner city park. The changes show that it is possible to create a haven, not only for people, but also for wildlife, in a relatively small green space within an urban environment.



Reggrading at waters edge and timber deflectors fixed to the concrete bed



Backwaters



## The completed scheme



“Well designed public spaces can define an entire area. The changes made to Ladywell Fields have opened up the river and created a fantastic park.

“Through their thoughtful design, the new paths, signs and innovations like viewing platforms and lighting will all enable and encourage more people to use and enjoy their great outdoors.”

Design for London director  
**Mark Brearley**  
(Quote extracted from BD)



## Future plans and winning the award

The project is a great case study and example of how to transform an urban river within a park for the benefit of all. There are lots of other schemes which we have learnt from in developing the masterplan and objectives, however this scheme brings other ideas and new ideas together within one scheme.

The outcomes are clear and local people are excited by the changes. Following such positive outcomes it is likely to be easier to attract further funding to extend the approach to a larger area. The Council is currently in discussions with the Environment Agency and looking at options on how they can take the Ravensbourne Corridor Improvement Plan forward in other areas.

This project should and will continue to be promoted in the years to come, winning this award will bring status and recognition allowing the merits, lessons learnt and demonstrating the potential of an urban river to be realised in other areas and communities - a great example of a showcase scheme for the benefit of all.



***'I don't often find enough reason to write to say thank you for things -but I live in Ladywell, and since the recent transformation of Ladywell Fields, I've spent a lot of time down there with my daughter (aged 14 months). I think your team have done an absolutely amazing job. The new design feels extremely well thought through, and really uses the most of the park's natural features. We've already spent quite a few hours paddling in the river at the part of the park at the end of Malyons Road, and in the new part of the river which meanders through the fields. Honestly, you would never know you were in Lewisham! So frequently, councils and large organisations over complicate designs, and don't make the most of nature - but you have done totally the opposite and the results are superb. Well done, I just wanted to let you know, your work is really appreciated.'***

Chris, 24th May 2011

