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HARPENDEN SOCIETY / HARPENDEN URBAN DESIGN GROUP

Upper Lea Valley Group's 2nd Interim Report

CENTRAL AREA STUDY

MARCH 1972

Upper Lea Valley Group's 2nd Interim Report.

CENTRAL AREA STUDY

The Council invited the Group to give their views on the areas of land which the Council own in Batford. These are identified on the Key Map as follows:

- A Marquis Lane Allotments and Playing Field
- B Scrub and Lower Luton Road Verges
- C Lower Luton Road Allotments
- D Pinney's Meadow
- E Marquis Lane Widening

Details plans of these areas form a supplement to the report. Other Illustrations are as follows:

- 1 1 : 1250 Key Map
- 2 1 : 500 Landscape Survey
- 3 Bridge No.1
- 4 Bridge No.2
- 5 Bridge No.3
- 6 Bridge No.3 lead-in
- 7 Weir
- 8 Dam and Footway

1 INTRODUCTION

The 'central area' of "The Lea Valley in Harpenden" is probably the most important part of the whole area considered in that report. It is the most accessible, the most widely used and impinges most on local residents and travellers during normal daily activities.

The guiding principle for its future development should follow the aims of the full report: to provide a "green lung" for Batford and to make the most of the valley's natural assets of river, trees and open land.

It should be stressed that the area has to be considered as a small part of the natural countryside and not as parkland or garden in the more suburban, formal sense. The selection and maintenance of trees and shrubs should enhance the natural landscape by using species appropriate to the area. Some privately managed areas adjacent the Council owned lands have been planted with species alien to the local landscape which, although attractive in their way, do not reinforce the area's rural character. The church site is one instance.

This emphasis on a rural as opposed to suburban character should also influence the design and construction of all artefacts throughout the area such as buildings, bridges, fencing, the edge treatment of verges and roads, footpaths and car parks, likewise the surfacing of footpaths and car parks, also signposting, seating, litter bins, choice of colours, etc.

It is planned to make a through walk between leasybridge and East Hyde Where this passes through the Council's central areas is shown on the Key Map.

Walkers would leave the railway track at the south end of Marquis Lane and take the riverside route through Batford as far as Pickford Bridge where they can rejoin the railway track at Waveney Close. From here the track continues through Westfield out to East Hyde.

At the south end the Council has made a start on the walk by fencing off a strip of river bank from Marquis Lane allotments. It continues through the Playing Field to the footpath which links Station Road with Lower Luton Road but at this point it is not obvious how to get through to Pickford Bridge. After considering several alternatives on the spot, The Group have concluded that the path should turn right across the watercress stream and then sharp left, between the two footbridges, into the Scrub. Here it would meander interestingly and approach the Lower Luton Road allotments by the Natural causeway between the river and watercress bed. For the rest of its length it could be hedged off from the allotments until reaching Pickford Bridge.

This route is literally "riverside" along almost its entire length. We have discussed it with the L.C.C.B. who agree in principle. It has the advantage of providing unimpeded access - at present non-existent - for mowers and machinery with which to maintain the respective areas through which it passes. It is hoped it would also lead to a general improvement of these areas. Detailed suggestions are given in the landscape proposals in Section 3.

## 2 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2.1 EDGE TREATMENT & VERGES

Concrete kerbs have a very urban appearance and the loss of natural grass verges is unfortunate. Other more appropriate methods of restricting the movement and access of vehicles include granite setts, ditches, pegs of stripped timber, logs as kerbs, etc. Places where this is of particular importance include Marquis Lane where the widened road will be adjacent to open land with no footpath (see paragraph 3.E.1) and on the perimeter of the parking area opposite the Gibraltar Castle (See paragraph 3.B.13)

### 2.2. LITTER BINS

Litter bins should be sited at potential sources of litter such as car parks, picnic spots and play areas. Some sitings are suggested on the detailed plans. They should be grouped with a tree or some other large object, which tends to diminish them, rather than dotted about at random, which tends to emphasise them. Figure 1 shows a good modern design which has a rural character. A lid is essential and emptying must be regular.

### 2.3 FENCING & HEDGES

Chain link fencing is visually disastrous to an area struggling to keep its rural character but unfortunately it is used extensively - usually for its high security value. A good compromise is to plant out the fencing with hedge plants so that the appearance is improved without loss of security. Wherever possible more traditional, but not rustic, fencing should be employed. A good example is shown in Figure 2. Excessive fencing is obtrusive so by the river it should be used only in places where real danger exists but not otherwise. Specific proposals are discussed in Section 3 as they arise.

2.4

**SEATING**

Some sites for seats are shown on the detailed plans. People prefer to sit near rivers or other natural features which form a focal point. Also they have an apparently instinctive desire for cover - against rocks or in caves on a beach or under trees or at the edges of a field. This need can be catered for. Once again seating should be rural in character and constructed primarily of natural materials which agree with the surroundings like wood rather than concrete or steel. The existing benches are quite attractive and unobtrusive and additional seating could follow this design.

2.5

**CAR PARKING**

It is considered that the area will be used mainly by local people on foot or by others passing through. It is unlikely to be the object of a day's outing so car parking is more likely to be for short stays and need not be extensive. The space under the trees opposite the Gibraltar Castle is used at present for such parking and seems adequate. Specific recommendations are made in paragraph 3.B.13. Parking on the other side of the river will be catered for by the Marquis Lane car park (see paragraph 3.E.7). Tarmac, although inexpensive and widely used for surfacing, does nothing to enhance the landscape and is basically urban in character. Alternatives such as tar spray and pea shingle or rolled gravel should be used. A relatively new system called Mono BG slabs exists consisting of perforated concrete blocks through which grass can grow giving a pleasant grass and cobble appearance; it can be mowed but is solid enough for vehicles and might be used to good effect where appropriate. (Literature supplied.)

2.6

**COLOURS**

Everything which goes into the countryside involves a colour decision. This, to some extent has always been true but when local materials - stone and brick, slate and tile - were in common use the problem largely looked after itself. With the increasing use of modern man-made building materials and mass production this is no longer the case and careful decisions have to be taken. Colours most sympathetic to the countryside are yellow ochres, olive greens, terracotta reds and browns. Local lamp posts which are at present a rather insipid eau-de-nil should be repainted in BS 4-050 (Dark Olive). Colours of bridge are discussed later. (See paragraphs 2.8.1 and 2.8.2).

2.7

**TELEPHONE WIRES**

There are a large number of overhead wires along Marquis Lane and Station Road as well as in other areas. We understand the Post Office are sympathetic to environmental considerations and will under certain circumstances place them underground. We suggest enquiries be made towards this end.

2.8

**BRIDGES & SURROUNDS**

The three footbridges are dilapidated and need extensive reconstruction. In their present state they are detrimental to visual amenity. Each is dealt with individually in detail, the numbers referring to their position on the Key Map.

2.8.1

**Bridge 1 - over the watercress bed on the Station Road/Lower Luton Road footpath:**

This small footbridge is of wooden beam construction on concrete buttresses either side. The railing consists of circular pipe at handrail level supported each side on old wooden posts helped out by angle iron uprights and intermediately on twisted steel strip supports. There is bracing at both ends and on either side back to the concrete buttressing. The whole structure is painted aluminium and is infilled with galvanised chain link.



The whole metalwork structure of pipe, twisted strip, angle iron, bracing rods, chain link, etc. should be removed and a completely new handrail system constructed. A possible solution is illustrated in Drawing No.3. Excessive and unsightly concrete buttressing should be broken out as much as possible (bracing rods are not necessary on the new design) so that overhanging plants can be introduced; moss could also be encouraged. Remnants of old barbed wire, chain link fencing and angle iron supports near the lamp post, in the stream itself and on the Lower Luton Road side should be removed. The new bridge should be painted in a more sympathetic colour such as BS 4-051 (Dark Green).

**2.8.2 Bridge 2 - over the main river on the Station Road /Lower Luton Road foot path:**

This bridge is a steel I beam construction overlaid with timber. It has eleven 3" x 3" angle iron support posts on either side at approximately 45" centres. These carry three horizontal pipes. The whole structure above footpath level is painted aluminium and is infilled with galvanised chain link. Again the whole handrail system should be completely removed and replaced with a more attractive and safe design. A possible alternative is illustrated in Drawing No.4.

The 3" x 6" cross planking requires attention and it should be replaced where necessary. The 1½" x 13" top planks do not completely fill the space between vertical supports. This should be remedied to do away with the dangerous leg traps each side. Excessive concrete buttressing should be broken out and planted as before.

The suggested colour for the new bridge is BS 3-038 (Dark Brown)

**2.8.3 Between Bridges 1 & 2:**

All chestnut fencing, pipework and concrete posts should be removed. The dangerous drop (max. 2'6") on either side of the path can be eliminated by banking up with earth at about 30 degrees to the horizontal. This would be quickly grown over and melt into the landscape. It would also cover the bare concrete retaining walls seen from the open space on either side of the footpath.

**2.8.4 Approach to Bridge 2 from Lower Luton Road:**

The bridge railings should stop more closely to the bridge so that the fencing is no more obtrusive than necessary. The ground adjacent to the footpath on either side should be banked up as described in 2.8.3. to eliminate danger and the ugly retaining walls.

**2.8.5 Bridge 3 - at the Crabtree Lane ford:**

The bridge has concrete and wooden posts with metal pipes passing through to provide horizontal bars.

At the southern end the concrete posts have two pipes passing through and form a long lead-in on the left which protects pedestrians from the wide sweep of the river. Where the river is at its deepest and there is a sharp fall-away immediately behind the fencing chain link netting is used as infill. This should be removed along with its angle iron supports and a third pipe fitted in between. This would necessitate drilling the concrete posts but would not alter the character of the fencing while maintaining its effectiveness. In one of two places the bank will need to be rebuilt to avoid leg traps at footpath level. The shorter lead-in on the right hand side requires the same treatment. Both sides could then be repainted white which would be a further aid to pedestrians at night and would alleviate the derelict appearance of the approach.

On the bridge itself three pipes pass through vertical timber posts. Welded wire mesh is superimposed onto this arrangement - presumably for safety.

We feel the condition of the bridge is so bad that a complete replacement may be needed. We would be prepared to advise on the design of this if required. However if a structural survey proves the bridge is basically safe a stop-gap solution may be possible. For this all loose timber should be replaced by new to match the existing. We think three pipes alone are adequate for safety except at footpath level where there are leg traps. These could be enclosed between the lower pipe and the edge of the path by a plank of timber fitted between the posts as illustrated in Drawing No.5

The debris should be removed from the river and the buttresses. The wire netting and angle iron supports should be removed and the metal caps to the wooden posts refixed or renewed.

On the north side of the bridge a long lead-in is provided by a wooden rail on concrete posts. There is a similar shorter lead-in on the right. This arrangement has had chain link superimposed upon it which is extremely untidy and should be removed along with its angle iron supports and old concrete post. An extra rail could be inserted as illustrated in Drawing No.6. The remaining wooden and concrete fence should be painted white like the rest of the bridge and lead-ins.

- 2.9 The wooden fencing at the rear of Coles' Plastics factory needs replacing. Coles should be approached about the general untidiness of their side of the river, facing the bridge, including the removal of an old rusted Keeklamp fence.

The barbed wire across the river below the ford appears to perform no useful function and is an eyesore that could be removed.

### 3 SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

The Group are indebted to members of the Rothamsted staff, the L.C.C.B., and others for help and advice. The proposals are also subject to further consultation with the County Landscape Architect.

If they are implemented the proposals should be open to discussion between the Group and the Council and to continuous review in the light of experience gained from season to season. It would also be helpful at the outset to hold a programming and costing session with the Officer or Officers who would be responsible for implementing the proposals. For instance the dates for planting will be of great importance.

The Group hope to supply the planting schedules, giving the setting out and species of trees indicated in the text. (See Index) We would also like the opportunity of cooperating with the Council in setting out the positions of trees, paths, etc. recommended in the report.

In general we have tried to keep our proposals within the bounds of present day practicability, leaving more ambitious schemes like boating lakes or sports facilities until a demand becomes more apparent. For the immediate future with which our report deals the most obvious need is for a re-planting and tidying up programme which will revitalise a deteriorating landscape.

The Group have landscape proposals for privately owned properties adjoining the Council's land but these are not shown on the plans.

### 3.A PLAN A: MARQUIS LANE ALLOTMENTS & PLAYING FIELD

- 3.A.1 The west river bank has a natural country character but as it will be used more and more this naturalness will have to be maintained by 'management' from now on. The thickets which overhang the river alternating with grassy banks where children can fish and play, linked by the pathway, can be made most attractive.
- 3.A.2 At the south end the footpath fenced off from the allotments is already well trodden by the public. To encourage it to meander as shown on the plan and not to follow a straight line along the fence as at present some rough levelling will be necessary and a hardcore bottom needs to be built up to take a shingle or open surface dressing of some kind to prevent mud pockets forming. It will need maintenance from time to time but should never be made formal with tarmac.
- 3.A.3 The existing thickets of thorn, elder and other bushes which overhang the river should be carefully tended and additional planting introduced, to naturalise with them and reinforce what already grows there by nature. The bottom branches of the bushes should be allowed to grow out naturally without trimming. The ground cover - mainly grass - need not be cleaned out under them except the nettles. Between the thickets are some patches of tall grasses. These should be allowed to grow and can be supplemented by others but again the nettles need careful cleaning out so that the grasses dominate. The areas of shorter grass which run out to the river's edge should be roughly cut at regular intervals to get rid of the nettles.
- 3.A.4 The footpath will need some levelling and making up round the recently planted group of bat willows and birches and these should be supplemented by planting suitable saplings to grow into a small copse.
- 3.A.5 The public should be discouraged from walking through the newly planted areas: these can be protected by driving in some larch poles about three feet above the ground with a single strand of galvanised wire atop.
- 3.A.6 The ground on both sides of the allotments fence should be cleaned out and prepared to take hedging. This will gradually grow into the chain link and conceal it. A mixed variety of hedging plants are suggested. If allowed to naturalise freely, with a few going up to form standard trees, they will grow into a more attractive hedge than the conventional clipped thorn or beech.
- 3.A.7 The electricity sub-station on Crabtree Lane is a monstrosity. Planting, although helpful, cannot provide complete year-round cover and in this case close boarded fencing is recommended in addition to tree screening. The chain link fencing which runs from the corner of the sub-station towards the entrance to the footpath should be removed.
- 3.A.8 Another thicket borders the river where the footpath enters the Playing Field: this should be treated as described in Paragraph 3.A.3
- 3.A.9 The chestnut fencing and remains of old chain link fencing and posts can now be cleared away from this area.

- 3.A.10 The corner of the Playing Field and river's edge nearest the end of the allotments fence have been heavily nettle-grown. An approved safe selective weed-killer can be applied and any renewed growth cut frequently to weaken the roots. These can be finally removed by cultivation in preparation for planting new bushes and saplings when the ground is clear. The new planting<sup>4</sup> should be within the line of old Prunus to form a continuation of the copse referred to in paragraph 3.A.4. Protect as paragraph 3.A.5. Re-seeding will probably be necessary and rough cutting thereafter to maintain grass between the trees in the copse.
- 3.A.11 The row of old pollarded willows along the cress stream might be rejuvenated by re-pollarding (say) alternate trees to start with - perhaps half next winter and the other half in 2 to 3 years time - to maintain the screening they give. They should be cut back above the reach of children and all the broken branch foot and handholds lower down the trunk should be trimmed off flush. If any of the trees are slow to make new growth after treatment replacements should be inter-planted<sup>5</sup> to take their place when they have to be felled. New bat willows could also be planted to replace the existing four. They will have to be protected by the type of wire cages recommended by the Nurserymen.
- 3.A.12 The weir at present has the appearance of a derelict wartime defence installation. It has great potential as an attractive waterfall and if the old concrete buttressing were removed it could be replaced by large rocks or boulders. The L.C.C.B. would have to be consulted on its construction but we understand they would have no objection in principle as long as the flow of the river is not impeded. One suggestion is illustrated by Drawing No.7.
- 3.A.13 The playground facilities presently provided in the Playing Field are rather inappropriate and, once again, do not fit in with the rural character of the surroundings. This is partly due to their design and construction and partly due to their seemingly random positioning in the field where they do not relate to the natural features. We recommend that, in line with more modern ideas on play facilities the existing equipment be added to by 'adventure' equipment - such as large gnarled tree trunks, palisades of timber posts, hidey holes sculpted out of the earth, man made mounds, etc. The whole area should then have additional tree planting to anchor it all back to the landscape.
- S.M.P. (Landscapes) Ltd. market a first class range of adventure play equipment which has been very successfully used at Whipsnade and London Zoo. (Catalogue supplied)
- 3.A.14 The existing sandpit and its accompanying concreted area should be removed, filled in and turfed over. Intended originally as a 'Beginners' Pool it no longer works very well in its present use and is not attractive. It is proposed that the fresh water stream, amply supplied from the deep bore springs in the watercress beds, be dammed just before entering the main channel of the river when the existing derelict reinforced concrete dam has been removed. The form of dam proposed is illustrated by Drawing No.8 and incorporates an interesting timber pile footway giving access to the swamp area. The intention would be to increase the depth of water to about 9 inches and create a fresh water pool as indicated on the plan. An artificial beach could be constructed which would replace the sandpit by offering wet and dry sand-play facilities with running water.



The cress and other plants growing in the area of the proposed pool would have to be removed but the remainder of the 'swamp' should be left untouched as far as possible. It offers an exciting and interesting contrast to the tidier surroundings and is a natural 'Adventure Playground'. Any maintenance required could be carried out by Volunteer helpers who, it is thought, might be raised and supervised through the Group.

The base of a large Ash growing on the swamp 'island' has been hollowed by fires: it is still growing but should be filled to discourage any further damage and a new tree planted which will eventually replace it.

### 3.B PLAN B: SCRUB & LOWER LUTON ROAD VERGES

3.B.1 The Scrub is one of the most difficult areas to prescribe for because it has been untended for some time and tends to look untidy. It is an irregular piece of ground, channeled by old cress beds and the river, and is a wilderness of wild flowers among which thistles, nettles, hemlock and willowherb dominate during the later part of the season.

It would be easy to suggest the wholesale obliteration of all these broadleaves by using weedkiller and to level out the area for grass which could be kept 'tidy' but in doing so this would destroy the very valuable function the area fulfills. It is a reservoir of natural growth which provides cover and plant food for a large population of insects, animals and birds. Even nettles are the home of numerous species: countryside plants are only 'weeds' in a cultivated park or garden. The Scrub is certainly not that and in our view the time has not yet come to tame it into an urban park.

Today these pockets of natural vegetation are becoming rarer - particularly in a county like Hertfordshire with its rapidly expanding urban population - and they ought to be conserved. There is growing authority for the contribution such reserves make to the general well-being of people living in towns.

However - to be practical - the area has been neglected and some conservation work is needed. Also if the walk is to be driven through the scrub a compromise has to be made: but this can be done without destroying its value as a natural reserve. After discussing the means of achieving this end with a number of authorities the Group suggest:

3.B.2 Certain areas should be left untreated and un-cut, summer and winter, to naturalise 'untidily' for at least another season while other parts are being tackled experimentally. These are indicated on Plan B.

3.B.3 The through walk and other areas proposed for public access and enjoyment should be rough cut, levelling only where necessary to allow ease of passage for the mowers. Not less than a four inch cut is suggested. Regular cutting will retard the coarser perennials and encourage the grass to grow out, as it takes over, their roots should eventually die out. Smaller species of wildflowers would now stand a chance of survival - and could even be re-introduced - provided the use of weed killers is prohibited.

3.B.4 Except in the very restricted areas (such as the riverside path referred to in paragraph 3.A.2) the finished surface of the walk should be grass throughout its entire length. Use alone will show which stretches need a more durable surface finish.

3.B.5 The walk through the Scrub, in the form of roughly cut 'rides' or 'Swathes', has been designed to suit the lie of the land. It was plotted by observation on site and should be carefully set out to follow Plan B.

- 3.B.6 Some of the existing groups of trees and bushes have thinned out and need supplementing by additional planting<sup>6</sup>. The ground should be prepared for this in the same manner as described in paragraph 3.A.10 in readiness for new bushes and saplings.
- 3.B.7 Many of the old trees are deteriorating and should be interplanted with suitable replacements which can take over when the others have to be felled.
- 3.B.8 The derelict pump house should be cleared away and old electricity conduits cut back and buried.
- 3.B.9 We suggest the watercress beds and banks throughout this area offer another opportunity for cleaning and maintenance by volunteer labour which it is thought might be organised through the Group.
- 3.B.10 The treatment so far - which might be described as 'cultivated scrub' - can be applied up to and including the narrow causeway leading into the allotments.

-now back to the Lower Luton Road verges.

- 3.B.11 The open grass verges between Batford Mill and the trees opposite the Gibraltar Castle are a valuable open space. Apart from maintenance by mowing little is required. Between the footbridge and the trees the east bank of the river is thick in nettles. We strongly recommend that it should be re-graded and re-seeded so that it can be mown and maintained with the verges.
- 3.B.12 Some supplementary tree planting is proposed near the weir and a copse at the roadside corner of Coles' boundary. Two specimen forest trees on the open verge would also add interest. They would need protecting.
- 3.B.13 The group of poplars opposite the 'Gib' dominate the area and are well matured. Interplanting with similar species is required soon to take the place of the older trees as they decline.

The area under these trees which is currently used for parking might continue as such. Cars tend to be diminished by the trees. The area would serve the Public House and the open riverside and access would be easily afforded to the footpath system. We do, however, feel that the parking area should be limited at present as indicated on Plan B, and that this could be done with 3 inch diameter by 9 inches tall pegs of stripped timber, bedded below the ground in concrete, at 4 feet 8 inches centres. The entrance to the area needs surfacing in one of the ways suggested in paragraph 2.5.

If the parking demand increases the area itself may need surfacing and the perforated slabs referred to in 2.5 would be an excellent solution.

- 3.B.14 Between the poplars and the bungalow "Homelea" nearer Batford Corner the river skirts the main road at two places. The fences and verges need cleaning up and some planting, including the area adjoining the 'Fishbar' site, will be required. Part of this will have to be done by negotiation with the owners concerned. Generally we suggest that the existing roadside fencing be removed and re-placed, if any fencing is required at all, with post and pipe rail similar to that along Station Road. Where the river lies close to the back of the highway footpath the number of rails could be increased in the interests of safety.

### 3.C PLAN C: LOWER LUTON ROAD ALLOTMENTS

- 3.C.1 Access to Pinney's Meadow may be required in the future so provision has been made to link it with the walk when necessary.
- 3.C.2 The Lee Conservancy Catchment Board require a minimum width of twenty feet to operate a drag line or similar dredging plant. If the dredgings are spread behind the machine as it works thirty feet are needed but the Board will agree to spoil being carted away in special cases, provided they do not bear the cost of this. The Group considers the riverside walk a special case and that carting away should be budgeted for when the river is dredged every ten to fifteen years.
- 3.C.3 It is recommended that a hedge, reinforced during its early growth by angle iron and chain link, should be planted to separate the through walk from the allotments. The hedge plants would be similar to those suggested for the Marquis Lane allotments fence (paragraph 3.A.6). Gates would be required at intervals to give the gardeners access and for deliveries of manure, etc. The fence would be parallel with the river for most of its length.
- 3.C.4 On the river side of the hedge, not closer than 20 feet to the water, it is recommended that the Council should plant bat willows for commercial cropping. Where the river bends towards the main road they could form a plantation. They would provide an income towards the maintenance of the walk. Planting should be programmed for crops to alternate at 5 to 7 year intervals so that the first sets planted during the winter of 1972-3 (say) can be cut as maturing trees in 1984-5, the second crop planted in 1977-8 being cut in 1989-90. New sets would be planted after each crop was cut to ensure continuity of growth and screening. The older existing willows should be kept as screening at least until the first crop of new trees has matured. To provide variety of foliage some poplar species (which also have a commercial value) are suggested for interplanting. A few saplings of other species are also indicated at the water's edge: the Board would not object to these provided they did not interfere with dredging.
- 3.C.5 If asked, the Board would cooperate with the Local Authority at dredging time to avoid damage to the walk, the trees and any surrounding amenity areas.
- 3.C.6 It is suggested that if the old cress bed which passes through the allotments cannot be maintained it should be filled and topsoiled. The bed has a very variable bottom: firm patches of gravel alternate with deep pockets of silt. The latter will take a quantity of hard fill before softer stuff can be used. When the bed is ultimately brought under cultivation the type of boundary division between church and allotments will have to be agreed if further security is required. A reinforced hedge similar to that prescribed for the riverside walk might be advisable.
- 3.C.7 As the foregoing works are carried out the allotments will become clearer and more self-contained for working. New trees would be confined to the north east boundary. With access from the riverside walk the existing path up the middle could be brought under cultivation. By adjusting the setting out of the plots a little full use could be made of the new ground. The additional areas would more than compensate for land taken for the riverside walk.

3.C.8 At Pickford Bridge the entrance to the walk could be greatly improved if access was nearer the river. A better view of approaching traffic would be obtained from all directions. Some way back from the road some new saplings would be planted<sup>10</sup> to line the way into the walk. The bat willows would halt at this point.

3.C.9 The existing deep bore spring at the head of the cress bed by Pickford Bridge is plentiful and a small natural running water garden could be constructed and planted<sup>11</sup> with flowering water plants, rushes, etc. to give added interest at the entrance. The overflow would have to get away and if the cress bed is filled it is suggested a culvert be provided along its full length.

3.C.10 An increasing number of surface water drains are being run into the cress bed. A recent example is the connection of a stormwater gully in Station Road, by means of a drain across the meadow, into the stream. In our view this is bad policy and should be stopped. The beds are fed by deep bore springs of pure underground water which should on no account be polluted by road drainage. The cress stream flows through the childrens play area and will supply the paddling pond and beach and eventually join the river.

We advise that any car park or road surface draining into the cress stream should be disconnected and soakaways dug well back from the bed to take the contaminated water.

3.C.11 The river is the rear boundary of a number of properties at Batford Corner, including the Leaside Service Station. Some of the backs and shacks are tumbledown and may ultimately be tidied up under planning requirements, but, if the title to the properties is to the centre of the river bed, the east bank can only be cleaned up and planted to provide screening if the owners are agreeable. It is the Group's policy to negotiate with individual owners along these lines.

### 3.D PLAN D: PINNEY'S MEADOW

3.D.1 The pleasant open character of this newly acquired land with its long view down the valley should be preserved. It needs little attention at present and might be regarded as a reserve against future open space requirements when these become apparent. It will continue to need the minimum of maintenance which, up to now, has been provided mainly by grazing cattle. The Council might keep up the practice for the time being and continue to let to a farmer: it adds genuine interest to the country scene. Tidying up will be needed from time to time - cutting thistles and nettles, trimming hedges, etc. There is only one gate for access - off Pinney's forecourt. It may become necessary to provide an alternative.

3.D.2 The long eastern boundary of the site which separates the meadow from the watercress stream has a few thorn and ash clumps on the bank at the north end but these peter out. They are an attractive type of open field hedge and should be extended by planting further clumps of low growing trees<sup>12</sup> as far as the old osiers in the Scrub. The latter form valuable screening but will need replacing in time and new slips should be set on the meadow side of the stream to take over when the older trees have to be felled.<sup>13</sup> (Some of the osiers might respond to re-pollarding as described in paragraph 3.A.11.)

There is a wide gap in the trees between the osiers and the footbridge which gives an attractive diagonal view across the valley and a glimpse of open country to the south east. This should be maintained by avoiding planting in the gap.

At present the hedging on the east and south boundaries is supplemented by posts and barbed wire fencing which is in a poor state of repair. This would be a good place to introduce the type of wooden fencing illustrated in Figure 2.

If part of the thorn hedge on the southern boundary which runs parallel with the public footpath were removed in the middle a continuous vista from Playing Field to meadow could be obtained. It would bring passers-by into closer contact with any cattle there.

3.D.3 The boundaries of Pinney's Service Station and car park have been planted but the site is so restricted that what they can grow will need supplementing by further planting<sup>14</sup> on Council land. At present the visual impact of this very dominating collection of buildings is calamitous - especially from the meadow side and the additional planting is a necessity to help them settle more comfortably into their surroundings.

3.D.4 The roadside trees between Pinney's and Marquis Lane need little attention but the new Marquis Lane / Station Road junction will cut into them and the landscaping proposals for Marquis Lane include this junction. (See paragraph 3.E.7.)

The white post and pipe railing along Station Road is attractive and should be retained and repainted and extended round the junction. Behind it, at present, is a very unattractive chain link and barbed wire fence which should be removed. A cattle-proof boundary can be achieved by banking up the natural fall as shown in Figure 3.

3.D.5 The point on the verge north of Pinneys at which a six foot way through from Station Road is to be provided to the meadow is grown over and will need care, and possibly re-planting, when it is formed. The area of verge between this point and the garage needs supplementary planting on the highway side of the boundary to screen the car park more adequately than Pinney's planting will.

### 3.E PLAN E: MARQUIS LANE WIDENING

3.E.1 When Marquis Lane is widened and the hedge removed the proposed treatment of the new highway verge is important. Marquis Lane still is a lane: it is not an urban street. Its houses look over the playing field to open country. This character should be maintained. Widening will create a bank which may discourage attempts by motorists to park on the grass but if a conventional concrete kerb is used as well it will be completely out of character. A more ingenious engineering solution is required to soften the transition and avoid an abrupt break between road surface and grass.

By working to rule the verge bank may be steeply sloping in places but it would be better to vary it, in width and gradient, to create an informal appearance. Ease of mowing will also be necessary.

3.E.2 The large elm behind the shops is to be retained but the line of kerbs to the service area as proposed at present appears to run too close to the tree and might damage the roots: greater clearance should be given. The tree itself has been severely lopped and now needs careful balancing under professional direction to restore its shape.

3.E.3 Four specimen forest trees and some new clumps of smaller trees are suggested for planting at intervals<sup>15</sup>. The trees in the groups should be allowed to branch out freely at the bottom, the grass underneath being rough cut without damaging the lower growth. Nominal protection for each group should be given with larch posts and stranded wire as described in paragraph 3.A.5 until the young trees are well established. Between the groups the remainder of the grass would be gang mown in the normal way.



- 3.E.4 For the time being it is suggested no fence should be erected to Marquis Lane. The sloping bank will provide a check and an open front should be attractive.  
A single rail fence on concrete posts, as currently existing on the north lead-in to Bridge 3 and illustrated in Drawing No.6 should be provided between the road and the newly planted groups of trees.
- 3.E.5 The new road side fence to Marquis Lane allotments should be planted as described in paragraph 3.A.6 and several hollies which do so well in this area could be included.
- 3.E.6 The elm opposite 'The Firs' should be retained and protected during widening. This three-storey building itself is so out of character with the area that the scant screening which the elm provides should be supplemented by additional planting<sup>16</sup>. The benefit of this would be mutual as it would also shelter the residents from the north east and supplement their screening from the factory opposite.
- 3.E.7 A suggested layout for the car park and for landscaping<sup>17</sup> the new Station Road / Marquis Lane junction is shown on Plan E.  
It is suggested that the car park should be separated from the highway by a double row of setts and surfaced with pea shingle. It should be hedged and planted as shown.

One of the Limes which come within the area of roadworks will have to be felled but the other two will provide useful screening and should be protected against damage by machinery during the work. A short length of new thorn hedge should be planted round the curve leading into Station Road to continue the present hedge and one or two trees planted to continue the line of birches in Station Road.

#### 4 INDEX OF PLANTING PROPOSALS

Ref.No.	Location	Section
1	Riverside thickets - supplementary bushes	3.A.3
2	Existing young trees - new interplanting	3.A.4
3	Sub-station & Allotments - new hedge / trees	3.A.6
4	Corner of Allotments - copse	3.A.10
5	Playground area - replacements	3.A.11
6	Existing trees in Scrub - reinforcements	3.B.6
7	Scrub - replacements	3.B.7
8	Lower Luton Road verges - new planting	3.B.12
9	ditto allotments - Willow/Poplar crops	3.C.4
10	Pickford Bridge - entrance to walk	3.C.8
11	ditto - running water garden	3.C.9
12	Pimney's Meadow - N.E. field hedge	3.D.2
13	ditto - Osier replacements	3.D.2

# INDEX OF PLANTING PROPOSALS CONT.

14	Pinney's buildings - supplementary planting	3.D.3
15	Marquis Lane - new verge groups	3.E.3
16	ditto - 'The Firs' screening	3.E.6
17	Station Rd. / Marquis Lane Junction & Car Park - Trees, hedging etc.	3.E.7

The choice and combination of the most suitable species of trees or bushes will need careful consideration in each case. This will be done in consultation with the County Landscape Architect and the Group hope to provide the schedules.

The following are a selection of some of the species suitable to the area which can be drawn upon:

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Botanical Name</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<u>Large Trees</u>		
Ash	FRAXINUS EXCELSIOR	Non-conker 2 most resistant to disease
Horse Chestnut	AESULUS FLORE PLENO	
Commelin Elm	ULMUS COMMELIN	
Groeneveld Elm	U. GROENEVELD	
Cornish Elm	U. CARPINIFOLIA VAR. CORNUBIENSIS	Also resistant No suckers
Wych Elm	U. GLABRA	
Norway Maple	ACER PLATANOIDES	Fast growing
Field Maple	A. CAMPESTRE	
Sycamore	A. PSEUDOPATANUS	Fast growing
London Plane	PLATANUS ACERIFOLIA	
Hornbeam	CARPINUS BETULUS	Less pest and disease prone. Fast growing
Durmast Oak	QUERCUS PETRAEA	
Red Oak	Q. BOREALIS	Fast growing
Walnut	JUGLANS REGIA	

## Smaller Trees

Lime	TILIA X EUCHLORA	Small (20') and Aphis-free Small chestnut Good on chalk
Red Buckeye	AESULUS PAVIA	
Whitebeam	SORBUS ARIA MAJESTICA	
Swedish Whitebeam	S. INTERMEDIA	Rowan White-berried: unattractive to birds
Mountain Ash	S. AUCUPARIA	
Japanese ditto	S. HUPEHENSIS	
Silver Birch	BETULA PENDULA	3 varieties of red and white May
Golden Ash	FRAXINUS AUREA	
False Acacia	ROBINIA PSEUDOACACIA FRISIA	
Purple Plum	PRUNUS PISSARIDII NIGRA	
Japanese Maple	ACER PALMATUM	
Holly	ILEX AQUIFOLIUM	
Elder	SAMBUCUS NIGRA	
Golden Elder	S. CANADENSIS AUREA	
Hawthorn	CRATAEGUS OXYACANTHA	
do	C. PRUNIFOLIA	
do	C. COCCINEA	

Waterside & low lying meadow trees: can also be used in copses, groups, cut to clumps, or pollarded

Alder	ALNUS GLUTINOSA
Aspen	POPULUS TREMULA
Black Italian Poplar	P. SERATINA
Balm of Gilead	P. GILEADENSIS
White Poplar	P. ALBA
Lombardy Poplar	P. NIGRA ITALICA
Bat Willow	SALIX X COERULEA
Osier	S. VIMINALIS
Goat Willow	S. CAPREA Palm, Pussy Willow, Sailow.
Weeping Willow	S. VITELLINA PENDULA
White Willow	S. ALBA TRISTIS
Hairy Birch	BETULA PUBESCIENS
Metasequoia	METASEQUOIA GLYPTO STROBOIDES
Guelder Rose	VIBURNUM OPULUS
Alder Buckthorn	RHAMNUS FRANGULA

### Conifers

Leyland's Cypress	CUPRESSOCYPARIS LEYLANDII	V. hardy, fast-growing
Lawson's Cypress	CHAMAECYPARIS LAWSONIANA (VAR)	
Swamp Cypress	TAXODIUM DISTICHUM	Non-evergreen.
Scots Pine	PINUS SYLVESTRIS	
Corsican Pine	P. NIGRA	
Beach Pine	P. CONTORTA L.	
Hybrid Larch	LARIX EUROLEPIS	Vigorous, non-evergreen
Giant Thuja	THUJA PLICATA	
Yew	TAXUS BACCATA	Dry or chalky soil
Metasequoia	METASEQUOIA GLYPTO STROBOIDES	Non-evergreen

### Trees, bushes, shrubs for hedges or to naturalise in thickets, groups, etc

Hornbeam	CARPINUS BETULUS	
Field Maple	ACER CAMPESTRE	
Yew	TAXUS BACCATA	
Hawthorn/Quick	CRATAEGUS OXYACANTHA (VAR)	
Holly	ILEX AQUIFOLIA	
Ivy	HEDERA HELIX	
Sloe	PRUNUS SPINOSA	
Ash	FRAXINUS EXCELSIOR	
Cotoneaster	COTONEASTER FRIGIDA	
do	C. HYBRIDA (ET VAR)	
Broom	VYTISUS (VAR)	
Gorse	ULEX (VAR)	
Wayfaring Tree	VIBURNUM LANTANA	Dry or chalky
Guelder Rose	V. Opulus	
Dogwood	CORNUS ALBA	Red
do	C. STOLONIFERA	Yellow
Aspen	POPULUS TREMULA	
Hazel	CORYLUS AVELLANA	
do	C. COLUNA	
Privet	LIGUSTRUM VULGARE	
Spindleberry	EYONYMUS EUROPAEUS	
Buckthorn	HIPPOPHAE RHAMNOIDES	
Alder Buckthorn	RHAMNUS FRANGULA	
Purging Buckthorn	R. CATHARTICA	Good in dry soil
Alder	ALNUS	

MISCELLANEOUS.

Rose	(VAR)	
Dog Rose	ROSA CANINA	
Ivy	HEDERA HELIX (VAR)	
Traveller's Joy	CLEMATIS VITALBA	
Bamboo	SINARUNDINARIA NITIDA (VAR)	
Kingcup	CALTHA PALUSTRIS	Marsh Marigold
Yellow Flag	IRIS PSEUDACORUS	
Reed Grass	DIGRAPHIS ARUNDINACEA	
Reed	ARUNDO PHRAGMITES	
Bulrush	SCIRPUS LACUSTRIS	
Reed Mace	TYPHA LATIFOLIA	Called 'Bulrush'
Rush	(VAR)	
Marsh Sedge	CAREX PALUDOSA	

# Upper Lea Valley Group's 2nd Interim Report

## CENTRAL AREA STUDY

### SUPPLEMENT JULY 1972

Report on visit to site of Mr. Norman Clarke,  
County Landscape Architect, July 13th, 1972.

In general Mr. Clarke accepts the Report and, where there is no comment in the notes which follow, his general agreement with the proposals can be assumed. He gave one general warning against too much 'tidying up' (clearance of 'scrub', undergrowth, etc.) and re-emphasised the point made in the Report that the area is nearer to natural countryside than to an urban park. Aerial photographs support this view. Conservation work which is undertaken should reinforce this country character. The following notes record his comments during an inspection of the site on July 13th in company with two members of the Upper Lea Valley Group.

#### THROUGH WALK (Railway land)

- pp.1-2 Access to track at south end of Marquis Lane (adjoining bridge over 'Sewer Lane'):  
Flights of sleeper steps, some rough levelling-out to form paths and landings and some surfacing to prevent mud-spots developing in wet weather are required. Encroachment down the track towards the sewage works should be kept to the minimum when providing any access road which may be required to the sewage works land which is to be developed for light industrial purposes: the railway track and banks at this point have a very high amenity value.

Wroxham Way: It is suggested Harpenden Council should consider including a condition in any Agreement with adjoining owners as to the sale of small parts of the railway land, for the protection, preservation, or replacement of any mature trees forming part of the screening of the banks.

Beeshing Close: Newly-planted UDC trees and shrubs which will form part of the walk when mature need maintenance and weeding regularly.

#### PLAN A. MARQUIS LANE ALLOTMENTS & PLAYING FIELD.

- 3.A.4 Rescue newly-planted trees with minimal clearance of undergrowth.
- 3.A.2 After roughly levelling path, surface with rolled-in hoggins: it can be re-dressed when necessary.



3.A.8-9-10 Clear out over-grown riverside fence as far back as tree clump behind sand-pit: level off ground, grade bank and encourage a mown sward down to the river's edge. Cut out the river bank at the right-angled bend to form a wider basin. Reduce the extent to which the proposed copse sticks out into the Playing Field. Now, from Marquis Lane, the Playing Field will be seen to run down into the river near the allotment corner: an attractive view of the water will be opened up.

3.A.13 By extending the planting of the Play Area, as proposed in the Report, up the field, towards Marquis Lane, and by introducing the verge-side clumps along Marquis Lane, the whole field will become more interesting.

3.A.11 Thin out osiers by paddling beach. The three large bat willows have a limited life, but leave alone. Tidy up the osiers to the west. Consider Alders for interplanting, and in proposed copse.

3.A.14 Possibly extend the timber-pile treatment specified for the dam around the far side of the paddling area. This should prevent mud filtering through from the natural growth in the 'swamp' beyond.

Widen the channel of the watercress stream up to the foot-bridge to encourage free flowing stream.

#### Plan B. SCRUB & LOWER LUTON ROAD VERGES

3.B.13 Regular mowing seems to have lapsed under the Poplars. A large clump of dogwood planted on the river bank behind the Poplars would be attractive.

#### Plan C. LOWER LUTON ROAD ALLOTMENTS

3.C.3 Black plastic-coated square-section tubular metal uprights and black plastic-coated chain-link fencing is the most self-effacing form of security fencing where this is unavoidable.

3.C.4 Good grower's Bat Willow stock (e.g. Sutcliffe's) should be used for commercial cropping, as distinct from slips used to provide screening trees.

#### Plan D. PINNEY'S MEADOW

3.D.1 Remind UDC that nettles and thistles need cutting

3.D.2 Proposed groups of newly planted trees will need strong protective fencing while grazing continues.

Leave thorn hedge between Meadow and Playing Field while the present use continues.

#### PLAN E. MARQUIS LANE WIDENING

3.E.2 Large elm in poor state but leave alone as long as possible and rely on new trees to take over in time.

3.E.3 Select specimen trees to introduce greys and other colour variations into over-all green-ness of present landscape

3.E.4 Open front to Playing Field creates a good village green atmosphere: confine planting to small clumps as suggested in

## Report.

- 3.E.7 There is a strong case for buying semi-mature trees for planting in the new positions round the car park area.

If the surrounding ground level is raised around any of the existing trees on account of roadworks, fill the area around base with large gauge rejects to maintain ventilation and moisture penetration over root area, and prevent the suffocation of the tree.

## 4 INDEX OF PLANTING PROPOSALS

- p.14 Silver Birch \_\_\_\_\_ unsuitable for swampy ground: use in  
dry heath/gravel/sand situations only  
OMIT Purple Plum \_\_\_\_\_ out of character
- p.15 OMIT Metasequoia \_\_\_\_\_ ditto  
OMIT Swamp Cypress \_\_\_\_\_ ditto  
Use the Common Brooms  
? Spindleberry
- p.16 Bamboo is not native

# Upper Lea Valley Group

## CENTRAL AREA STUDY

## PLANS SUPPLEMENT

- A MARQUIS LANE ALLOTMENTS GARDENS & PLAYING FIELD
- B SCRUB & LOWER LUTON ROAD VERGES
- C LOWER LUTON ROAD ALLOTMENT GARDENS
- D PINNEY'S MEADOW
- E MARQUIS LANE WIDENING

### KEY



existing trees (as Landscape Survey)



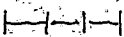
new trees, bushes, etc.



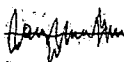
bat willows (1st crop)



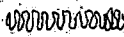
ditto (2nd crop)



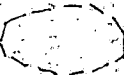
new fence



hedge reinforced by fence



new hedging



areas left to naturalise a further season



areas to be prepared for later planting



protected planting



grass walks, public access, etc.



existing deep bore springs



litter bins

MARCH 1972

Fig 1 Litter bin

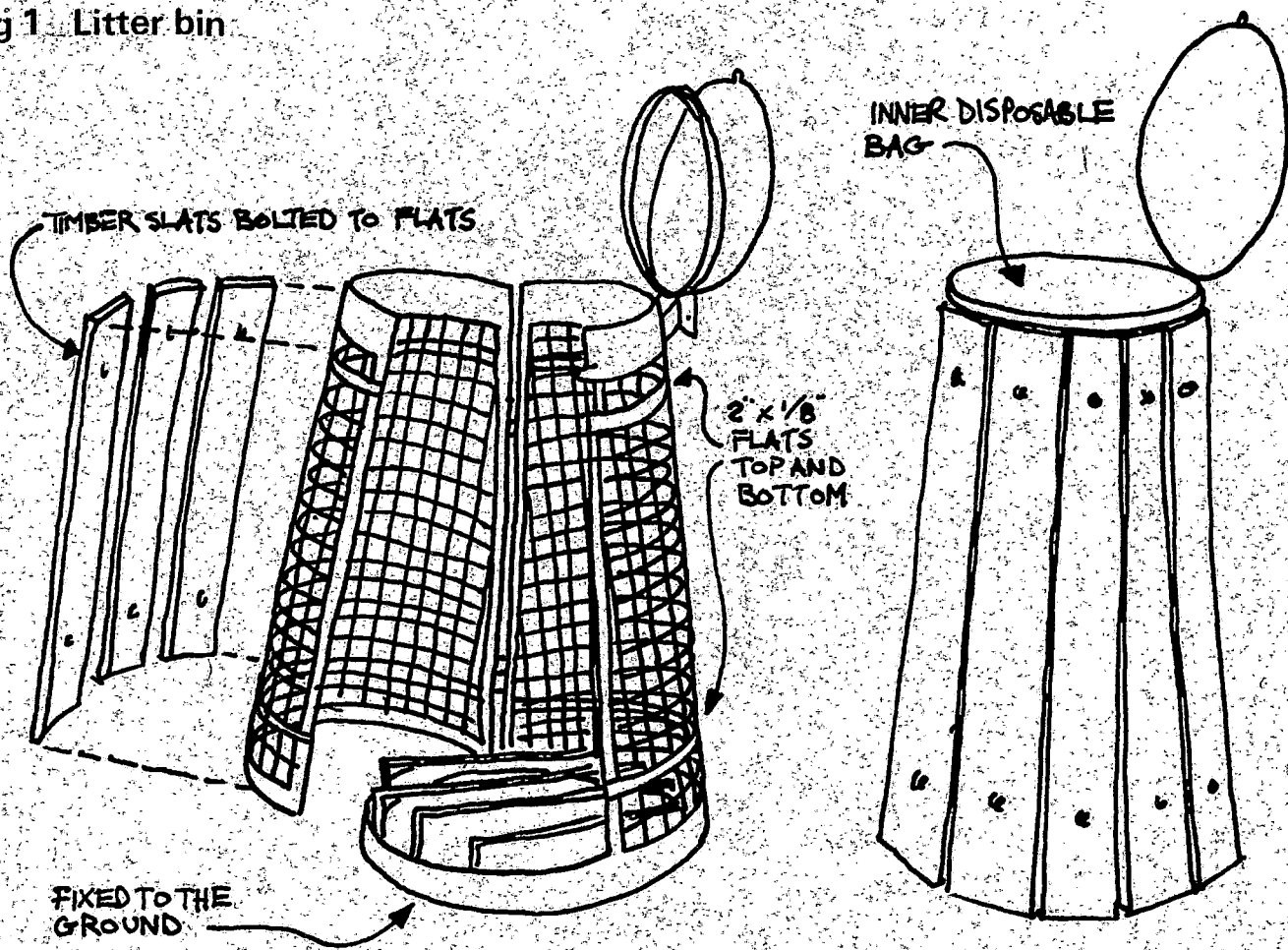


Fig 2 Timber fencing

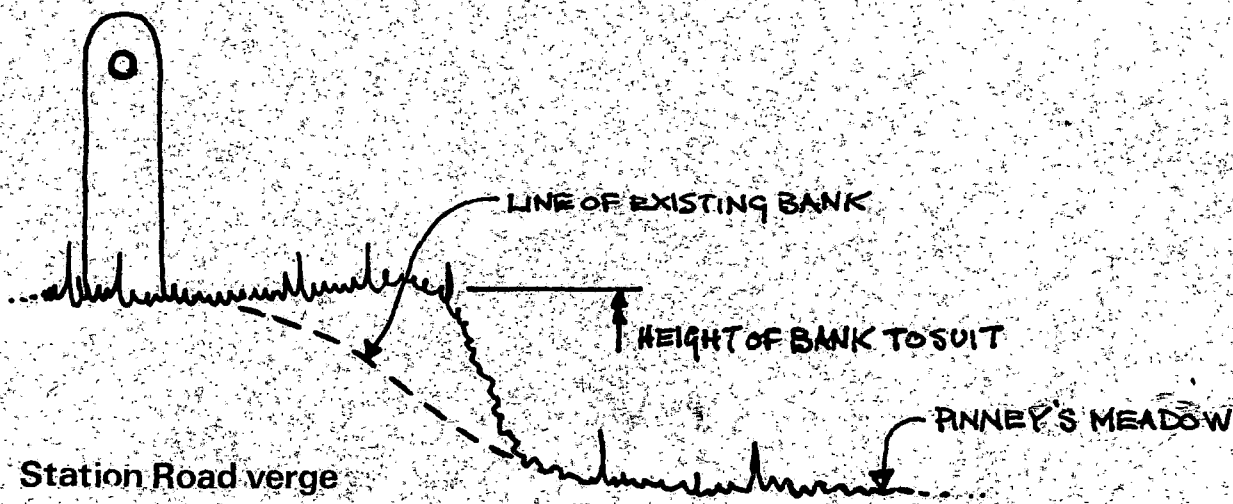
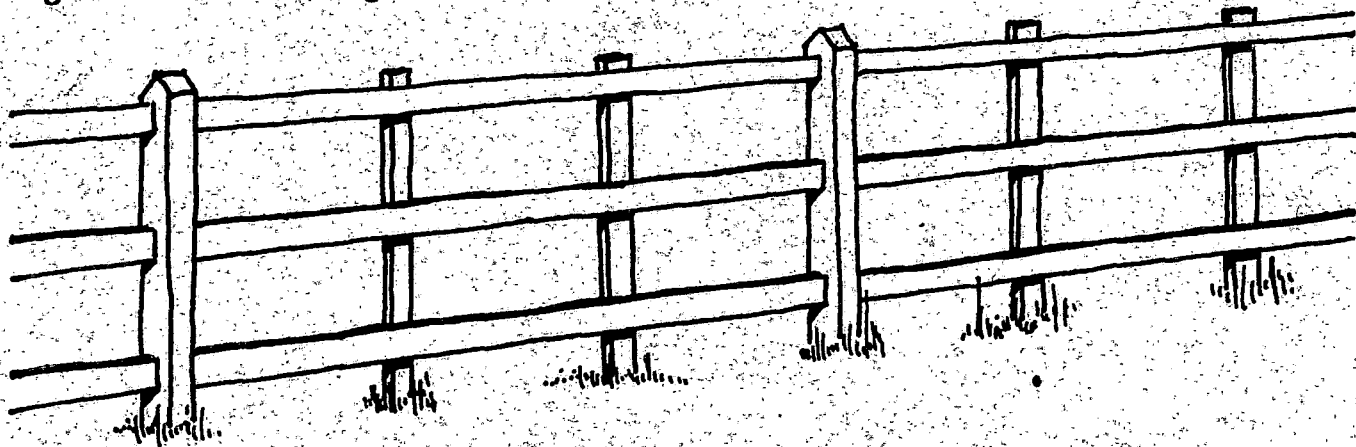


Fig 3 Station Road verge