

NOTICE OF MEETING

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

will meet on

TUESDAY, 30TH JUNE, 2020

at

6.15 pm

by

VIRTUAL MEETING - ONLINE ACCESS ON RBWM [YOUTUBE](#)

TO: MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

COUNCILLORS MAUREEN HUNT, PHIL HASELER, JULIAN SHARPE
& EXTERNAL MEMBERS: http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/laf_members.htm

Karen Shepherd
Head of Governance
Issued: 22nd June 2020

Members of the Press and Public are welcome to attend Part I of this meeting.

The agenda is available on the Council's web site at www.rbwm.gov.uk or contact the
Panel Administrator **Mark Beeley** 01628 796345

Recording of Meetings – In line with the council's commitment to transparency the Part I (public) section of the virtual meeting will be streamed live and recorded via Zoom. By participating in the meeting by audio and/or video, you are giving consent to being recorded and acknowledge that the recording will be in the public domain.

If you have any questions regarding the council's policy, please speak to Democratic Services or Legal representative at the meeting.

AGENDA - PART 1

ITEM	SUBJECT	TIME	PERSON	PAGE NO
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Introductions	20 mins	Geoff Priest	-
	a) Declarations of Interest	-	All	3 - 4
	b) Approval of Minutes - 26th November 2019	-	Mark Beeley	5 - 10
	c) Matters arising from the last meeting	-	Jacqui Wheeler	11 - 48
2.	Membership Update	2 mins	Jacqui Wheeler	Verbal Report
3.	LAF Information on RBWM website	5 mins	Jacqui Wheeler	49 - 50
4.	Horse Riding and Multi-Use Provision - Sub Group First Report	10 mins	Anne Woodward Trisha Mentzel	51 - 84
5.	Accessibility Audits Working Group	10 mins	Lisa Hughes Dom Lethbridge Steve Gillions	85 - 86
6.	Battlemead Common Update	5 mins	Jacqui Wheeler Lisa Hughes	87 - 128
7.	Site Visit - When and Where	5 mins	Jacqui Wheeler	Verbal Report
8.	Date of Next Meeting Monday 30 th November 2020	-	-	-

MEMBERS' GUIDE TO DECLARING INTERESTS IN MEETINGS

Disclosure at Meetings

If a Member has not disclosed an interest in their Register of Interests, they **must make** the declaration of interest at the beginning of the meeting, or as soon as they are aware that they have a DPI or Prejudicial Interest. If a Member has already disclosed the interest in their Register of Interests they are still required to disclose this in the meeting if it relates to the matter being discussed.

A member with a DPI or Prejudicial Interest **may make representations at the start of the item but must not take part in the discussion or vote at a meeting.** The speaking time allocated for Members to make representations is at the discretion of the Chairman of the meeting. In order to avoid any accusations of taking part in the discussion or vote, after speaking, Members should move away from the panel table to a public area or, if they wish, leave the room. If the interest declared has not been entered on to a Members' Register of Interests, they must notify the Monitoring Officer in writing within the next 28 days following the meeting.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) (relating to the Member or their partner) include:

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit made in respect of any expenses occurred in carrying out member duties or election expenses.
- Any contract under which goods and services are to be provided/works to be executed which has not been fully discharged.
- Any beneficial interest in land within the area of the relevant authority.
- Any licence to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where the landlord is the relevant authority, and the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:
 - a) that body has a piece of business or land in the area of the relevant authority, and
 - b) either (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body **or** (ii) the total nominal value of the shares of any one class belonging to the relevant person exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Any Member who is unsure if their interest falls within any of the above legal definitions should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

A Member with a DPI should state in the meeting: ***'I declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item x because xxx. As soon as we come to that item, I will leave the room/ move to the public area for the entire duration of the discussion and not take part in the vote.'***

Or, if making representations on the item: ***'I declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item x because xxx. As soon as we come to that item, I will make representations, then I will leave the room/ move to the public area for the entire duration of the discussion and not take part in the vote.'***

Prejudicial Interests

Any interest which a reasonable, fair minded and informed member of the public would reasonably believe is so significant that it harms or impairs the Member's ability to judge the public interest in the item, i.e. a Member's decision making is influenced by their interest so that they are not able to impartially consider relevant issues.

A Member with a Prejudicial interest should state in the meeting: ***'I declare a Prejudicial Interest in item x because xxx. As soon as we come to that item, I will leave the room/ move to the public area for the entire duration of the discussion and not take part in the vote.'***

Or, if making representations in the item: ***'I declare a Prejudicial Interest in item x because xxx. As soon as we come to that item, I will make representations, then I will leave the room/ move to the public area for the entire duration of the discussion and not take part in the vote.'***

Personal interests

Any other connection or association which a member of the public may reasonably think may influence a Member when making a decision on council matters.

Members with a Personal Interest should state at the meeting: ***'I wish to declare a Personal Interest in item x because xxx'. As this is a Personal Interest only, I will take part in the discussion and vote on the matter.***

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ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM MEETING MINUTES

26 November 2019

ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Interest area
Lisa Hughes	User – Accessibility
Alan Keene	User
Steve Gillions	User – Walking
James Copas	Landowner
David Clenshaw	User – Walking
Councillor Phil Haseler	RBWM
Anne Woodward	User – Horse riding
Anne Keene	Observer – Horse riding
Geoff Priest (Chairman)	Hurley Parish Council, User – Young People
Trisha Mentzel	User – Horse riding
Dom Lethbridge (Vice-Chairman)	Landowner
Jacqui Wheeler (LAF Secretary)	RBWM
Wendy Binmore (Clerk)	RBWM

APOLOGIES

Name
Councillor Maureen Hunt
Christine Gadd
Lynn Penfold

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
26 November 2019
MINUTES**

ACTION

- 1 Welcome, Apologies and Introductions**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Maureen Hunt, Christine Gadd and Lynn Penfold.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
None.
- A) APPROVAL OF MINUTES - 4TH JULY 2019
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2019 be approved.
- 3 Matters arising from the last meeting**
 - 4.1 – Officers would bring the Cookham Cycleway back to the Forum once more progress had been made.
 - 4.2 - Regarding the Chairs meeting, Jacqui Wheeler explained that she had emailed Surrey County Council as she was exploring links that could be formed between the two areas. She had been in touch with Joanne Porter about setting up a joint Local Access Forum Chairs meeting to discuss cross boundary issues. The previous Chairman had passed away in 2018 and he had been very involved in local access issues and it would be good to continue that work. Jacqui Wheeler had not heard back from West Berkshire Council but would continue to chase for a new date.
 - 6.1 – Lisa Hughes commented that it was very difficult to find any information on the Council's website regarding the Local Access Forum. The Chairman responded the Forum might need to wait until the New Year to make the website easier to navigate but he would start discussions.
 - 6.2 – The Terms of Reference had been updated to encourage a younger, ad hoc membership. The plan was to bring someone on board with more youthful views. The Chairman stated he felt it would be nice for students to get broader views but it was difficult to find people willing to volunteer. He was hoping the head of the BCA College would attend a Hurley Parish Council meeting in December so the Chairman could discuss the issue with her then.
- 4 Members' Update**
There was no Members Update to report.
- 5 Membership and Staff Update**
Members noted that there had been no membership enquiries for the Local Access Forum. Nabihah Hassan-Farooq had left RBWM and there was a new clerk moving forward, called Mark Beeley.
- 6 Horse Riding and Multi-Use Provision - Creation of Sub Group**
LAF Horse rider members, Anne Woodward and Trisha Mentzel had both written letters to Teresa May MP about the significant issues facing horse riders in the borough such as; lack of off-road provision and road safety. Anne Woodward felt it was now too dangerous to ride on the road with access areas being closed down and riders receiving abuse for riding on the road. She

appreciated there were more footpaths and cycleways being created but, bridleways seemed outdated. Cyclists were allowed on bridleways but, riders could not use cycleways. Anne Woodward had explained this in her letter to Teresa May. The Chairman proposed setting up another working group similar to the existing Accessibility Working group which would be made up of existing LAF members together with any interested external volunteers. The new working group would focus on extending the route provision available for horse riding and creation of multi-user routes.

Anne Woodward and Trisha Mentzel volunteered to establish the new sub group with Anne stating she would like to attend a meeting of the other working group so she could see how it was structured. The Chairman responded that once the new sub group reported back to the Forum, the report could be used to gain leverage with MPs on opening up rural areas such as Ashley Hill Forest. Jacqui Wheeler confirmed she was happy to support both groups.

Furthermore, Jacqui Wheeler informed the Forum that the PROW team had received a very negative response from the temp officer at Forestry Commission concerning the necessary risk assessments being done at Ashley Hill Forest. They had point blank refused to carry them out or accept help from RBWM PROW team. The permanent Forestry Commission contact is currently on maternity leave. Jacqui would forward Forestry Commission contact details to the new sub group so they can begin putting pressure on to have the risk assessments done.

7

Accessibility Audits Working Group

Steve Gillions explained the report showed how accessibility could be improved if an agreement came forward to RBWM officers, they could look into it and try and implement it. Lisa Hughes said she was not expecting the countryside to become accessible to everyone but, some accessible routes for disabled people would be good. Steve Gillions stated as a site, Battlemead Common had high potential for accessibility for disabled people as it was quite flat and there were not many obstacles. If the Rights of Way team considered disabled needs during the design phase, it would save a lot of money in the long run. He added no one was expecting all-weather track running all the way round but, he would be asking for disabled friendly pathways and access. He was suggesting doing something similar to South Downs where they offered a map that showed where all of the facilities in their parks were so that those who were less able, or parents with prams could still access and use the facilities.

Lisa Hughes stated the information for South Downs could be found online, with signage installed on the ground. The information included step free access, some stepping, resting places, no stiles access, and least restricted access points. There were four national parks using the information formatting but, she liked the one at South Downs as it contained all the information in one document.

Councillor Haseler said Ockwells Park had 86 acres and asked if there was anything going on at that site to inform visitors. The Chairman stated this park was on this list to be audited by the accessibility working group (AWG). He added the AWG had to create a proforma of how they would review the areas for access and would also use a format for inputting into the Borough Local Plan (BLP), and if that worked, it would set the standard by people that knew what they were doing. The Chairman stated it was a good report and he had been to site and the report came across as objective.

Alan Keene said he was glad to see the Borough considering opening up the

Causeway at Battlemead and that, the Local Access Forum should be involved in that. The Forum's job was to ensure there was good access and support the opening up of the Causeway. The Chairman responded that there were ongoing ecology surveys and people were only excluded from the area due to biodiversity. Access routes including to the Causeway would be worked out once the results of ecology surveys were available. Subject to this the LAF would be looking to support more access to this area.

It was unanimously agreed to endorse the report and put the report forward to the Council and to the Friends of Battlemead group.

8 Battlemead Common Visit/Update

Jacqui Wheeler explained the four sub groups had met in October and the minutes of the previous meetings of the sub groups were included in the agenda/ dropping the name 'Common' was being discussed at the next Friends group meeting. Lisa Hughes stated all the sub groups were worried about nuisance dog owners and felt the term 'Common' would make people feel they could use it but, it was agricultural land. Jacqui Wheeler said that simply calling the land a "Common" did not give it the legal status of "Common". However, James Copas contended that the term Common did sound like anyone could use the land. The Chairman stated the Forum needed to find out why it was named that way in the first place. James Copas said people think Commons are owned by the National Trust and that that is not the case with Battlemead.

Jacqui Wheeler circulated photos of the access gate at Battlemead which had been brought up in the Battlemead accessibility sub group meeting as the opening is less than a metre wide which is not compliant with government guidance. The Battlemead accessibility sub group had agreed it needed alteration and the Council was consulting with the LAF for opinions on this issue. Lisa Hughes stated there was much better access a bit further down the road. It would save money to leave it as it was. The access point was very narrow and quite dangerous to use as it was right by a very busy road. A more suitable access point was approximately 100 metres away. The Chairman said the Borough needed to be careful because if the gate was removed, there may be objections if the Council ever wanted to have the gate reinstated; so it was better to improve it and make it more useable. James Copas said it would either need to be set back and remove the nearby tree or, just use the other entrance. The Chairman stated he felt both crossings were not safe to use, but that the gate should be left as it was and the crossing at the car park be highlighted as the accessible entrance to the site.

Jacqui Wheeler explained the map on page 32 in the agenda showed signage related to wildlife was to be installed on 31 January 2020; and page 36 of the agenda showed the minutes of the biodiversity group with recommendations at the end of the page; it set out a vision with basic principles of managing Battlemead and she wanted to bring that to the Local Access Forum to see if the Forum wanted to support the vision and have it recorded. Alan Keene said he had no objections to the points but it needed to say something about access. Steve Gillions said seasonal access needed to be based on evidence, there needed to be a balance between wildlife and access. The Chairman stated the Council did not know about the extent of the wildlife habitat when it bought the land, which has created issues regarding access to the site. He added the Forum could go back and say it supports their recommendations but it needed to say something on access and also to balance between access users and wildlife. The Local Access Forum was generally supportive but the Friends of Battlemead needed to strike a balance.

Lisa Hughes stated the volunteer sub group of Battlemead had been engaging with dog walkers to ensure their dogs were kept on leads at the site.

The Local Access Forum unanimously agreed it was happy to support the recommendations in the report.

9 Milestones Summary Report 2019

A target to carry out 10 major surface or clearance jobs was currently sitting at nine completed; the target for seven bridge repairs or replacements was currently sitting at 9 completed which exceeded the target; two new paths had been completed which was one more than the target but, only six access improvements had been completed despite the target sitting at 10 to be carried out.

The Chairman stated for a large part of the period relating to the targets, there was no designated officer in the Rights of Way Team so it was a pretty good performance seeing as the team were short staffed and the Forum was quite harsh with their targets.

10 Local Plan Further Consultation

The Chairman explained after the inspectors first review the draft Local plan had now been amended and was out for consultation again. The working group of the Local Access Forum had reviewed the original draft local plan with a view to how access could be improved. That review was submitted to the Head of Planning with the intention that it be circulated to developers. The Forum will reconvene in early 2020 to review the Forum's original report on access in relation to the developing draft local plan.

11 Future Site Visits

Forum members were made aware of an invitation for the opening of a new shared use route on the A404 near to Temple. The route was opening on 18 December 2019 at 1pm. Alan Keene stated the Bisham Parish Council felt it would be very beneficial to the local community. The status was noted as a permissive route rather than a dedicated public right of way.

Jacqui Wheeler stated there would be further site visits arranged at Cockmarsh and Thrift Wood which was the new extension to Ockwells Park and she was hoping to schedule the visits in the spring and then arrange a couple more visits in summer 2020.

12 Date of next meeting

Members noted the next schedule of meetings would be known after Full Council in February 2020.

The meeting, which started at 6.30 pm, ended at 7.55 pm.

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LOCAL ACCESS FORUM: 30th JUNE 2020

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Local Access Forum about the progress made on actions and issues arising from the Forum meeting held on 26th November 2019

Key:

Completed items

In progress

Incomplete

Action owners:

GP	Geoff Priest	AH	Anthony Hurst (Parks and Countryside Team Leader)
SW	Sharon Wootten (Public Rights of Way Officer)	JW	Jacqui Wheeler

Agenda Item 1(d): Matters Arising

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
4.2	Next 2020 Joint LAF Chairs meeting proposed by Graham Pockett Parks and Countryside Development Manager of Bracknell Forest Council	GP	On 4 th Dec 2019 Graham Pockett emailed that Bracknell might be able to host next meeting. However, no contact from West Berkshire. Hampshire CAF and Surrey CAF are both interested in attending a new meeting. JW to contacted Bracknell again now the worst of the pandemic is over and there is possibility of a virtual meeting using MS TEAMS.
6.1	Lack of promotion of the LAF on council website	JW	GP has had discussions with JW on 19 th Feb 2020 to decide how to make improvements to the RBWM website. New LAF webpage content has been sent to web editor and waiting to be uploaded. Archived webpage has been loaded to the "live" website again (out of date)
6.2	A representative from the Crown Estate had been identified and approached. GP and ACH were waiting to hear back.	GP/JW	Nothing has been heard from the Crown Estate.

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM REPORT - 30 June 2020
AGENDA ITEM 1(d)

6.3	BCA had been identified as an organisation from which younger LAF members might be recruited.	GP/JW	Action required to pursue membership from BCA. GP is there an update?
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Agenda Item 10: Local Plan Further Consultation

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
10.1	The Forum needed to review its original report on access in relation to the developing draft Local Plan	GP	No progress due to COVID-19

Interim Item: Milestones Targets Consultation Feb 2020

Item	Action / Issue	Action Owner	Outcome
9.1	LAF agreed the 2020 targets for the Milestones Statement and that the Accessibility Report would be incorporated into the Statement via an email consultation	GP/AH	On 24 th March 2020 the 'Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan Annual Review 2020/21' was approved under delegated powers and reviewed by the Chair (Cllr Hunt) of the Rights of Way & Highways Licensing Panel.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Milestones Statement

*and Public Rights of Way
Management and Improvement
Plan review*

2020-21

FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the 22nd annual Milestones Statement for the Royal Borough, marking 22 years since this Council, as Highway Authority, became responsible for the management and maintenance of the borough's public rights of way in 1998.

I hope that residents and visitors to the borough will continue to enjoy these public rights of way as a means of accessing the borough's beautiful countryside, and as a healthy and stress-free way of getting about.

We will continue to work with all our partners, including the Local Access Forum, Parish and Town Councils, landowners, and path user groups (including the East Berks Ramblers, the British Horse Society and Sustrans) to achieve these goals, and I wish to thank all our partners for their continued co-operation, support and enthusiasm.

Councillor Maureen Hunt

Chair of Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

April 2020

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The Royal Borough as the surveying and highway authority is responsible for the management and maintenance of the public rights of way network in the borough. There are over 310 km (192 miles) of public rights of way, about a third of the borough's total highway network (see Table 1 for lengths of rights of way by parish).

This Milestones Statement sets out the Council's priorities and targets for ensuring that the network is legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised. The Statement also incorporates an annual update on the Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026.

1.2 The Milestones approach

The 'milestones approach' is an effective means of prioritising public rights of way work and measuring performance against an agreed set of targets. This is achieved by:

- setting individual, realistic targets, taking into account the available resources – these are the Milestones Targets (see page 7) monitoring progress towards achieving the Milestones Targets (see page 19).

1.3 Partnership working

The Council works closely with public rights of way user groups, landowners, parish and town councils, local conservation volunteers, and the borough's Local Access Forum. Two Parish Councils (Cookham and Old Windsor) undertake routine clearance of vegetation from public rights of way in their area on behalf of the borough, as part of the Parish Paths Initiative.

1.4 Volunteers

During 2019/20, several volunteer groups worked on public rights of way around the Borough:

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) carried out **6 workdays** with a total of **46** participant days.

The Windsor and Maidenhead Conservation Volunteers (WMCV) carried out **1 workday** with a total of **4** participant days.

Ways into Work (WiW) carried out **29 workdays** with a total of **200** participant days.

Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) carried out **15 workdays** with a total of **93** participant days.

East Berks Ramblers carried out 398 hours of work on behalf of the Borough, mainly through undertaking condition surveys.

Based upon our current commercial rates for path works the value of the volunteer works listed above is **£13,756**

1.5 Resources

The Council's 'Parks and Countryside Team' manage the public rights of way network; 3 members of the team work specifically on public rights of way, totaling 1.7 full time equivalents (fte). In addition, the Council's Legal team provides legal support, and the Democratic Services team provides secretarial support for administering the Rights of Way and Highways Licensing Panel and the Local Access Forum.

Revenue Budget

2019/20	2020/21
£60,000	£60,000

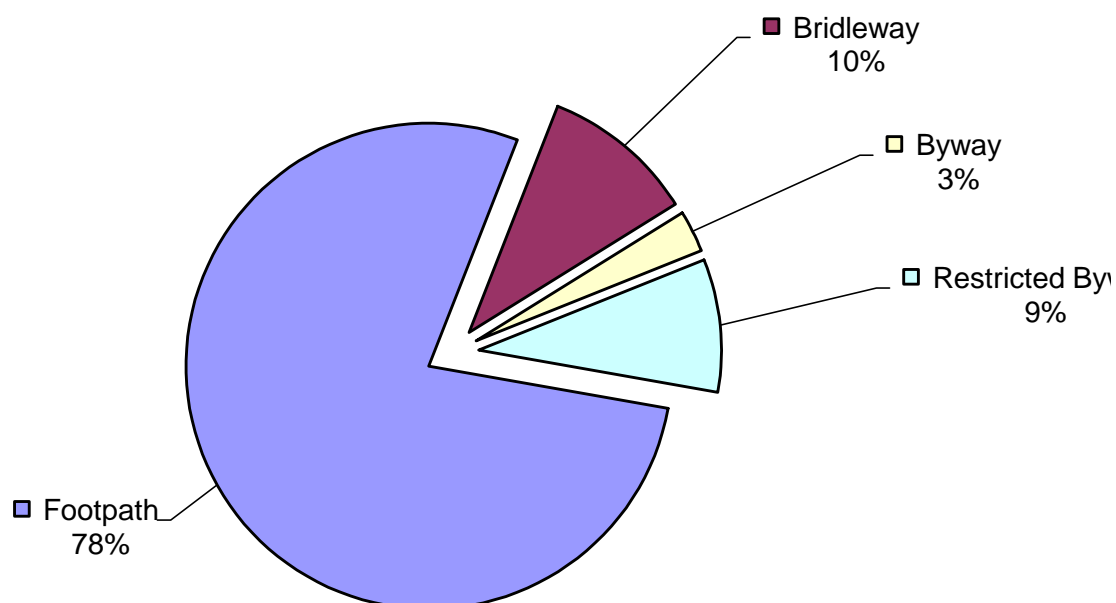
This budget funds the annual vegetation clearance contract of programmed works, as well as reactive works such as clearance of fallen trees and branches from public rights of way, replacement of missing or damaged signs, surface repairs, removal of fly-tipping etc.

There is no allocated capital budget for public rights of way work in 2020/21. However, the Council will continue to work with volunteers on public rights of way improvement projects, and sources of external funding will be sought for individual projects.

Table 1: Lengths of Rights of Way by Parish, March 2020

Parish	Length (km)					% of network
	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway	Restricted Byway	Total km	
Bisham	13.146	2.524	-	2.228	17.898	5.76
Bray	36.803	9.999	2.184	0.564	49.550	15.94
Cookham	34.138	1.980	0.469	0.405	36.992	11.90
Cox Green	8.395	1.399	-	-	9.794	3.15
Datchet	4.761	-	-	-	4.761	1.53
Eton	18.396	3.561	-	-	21.957	7.06
Horton	1.200	1.254	-	-	2.454	0.79
Hurley	31.608	6.115	-	6.909	44.632	14.36
Maidenhead	29.796	0.439	-	2.596	32.831	10.56
Old Windsor	4.574	-	-	-	4.574	1.47
Shottesbrooke	3.240	-	-	1.612	4.852	1.56
Sunningdale	3.554	1.666	0.337	-	5.557	1.79
Sunninghill	11.244	-	3.592	1.299	16.135	5.19
Waltham St Lawrence	17.728	-	-	7.209	24.937	8.02
White Waltham	11.011	0.530	0.342	4.165	16.048	5.16
Windsor	4.339	1.994	1.644	0.259	8.236	2.65
Wraysbury	9.648	-	-	-	9.648	3.10
Total (km)	243.581	31.461	8.568	27.246	310.856	100.00

Path status across the network



OBJECTIVES

2.1 Priorities for 2020/21

- Maintenance and enforcement: bring all public rights of way up to an acceptable standard for all users.
- Encourage and support the involvement of volunteers in the maintenance and improvement of public rights of way.
- Equality of service: ensuring that the needs of all users, regardless of race, disability, sexuality, age and religion, are taken into account.
- Ensure that the Thames Path National Trail is consistently safe and easy to use by all members of the public.
- Seek to complete the missing links in the Millennium Walk.
- Partnership working: working with all interested parties in the management of public rights of way, (e.g. Local Access Forum, Parish Councils, Civic Societies, residents associations, user groups and landowners)
- Changes to the network: seek improvements in association with development and other proposals.
- Improvements: seek improvements and additions to the network to enhance connectivity for horse riders, cyclists and people with restricted mobility.
- Explore opportunities to extend, create or promote Multi-user Routes
- Ensure effective early consultation with interested parties on proposed changes to the network, in accordance with government regulations, circulars and codes of practice.
- Liaise with landowners and occupiers on all public rights of way matters, including updating and advising landowners on changes in legislation and encouraging the establishment of permitted routes.
- Maximise the use of recycled and reused materials in rights of way maintenance where practicable.
- Develop and enhance the information available online for public rights of way, including the use of social media where appropriate.

- Accessibility:

Aim to establish a network of urban, semi-urban and highly used footpaths to be reasonably accessible for people with disabilities, older people and parents / carers with young children.

The initial six localities to be surveyed are Battlemead Common, The Green Way, Ockwells Park & Thrift Wood, Cock Marsh, Boulters Lock and the Thames at Old Windsor

Recommendations from the annual footpath surveys to be considered for inclusion in the annual Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Investigate best practice path surface materials that enable people with disabilities to use public rights of way and other footpaths. Use the results to develop a list of suitable surfaces and the circumstances in which they might appropriately be used.

Adopt the signage and information approach used by South Downs National Park for all online and hard copy maps of green spaces and accessible walks/routes: access for all/many/some; mapping symbols include gradients/resting places/access controls; standard information templates

Consider the needs of people with disabilities in all footpath design and improvement programmes. Key aspects to consider: access to the route/site; appropriate footpath surfaces and width; removal of access barriers; resting places; connections with other footpaths/green spaces and transport (parking, bus stops); signage and information.

Develop a footpath survey template for use in areas where access for all or some routes are considered feasible. It should include the following elements: footpath surfaces, gradients and condition; obstacles (access barriers, stiles, gates, steps); hazards (tree roots, overhanging or intrusive vegetation, barbed wire); signage and information; resting places.

2.2 Milestones Targets for 2020/21

Well Maintained

WM 1: To ensure that all public rights of way are easy to use by members of the public. (This is based on the former 'Best Value Performance Indicator' for public rights of way). Target for 2020/21 is **95%**.

WM 2: To carry out major surface improvements/vegetation clearance on **10** public rights of way.

WM 3: To repair or replace **7** bridges.

Well Publicised

WP 1: To produce **1** new Parish rights of way leaflet.

WP 2: To assist others to produce effective promotional material: a minimum of **1** new or updated publication.

Improving Access and Connectivity

AC 1: Create **1** new strategic path, either public right of way or permitted, to fill identified gaps in the public rights of way network, as/when opportunities arise.

AC2: To make **10** physical access improvements, including the replacement of stiles with gates or gaps, to facilitate use by those with special needs, the elderly, people with pushchairs etc.

Note: *the above targets are 'subject to funding', and subject to change should the need arise. This will ensure flexibility considering changing circumstances, for example to take advantage of opportunities that may arise during the course of the year, discussions with landowners, funding sources for specific projects etc.*

2.3 Equal opportunities

The Council continues to seek improvements to public rights of way to enable use by a wide range of people with sensory or physical disabilities or learning difficulties.

The Council supports the establishment of routes suitable for use by disabled people, in consultation with the Local Access Forum and the Disability and Inclusion Forum.

The Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan and annual Milestones Targets include a number of policies and proposals aimed at improving access for people with special needs.

2.4 Parish Paths Initiative

The Parish Paths Initiative (PPI) works with Parish and Town Council's to identify or carry out maintenance, improvement or promotional works on local path networks. All Parish Councils in the Borough and Eton Town Council participate in the PPI scheme.

Additionally, two Parish Councils (Cookham and Old Windsor) undertake routine vegetation clearance on the public rights of way networks in their area.

The British Horse Society, East Berks Ramblers and National Trust are also members of the Parish Paths Initiative. The scheme operates a rolling condition survey of all public rights of way in the borough, carried out in partnership with the East Berks Ramblers.

During 2019/20 projects carried out by the PPI included an information board in Eton Wick, surface improvements in Datchet and Sunninghill, and work on a new Wraybury walks leaflet.

2.5 Local Access Forum

The Local Access Forum is "a partnership to promote and develop sustainable access for the growing benefit of the environment and all in our community". Established in 2003, the Forum is statutory advisory group which advises the Council on the management and improvement of public access to land in the Royal Borough for open-air recreation.

In 2019 the Forum established two working groups to focus on significant hot topics to investigate in detail and feedback to the main Forum. These are: the Accessibility Working Group and the Horse Riding/Multi-User Working Group.

The Forum publishes an annual report detailing its activities. Forum membership details, agendas, minutes, and annual reports are available on the Local Access Forum pages of the borough website:

http://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200215/rights_of_way/452/local_access_forum

2.6 *Thames Path National Trail*

Natural England promotes the Thames Path as one of 13 National Trails in England.

The Thames Path passes through Hurley, Cookham, Maidenhead, Eton, Windsor, Datchet and Old Windsor, where possible following the course of the river. In places the Trail crosses the Thames to follow the Buckinghamshire side of the river.

The Royal Borough recognises both the national and local importance of the Thames Path and is represented on the Thames Path Partnership, which also includes representatives from all Highway Authorities along the route of the Trail, as well as the River Thames Society, the Environment Agency, the Ramblers, Cycling UK, Transport for London, and Natural England.

Volunteers organised by the Thames Path Partnership regularly monitor the condition of the Trail and undertake practical maintenance works. Information about the Trail can be found on the following website:

<http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/thames-path>

2.7 *Equestrian initiatives*

- Investigating possible upgrading of existing footpaths to bridleways, by negotiating with landowners and user groups, to improve road safety for horses and riders while considering the needs of other users. All negotiations must have clear resolutions and ensure that all users are satisfied with any changes to the status of the footpath(s) before modifications take place, including adequate width and, where appropriate, segregation of users.
- Continuing with an initiative to designate highway verges as horse margins by identifying suitable areas adjacent to the carriageways and adapting the maintenance of highway verges to enable safe use by horse

riders. As an example, a new horse margin has been created adjacent to the Henley Road, to create a safe riding link between Rose Lane and Hodgedale Lane.

- Continuing with an initiative to identify and establish multi-use paths to allow horse riders to use existing cycleways and other tracks where appropriate, and where suitable surfaces can be provided, in conjunction with landowners and Parish Councils.
- Work was completed in 2019 in partnership with Highways England to create an off-road link between Bradenham Lane and Hurley Lane in Bisham. A permitted bridleway was also created adjacent to Bradenham Lane in agreement with the landowner. Both paths were officially opened in December 2019 and have been well received by users.
- Development and promotion of circular riding routes where appropriate, avoiding main roads and busy crossings where possible. This includes investigation into possible routes through and around Ashley Hill, Hurley about which we are currently in discussion with the landowner.
- Improvements to gates to make them more 'horse rider friendly'.

3 WELL MAINTAINED

3.1 *Maintenance and Enforcement*

Path condition surveys are carried out on a 3-year rolling programme, with approximately 1/3 of the network being surveyed each year. Volunteers from the East Berks Ramblers carry out these surveys on the Council's behalf.

During these surveys the volunteers also check whether problems that had previously been reported and entered onto the Council's rights of way database have since been resolved, and this helps to keep the records up to date.

Priority criteria for dealing with maintenance and enforcement problems are listed on page 14 of this Milestones Statement.

The table in **Appendix 9** includes a list of outstanding reported problems on public rights of way in the borough

3.2 *Noteworthy current issues*

- Improvements to the Thames Path National Trail
- Multi-user and horse-riding provision – to aid the most vulnerable road users
- Accessibility to open spaces for people with mobility issues.

3.3 *Access for people with special needs*

When dealing with the provision of stiles and gates, an assessment is made to ensure that the appropriate type of barrier is used, and that wherever possible gaps are used rather than stiles or gates.

The Council places high priority on the use of effective designs of barrier to facilitate use by those with restricted mobility, the elderly, people with young children in pushchairs etc.

Service standards, including British Standards for path furniture, are set out on page 15 of this Milestones Statement.

4 LEGALLY DEFINED

4.1 *Definitive Map and Statement*

The Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way are legal documents that provide conclusive evidence of the existence and status of public rights of way. It is therefore important that these documents are kept up to date and accurate.

The Map and Statement was last updated in 2015 (effective date 1st November 2015) including all legal changes made since the previous consolidated Map was published in 2008.

Copies of the Map and Statement are available for inspection in Maidenhead and Windsor central libraries, Borough Council offices, and can also be viewed on the borough website.

Copies are also held by user groups and relevant extracts are held by Parish Councils.

4.2 *Modification Orders*

Definitive Map Modification Orders are made to update the definitive map, to show the effect of legal changes to public rights of way. Copies of the Orders are sent to all those who hold copies of the Definitive Map and Statement, so that up to date information is available

4.3 *Rights of way database*

The Definitive Map is shown on the Council's GIS system. The Council also maintains a comprehensive public rights of way database, the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS). Information is held on path maintenance records, condition surveys, reported problems, landownership details, and path furniture such as stiles, gates, bridges and signposts.

These electronic records enable the rights of way officers to record and prioritise problems and respond to public requests for information quickly and effectively.

4.4 *Applications to modify the Definitive Map (claims)*

There are no outstanding applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO's)

A statement of priorities for dealing with applications for DMMOs is shown in Appendix 2.

4.5 *Changes to the network*

Applications for changes to the network are occasionally received from landowners or developers and can also be initiated by the Council where changes are in the public interest.

Planning applications are checked by planning officers who consult the Public Rights of Way team and the East Berks Ramblers on applications that may affect public rights of way.

The Local Access Forum is also consulted on planning applications affecting public rights of way and is sent weekly lists of all new planning applications received.

Where appropriate, conditions and informatives are then included in planning consents.

Policy R14 in the borough's current Local Plan states that: ***"The Borough Council will safeguard and enhance the public rights of way network and recreational cycle routes"***

Following a recommendation from the Local Access Forum, "Planning Position Statements" have been passed to the Council's Planning team dealing with the emerging Borough Local Plan, as set out in **Appendix 8**.

5 WELL PUBLICISED

5.1 Leaflets produced by the Council

- Public Rights of Way information booklet (for landowners and path users)
- Public Rights of Way and your Gardens, Hedges and Trees (information leaflet for householders adjacent to rights of way)
- Ploughing, crops and paths: a practical guide (information leaflet for farmers and landowners)
- The Green Way
- Knowl Hill Bridleway Circuit
- Cookham Bridleway Circuit
- Cycling in Windsor and Maidenhead
- Cookham Easy Going Route
- Windsor Great Park Easy Going Route

All the above leaflets are available from the Borough Council free of charge.

The leaflets are currently being converted into a more web and printer-friendly version to make them easier for people to access online.

5.2 Other books and publications

Sunningdale, Bray, Datchet, Waltham St Lawrence, White Waltham and Hurley Parish Councils have all produced their own walks leaflets, with help from the Borough Council through the Parish Paths Initiative:

- “Walk, discover, enjoy - your Sunningdale” (Sunningdale Parish Council)
- “Parish Millennium Rights of Way Map” (Bray Parish Council)
- Holyport health walk (Bray Parish Council)
- “Foot and Cycle Paths in and around Datchet” (Datchet Parish Council)
- Waltham St Lawrence Parish Paths and Circular Walks (Waltham St Lawrence Parish Council)
- White Waltham Parish and Paths (White Waltham Parish Council)

- Hurley Circular Walks (Hurley Parish Council).

The above leaflets are available from the Parish Councils free of charge.

The Environment Agency has published a leaflet showing the paths along the Jubilee River (available from the EA 08708 506506)

The East Berks Ramblers, the British Horse Society, Sustrans and commercial publishers have produced a number of leaflets, booklets and books promoting routes along public rights of way locally, including the Thames Path National Trail.

5.3 Guided walks and rides

Guided walks and rides encourage the public to enjoy the countryside. The Ramblers organize a programme of walks for its members and the general public, and the British Horse Society organize various rides and events using the boroughs public rights of way and minor roads network.

5.4 Borough Website

The Borough’s Public Rights of Way web pages can be accessed directly at

https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200215/rights_of_way

The web pages contain detailed information including publications, report forms, and maps of all public rights of way in the borough.

Public rights of way are also shown on the ‘Neighbourhood Maps’ on the borough website.

The web pages also include Registers of applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO’s), and landowner’s statutory declarations, together with application forms and guidance notes for path diversion orders.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

6.1 *Monitoring/Performance indicator*

The following ‘performance indicator’ which provides a useful benchmark for assessing the condition of the network:

“The percentage of the total length of footpaths and other rights of way which were easy to use by members of the public”

The indicator is calculated using a methodology originally devised by the County Surveyors Society and is widely adopted by Highway Authorities to enable benchmarking between individual authorities’ performance.

The borough’s indicator is based on information obtained from condition surveys undertaken by volunteers from the East Berks Ramblers, and the indicator result for the borough in 2019/20 was 93% (against a target of **95%**).

6.2 *Review*

The Council is committed to working with all interested parties in carrying out public rights of way work in the borough.

This Milestones Statement and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan will continue be reviewed and published annually, and the Milestones Targets will be discussed with the Local Access Forum, and Parish/Town Council’s so that co-ordinated priorities can be adopted.

APPENDIX 1

Consultation on the Milestones Statement

The following organisations were consulted on the 2020/21 Milestones Statement

- Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel
- All Parish and Town Councils in the borough
- The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum, which includes members of the following organisations:

East Berks Ramblers

British Horse Society

Royal East Berks Agricultural Association

National Trust

National Farmers Union

APPENDIX 2

Statement of priorities for dealing with applications to amend the Definitive Map

The Council aims to process uncontested applications for Public Path Orders and Definitive Map Modification Orders (claims) within 1 year of receipt.

Applications for Orders to amend the Definitive Map and Statement (claims) will be prioritised based on the following factors:

Highest Priority: Closure very likely (e.g. area subject to planning application).

Path currently blocked by planting, fencing etc. which could be removed.

Path currently blocked by permanent structure e.g. building.

Possible threat to path, and/or partial blocking likely.

Lowest Priority: No recognised threat, and route useable by the public.

APPENDIX 3

Statement of priorities for dealing with maintenance and enforcement problems

Maintenance and enforcement problems will be prioritised on the basis of the following factors:

Safety of users

Level of usage

Extent of obstruction of definitive line (i.e. completely obstructed or partially obstructed)

Benefit to public once resolved

Cost/time effectiveness in resolving problem

Number/level of complaints

Potential for deterioration of the problem

Age of the problem

Note: for efficient working practice, lower priority problems will be dealt with alongside higher priority problems where appropriate, for example if they are in the same locality or involve the same landowner. Lower priority problems will also be tackled as required in order to meet specific targets.

APPENDIX 4

Service standards

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has the following key aims in relation to public rights of way:

- To ensure that the borough's public rights of way network is properly maintained and well publicised
- To ensure that public rights of way are safeguarded and enhanced
- To help landowners and users to understand their responsibilities and rights
- To consult and work with interested parties to achieve the provision of a well-maintained and signed network of public rights of way

We will liaise with and involve:

- Local Access Forum
- Disability and Inclusion Forum
- Parish and Town Councils
- Natural England
- East Berks Ramblers
- Disabled Ramblers
- British Horse Society
- British Driving Society
- Cyclists' Touring Club
- Sustrans
- Vehicle User Groups
- National Farmers' Union
- Country Land & Business Association
- Thames Path Management Group
- Any other interested parties

We will comply with British Standards on all new structures and furniture, and where possible, upon replacement of existing structures or furniture. BS 5709-2018 gaps, gates and stiles; order of preference; a) gap, b) gate, c) kissing gate, d) stile. Barbed wire, razor wire, farm type electrical fences and suchlike should not normally be used in the vicinity of structures covered by this standard, but where these wires are necessary then assessment should be made of the effect they have on the safety and convenience of people in the vicinity. BS8300: part 1 2018: (Designing accessible and inclusive environments).

We will carry out:

- A condition survey of each path every three years based on a rolling programme of six-monthly surveys (in partnership with East Berks Ramblers Association).
- An inspection of rights of way in a dangerous condition within one working day of notification, make safe within one working day of inspection, and inform correspondents of the results within three working days.

We will use our powers:

- To enforce removal of any obstructions to the public rights of way network within three months of inspection, enforce compliance with the Rights of Way Act 1990 (ploughing etc) in accordance with the

Council's Ploughing and Cropping procedure below, and give consideration to all available statutory powers including prosecutions where appropriate.

Ploughing and cropping procedure:

1. Make first contact with farmer via telephone and email (with a read receipt) to explain the report or issue. This telephone call and email should agree the date with the farmer for the resolution of the issue based upon the statutory 14-day deadline. Explain that if the works are not done by this deadline the issue will be reported to the Rural Payments Agency.
2. Take the 14-day deadline from the date that the farmer is first contacted by the Council. Where necessary, agree an extension of this deadline for up to 28 days, for example where ground conditions do not allow proper reinstatement within the normal 14-day period.
3. Request the farmer to contact RBWM when the reinstatement works have been done, if possible, providing photographic evidence. If the agreed deadline has not been met, the breach of regulations should then be reported to the Rural Payments Agency.
4. If the path has not been cleared and the path reinstated by the stated deadline the Council to arrange for a contractor to clear the path and reinstate the surface (as required) and the cost of these works is re-charged to the farmer. This issue is then closed.

APPENDIX 5

Definitive map modification order applications (claims) currently being investigated

Parish	Claim no	Claim date	Path description		Current status
			From	To	
No current claims					

APPENDIX 6

Achievement of Milestones Targets 2019/20 (March 2020)

WM1 To ensure that all public rights of way are easy to use by members of the public (former Best Value Performance Indicator 178). Target for 2019-20: 95%	[note surveys undertaken in Spring and Autumn by East Berks Ramblers] 93%
WM2 To carry out major surface improvements or vegetation clearance on 10 public rights of way. (FP =footpath, BR = bridleway, RB = restricted byway)	
Bisham FP 23 (Stubbings)	surface improvements
Cookham FP 56 (Widbrook Common)	major vegetation clearance
Datchet FP5 (Montagu Road-Green Lane)	surface improvements
Datchet FP8/Windsor FP10 (Thames Path)	major vegetation clearance
Hurley FP 50 (Knowl Hill)	major vegetation clearance
Maidenhead RB 72 (Nightingale Lane)	surface improvements
Maidenhead RB 70 (Malders Lane)	major vegetation clearance
Sunninghill RB 24 (St Georges Lane)	surface improvements
Waltham St Lawrence RB 35 (Uncles Lane)	drainage improvements
Windsor BR1 (off Wolf Lane)	major vegetation clearance
	Total: 10
WM3 To repair or replace 7 bridges.	
Bray FP 31(off Primrose Lane)	bridge repaired
Bray FP 54 (Oakley Green)	bridge repaired
Bray FP30 (junction with Primrose Lane)	bridge replacement
Bray FP 57 (Oakley Green)	bridge repaired
Cox Green FP 6/8 (Ockwells farm)	anti-slip, ramp and handrails
Datchet FP 9 (Thames Path)	handrails repaired
Maidenhead FP 13 (off Blackamoor Lane)	deck replaced
Waltham St Lawrence FP 34 (off Hungerford Lane)	2 bridges repaired
Waltham St Lawrence FP 30 (off Pool Lane)	bridge repaired
Waltham St Lawrence FP 38 (off Downfield Lane)	bridge repaired
	Total: 11
WELL PUBLICISED	
WP1 To produce 1 new Parish rights of way leaflet	Total: 1 Eton Wick information board and leaflet.
WP2 To assist others to produce effective promotional material: minimum of 1 new or updated publication.	Total: a review of all leaflets on website is currently in progress

IMPROVING ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY	
AC1 <i>Create 1 new strategic path, either public right of way or permitted, to fill identified gaps in the public rights of way network as/when opportunities arise.</i>	<p>New Permitted Bridleway/cycleway adjacent to Bradenham Lane.</p> <p>Battlemead Common; New Permitted Footpath (Thames Path to Widbrook Common)</p> <p>New Permitted Footpath linking Cookham FP 49 and 50 (Green Way)</p> <p>Total: 3</p>
AC2 <i>To make 10 physical access improvements, including the replacement of stiles with gates or gaps, to facilitate use by those with special needs, the elderly, people with pushchairs etc.</i>	
Cookham FP34 (Cockmarsh to Winter Hill)	Installation of steps, bench and handrail
Cookham FP32 (r/o Lester Cottages)	replaced small kissing gate with swing gate
Cookham FP 55 (Thames Path)	surface improvements
Cookham FP 60 (Thames Path)	surface improvements
Cox Green FP 11 (Ockwells Park)	bridge and boardwalk replaced
Maidenhead FP 89 (The Green Way)	disabled accessible linking path created from 'The Loftings'
Maidenhead FP51 and FP48 (rear of Altwood Road)	surface improvements
Windsor Bridleway 2 (Roses Lane)	surface improvements and vegetation clearance
Walt St Lawrence FP 23 (off Pool Lane)	stile replaced with gate
Permitted Bridleway/cycleway adjacent to A404 (near Bradenham Lane)	Installation of safety fencing and surface improvements
	Total: 10

APPENDIX 7

Site specific projects in “Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026

(updates in bold)

Hurley, Shottesbrooke & the Walthams

Ref	Proposal (not in priority order)
1	Work with Wokingham Borough Council to secure a new off-road horse-riding link between Star Lane (Hurley) and Canhurst Lane by upgrading Wargrave Footpath 42
2	A crossing over the Thames across Hurley Lock and weirs
3	Upgrade White Waltham Footpath 9/National Cycle Route 4 to permitted bridleway. <i>(April 2015 update: the landowner has declined a proposal to create this new pedestrian link: however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
4	(a) New route along the Cut from Bray Wick upstream to Westleymill on the Bracknell Forest boundary <i>(March 2019 update: new section of streamside footpath has been included within layout of Ockwells Park/Thriftwood, Cox Green)</i> (b) Establish a new path from Windmills (White Waltham Footpath 20) to Howe Lane near Howe Lane Bridge
5	Work with Wokingham Borough Council to upgrade Waltham St. Lawrence Footpath 9 / Ruscombe Footpath 4 for horse riding use
6	Creation of a path from Great Wood, White Waltham, south of the B3024 road to the track at Pond Wood Farm
7	Create a route for carriage drivers from Beenhams Road in White Waltham to Mare Lane in Binfield.
8	Improve bridleway links between RBWM and identified horse riding networks in Wokingham and Bracknell Forest
9	Direct crossings over/under the M4 avoiding the use of road bridges

Cookham & Bisham

10	Create a new bridleway/horse margin connecting the end of Hurley Lane with the eastern end of Bradenham Lane using existing highway land alongside the A404 northbound carriageway: <i>(March 2020 update: route opened in Dec 2019, in conjunction with Highways England)</i>
11	Create a new right of way for non-motorised users linking Burchetts Green Roundabout to Permitted Bridleway 20, following the route of the A404 on its western side <i>(June 2015 update: proposal not supported by landowners, Temple Golf Club)</i>

12	Create a link between Bisham Bridleway 22 and the A404 tunnel at Dungrove Hill Lane <i>(March 2014 update: the landowner has declined a proposal to create this new link: however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
13	Upgrade Bisham Footpath 19 (Michael's Path) to a bridleway and divert the path to adjoin the disused Henley Road. <i>(March 2018 update: the landowner has declined a proposal to upgrade this footpath, however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
14	Improve links between Bisham and Bisham Woods for non-motorised traffic, particularly regarding crossing the A404 Bisham Roundabout. <i>(February 2016 update: Highways England have decided not to proceed with the proposed alterations to this roundabout, however they are keeping the junction performance under review to identify whether small scale improvements can be made.)</i>
15	Extend the southern end of Bisham Bridleway 22 to connect with Dungrove Hill Lane
16	Upgrade part of Bisham Footpath 17 to a Bridleway
17	Upgrade Bisham Footpath 23 to a bridleway, to link Burchetts Green to Stubbings and Maidenhead Thicket <i>(March 2018 update: the landowner has declined a proposal to upgrade this footpath, however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
18	Create a cycling route between Hurley and Temple (a) Create a route adjacent to Bisham Footpath 21 to allow cycle use (b) Upgrade part of Bisham Footpath 21 and Hurley Footpath 9 to allow cycle use and link with Mill Lane
19	Improve the surface of Bisham Restricted Byway 11 and Bisham Bridleway 12 <i>(March 2017 update: surface improvements completed)</i>
20	Route from Mill Lane to Odney Road, Cookham – perhaps across Odney Common <i>(March 2009 update: the landowner has declined a proposal to create this new pedestrian link: however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
21	Access improvements at Cookham Lock to provide high degree of accessibility to the site.
22	Upgrade Kennel Lane (Cookham Footpath 22) to a bridleway <i>(March 2009 update: one of the affected landowners has declined a proposal to upgrade this footpath to bridleway: however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
23	Crossings over the Thames: (a) from Hythe End to south bank avoiding M25 (b) from Magna Carta Island to north bank (c) from Wraysbury riverside to Old Windsor

	<p>(d) from Ham Island to Sunnymeads</p> <p>(e) from Datchet centre to Home Park</p> <p>(f) from north side of Eton to south bank</p> <p>(g) from Windsor near Slough railway bridge to north bank</p> <p>(h) from west side of Windsor (A308) to north bank</p> <p>(i) from Bray village to east bank</p> <p>(j) from west bank to southern tip of National Trust Cliveden Park</p> <p>(k) upstream of Maidenhead where towpath crosses to Bucks bank</p> <p>(l) near Cookham Lock where towpath crosses back again</p> <p>(m) from south side of Cookham bridge to towpath on Lock Cut</p> <p>(n) from Spade Oak Farm to south bank</p> <p>(o) downstream of A404 bridge</p> <p>(p) at Bisham Church</p> <p>(q) from south bank to Medmenham</p>
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Maidenhead & Cox Green

24	<p>Fill in missing links on the “Millennium Walk” from Hurley to Maidenhead Riverside / Cliveden Reach connecting to the Thames Path by securing a path from:</p> <p>(a) Nightingale Lane to the Green Way, subject to rail crossing provision</p> <p>(b) Lower Cookham Road at Widbrook Common to the Thames Path.</p> <p><i>(March 2014 update): Discussions are being held with the landowners about the proposed new footpath.</i></p> <p><i>(March 2015 update): the landowners have declined to agree the creation of a new footpath across this land; however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened).</i></p> <p><i>(March 2020 update: new footpath created across “Battlemead Common” to complete missing link)</i></p>
25	<p>Create the following paths from the 1999 Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan:</p> <p>(a) a path from Lower Cookham Road at Widbrook Common to the Thames Path</p> <p><i>(March 2020 update: new footpath created across “Battlemead Common” to complete missing link)</i></p>

	<p>(b) a route from the Causeway at Braywick Park to Old Mill Lane via Bray Bridge</p> <p>(c) make the Green Way accessible to mobility restricted users</p> <p><i>(March 2014 update: upgrades to footbridges on Cookham FP 48 to enable disabled access: works ordered)</i></p> <p><i>(March 2015 update: improvements to gates at National Trust land, and stepped footbridge replaced with step-free accessible bridge)</i></p> <p><i>(March 2015 update: steps south of Chapel Arches being replaced with a ramp, in association with redevelopment at former cinema site)</i></p>
26	<p>To establish a continuous riverside route of the Thames Path in Maidenhead beside the riverbank from the landing steps opposite Thames Hotel to Bridge Gardens</p> <p><i>(March 2010 update: the footpath opposite the Thames Hotel was extended in 2007, however a gap of approximately 30m remains in order to complete the link to Bridge Gardens)</i></p> <p><i>(March 2011 update: funding options for completing the remaining section of missing link are being explored in discussion with the Ramblers)</i></p> <p><i>(March 2015 update: Path Creation Agreement secured, and new roadside footpath opened north of Bridge Gardens)</i></p>
27	<p>A footbridge from Boulter's Island to east bank of the Thames, which would link the Thames Path and Jubilee River, and the walks in Taplow</p> <p><i>(March 2013 update: a new footbridge across the Thames at Boulter's Lock is included in a Draft Development Brief for the Mill Lane, Taplow site produced by South Bucks District Council)</i></p> <p><i>(March 2015 update: new footbridge design agreed, subject to redevelopment proposal on east side of the river being approved by South Bucks District Council)</i></p> <p><i>(March 2019 update: new footbridge opened from Ray Mill Island/Boulter's Lock to Taplow Riverside")</i></p>
28	<p>Create a new foot/cycle bridge across the Cut and new footpath-cycleway linking Braywick Park to Bray Road adjacent to Oldfield Primary School</p> <p><i>(March 2019 update: new bridge and footpath-cycle way opened September 2018, named "Margaret's Bridge" in memory of Margaret Bowdery MBE)</i></p>
29	<p>(a) Upgrade Kinghorn Lane (Maidenhead Footpath 30) to a cycle route</p> <p>(b) <i>March 2009 addition:</i> Reinstate the definitive width of Kinghorn Lane (Maidenhead FP 30) to provide segregated route for cyclists</p>
30	Create a continuous streamside footpath around "The Maidenhead Ring", including the Moor Cut and The Green Way, in association with the Maidenhead Waterways project
31	Upgrading Thames Path to allow cyclists to share route

Bray, Windsor and Eton

32	An extension of the Green Way from Hibbert Road in Braywick to the River Thames at Summerleaze Bridge to provide a traffic free route for walkers, cyclists and disabled users.
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33	Promote a circular route around Bray village, and around the old Biffa pits
34	Improve bridleway links between Eton, Dorney and Bray working with Bucks County Council and other neighbouring authorities.
35	A riverside path should be created in parallel to the Thames Path on the opposite side of the river
36	A route from Bray to Windsor, past Bray Film Studios
37	Create a circular route around Eton and the Boveney area for mobility restricted users <i>(March 2012 update): surface improvements carried out to paths in this area in conjunction with access to Eton-Dorney Lake for the 2012 Olympics, facilitating use by mobility restricted users.</i>
38	Expand the multi-user routes in Eton to surrounding areas and link with other bridleway routes. <i>(March 2017 update: Discussions with landowners to allow horse riding use of the Jubilee River cycleway. At present permission has not been granted due to concerns about path width and potential issues at M4 underpass)</i>
39	Create of a path between Sutherland Grange public open space, via the rear of the Centrica complex, and the access road to the Racecourse Marina
40	Secure a Public Right of Way or permitted link at end of Bridleway 11a Windsor, and a new footway along Winkfield Road to create a circular walk
41	Crossings over the Thames to link villages /settlements on either bank with paths on the other, and to link isolated bits of the old towpath

Datchet, Horton, Old Windsor & Wraysbury

42	Access around the Queen Mother reservoir, Datchet <i>(March 2011 update): The landowner has declined to agree the creation of a new footpath across this land; however, if circumstances change this project could be re-opened</i>
43	Improve and ensure long term accessibility (including possible bank repair / diversion) Datchet Footpath 8 <i>(March 2009 update: handrails installed by landowner in 2008)</i> <i>(March 2015 update: discussion with landowner about potential for widening the footpath)</i> <i>(March 2016 update: landowner has declined to widen the path, bank repair improvements completed to secure the riverbank)</i>
44	Thames side paths: <div style="margin-left: 40px;"> (a) along the banks of Ham Island (b) south bank of Thames from Home Park (c) along the shores of the big islands downstream of Cookham </div>

	(d) south bank between Bisham and Temple
45	<p>Create the following paths from the 1981 Horton, Datchet and Wraysbury Local Plan, depending on the working arrangements with the landowner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) footpath from Datchet Footpath 7 southwest around the Queen Mother Reservoir, over the Horton Road (B376) to the railway line (b) footpath from Datchet Footpath 5 running southeast on the northern side of the railway line to Datchet Footpath 6 (c) footpath along northern side of the Thames from Albert Bridge linking with Datchet Footpath 6 (d) footpath from Welley Road, Wraysbury along southern side of the railway line to Wraysbury Footpath 6 (e) footpath from Park Avenue, Wraysbury to Kingswood Creek (f) footpath from northern end of Douglas Lane (at termination of Wraysbury Footpath 6) to The Green (g) footpath running from High Street car park in Wraysbury, around southern part of lakes parallel to Staines Road to Staines Road near termination of Wraysbury Footpath 4 (h) footpath running from Horton Footpath 3 around northern part of lakes to Stanwell Road (i) footpath from Station Road, Wraysbury, to Stanwell Road running along the western bank of the Colne Brook. (j) footpath from Hythe End Lane to southern end of Ferry Lane (Wraysbury Footpath 3) (k) bridleway from Embankment to Magna Carta Lane in Wraysbury (l) bridleway from Horton Road, alongside the Queen Mother Reservoir to Majors Farm Road (B370) (m) Footpath from Kingswood Creek to Old Ferry Drive (n) Footpath from Stanwell Road, northeast along Mill Lane, running east along the Colne Brook.
46	New route along the Colne Brook

Ascot, Sunninghill & Sunningdale

47	Disabled friendly routes should be investigated at Eton, Sunninghill and Ascot, Sunningdale, Knowl Hill, White Waltham and Hurley Lock
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	<i>(December 2015 update: replacement of stepped footbridge west of Hurley Lock completed)</i> <i>(March 2015 update: surface improvements at St Georges Lane and Wells Lane)</i>
48	Extend Sunningdale Footpath 13 through to Sunninghill <i>(March 2009 update: feasibility studies have indicated that this project is not viable, however if circumstances change this project could be re-opened)</i>
49	Create a path from Ascot Station westwards parallel to the railway line to Kings Ride <i>(March 2007 update: Network Rail are unwilling to consider this proposed footpath creation)</i>
50	New footpath between Ascot High Street and Ascot Rail Station. <i>(March 2017 update: Path Creation Order confirmed, and path opened 1st February 2017)</i>
51	New footpath or cycle route from Ascot Centre to Ascot Rail Station
52	New footpath from St Georges Lane to Ascot Rail Station
53	New footpath or cycle route from Heatherwood Hospital to Prince Albert Drive
54	New footpath or cycle route between Prince Albert Drive and Ascot High Street around Heatherwood Hospital
55	New footpath or cycle route linking Bridge Road to Kings Road
56	New footpath or cycle route from Cavendish Meads to railway line
57	New footpath from Farm Close to Upper Village Road
58	New footpath linking Allen's Field to Swinley Forest
59	New footpath from Coombe Lane to Victory Fields Recreation Ground
60	New cycle route from Ascot High Street east of Station Hill to South Ascot via the A330 viaduct
61	New cycle route alongside Winkfield Road from the entrance to Ascot Racecourse and Royal Ascot Golf Course to the junction of A330 and A329 London Road/Ascot High Street
62	New cycle route from A330 Winkfield Road alongside New Mile Road, Cheapside Road and Watersplash Lane to B383 Sunninghill Road
63	Upgrade Sunninghill Footpath 5 to a bridleway usable by cyclists
64	Upgrade Sunninghill Footpath 1 to a bridleway usable by cyclists
65	New footpath from Liddell Way to Whiteladies Park
66	New footpath or cycle route from Heatherwood Hospital to Ascot Rail Station
67	New footpath from North Ascot to Ascot High Street across Ascot racecourse and through tunnel

68	New footpath east of Ascot Racecourse alongside Winkfield Road
69	New footpath through Silwood Park from Sunninghill Footpath 2 to Buckhurst Road
70	New footpath along Mill Lane linking into Windsor Great Park
71	New footpath alongside Whitmore Lane linking Sunningdale Byway 4, Sunningdale Footpath 2 and A329 London Road
72	New footpath alongside railway between Beech Hill Road to Kings Road
73	New footpath or cycle route from Sunninghill to Charters School on the edge of the railway and around school sites
74	New footpath from Sunningdale Park parallel to Larch Avenue
75	New footpath from Sunningdale Park / Larch Avenue to Park Drive
76	New footpath within Sunningdale Park linking Silwood Road to Station Road
77	New footpath around Southern border of Sunninghill Park parallel to Park Drive
78	New footpath from Sunningdale Park to Station Road
79	New footpath from Sunningdale Footpath 1 to Windsor Great Park adjacent to London Road
80	New footpath or cycle route linking Beech Hill Road over railway line to Charters School
81	New footpath from Bagshot Road to Charters School along Broadlands Drive
82	New footpath from Sunning Avenue into Charters School
83	Record the existing path round Beaufort Gardens loop to Burleigh Lane
84	Record the existing path from Kings Ride west of Heatherwood Hospital to the railway line
85	Record the existing path between Vernon Drive and Ruston Way
86	Record the existing path around Allen's Field
87	Record the existing path around the woods off Allen's Field
88	Record the existing path from Woodlands Ride to Allen's Field
89	Record the existing path along pine tree ridge near Liddell Way
90	Record the existing path to the west of Allen's Field
91	Record the existing path From Carroll Crescent via Beaumont Court to adopted path onto Bouldish Farm Road
92	Record the existing path between Elizabeth Gardens and Brockenhurst Road

93	Record the existing path from Armitage Court through open land / woods off St Mary's Hill
94	Record the existing path through woodland north west of Coombe Lane
95	Record the existing footpath round woodland off Coombe Lane
96	Record the existing path from St George's Lane to Coombe Lane
97	Record the existing path from Coombe Lane to Victory Field through Tom Green's Field
98	Record the existing path around the woods off Allen's Field
99	Record the existing path between New Road and Kennel Ride
100	Record the existing path between Winkfield Road and Oaklands Drive
101	Record the existing path across Ascot Racecourse
102	Record the existing path behind Hilltop Close
103	Record the existing path south of Hilltop Close to Sunninghill Footpath 2
104	Record the existing path from Hilltop Close to Playground
105	Record the existing path from Park Drive to Sunningdale Park
106	Record the existing path from Queen's Road Car Park to High Street by Chapmans
107	Record the existing path through woodland adjacent to Blythewood recreation area
108	Record the existing path through protected woodland by Blythewood recreation area
109	Record the existing path to/from green on Hanover Estate
110	Record the existing path under Ascot station and to Lyndhurst Rd
111	Record the existing path between Sutherland Chase and Blythewood Lane
112	Record the existing path from Cross Rd into Sunningdale Golf Course
113	Record the existing path between the A30 and the RBWM Car Park
114	Record the existing path around RBWM car park at Sunningdale
115	Record the existing path between Priory Road and Richmond Road
116	Record the existing path between Ridgemount Road and Priory Road to the level crossing
117	Record the existing path between Cedar Drive and Sunningdale Footpath 13
118	Record the existing path through Broomhall Recreation Ground
119	Record the existing paths linking from Hamilton and Greenways Drives to London Road A30

120	Record the existing path through Sunningdale Park from Old Sunningdale via Silwood Rd to Sunninghill via Larch Avenue
121	Record the existing path through Sunningdale Park from Silwood Rd to Sunninghill or Sunningdale
122	Record the existing path from Dale Lodge Rd via Leacroft (west) to Coworth Rd
123	Record the existing path from Dale Lodge Rd via Leacroft (east) to Coworth Rd

APPENDIX 8

Planning Position Statements

Guiding Principles for Planning to improve local access

1. All new proposed development should refer and comply with the *Policy IF5 of Rights of Way and Access to the countryside* while designing new access routes and paths.
2. All access should be consistent with the Borough's *Public Rights of Way Management and Improvement Plan 2016-2026*.
3. All access improvements, routes, locks and POS should be dedicated as highway or protected legally in some way.
4. Access new developments should aim to provide accessibility to all and improve accessibility for disabled or elderly people and families with pushchairs.
5. All new access structures should comply with BS5709:2006 for gaps, gates & stiles, and all new routes comply with *Environment Agency Access for All design guide* and RWBM ROWMIP.
6. On sites prone to flooding, paths need to be constructed with suitable permeable surface to ensure it can withstand and recover from a flood event.
7. If the path is a designated escape route it needs to be usable in the event of flooding and remain open at all times with suitable lighting for night-time use.
8. When considering fencing a path /route it should allow visual permeability and open views to create safe access route. The fencing should suitably blend into the character of the space without being detrimental to the aesthetics.
9. Boundaries should not be designed to deliberately curtail any views.
10. Paths should be wide enough with green verges so that they do not become narrow alleys. Footpaths should be wide enough to allow the use as cycle paths.
11. Enhancements should be sought through CIL contributions

Specific Advice – Allocated Sites Policies Maps in draft Borough Local Plan

1. Map Reference HA6

- a. Access to Braywick Leisure Centre and town centre used by walkers, cyclists and should be min 3m wide.
- b. Improve ways across Braywick road not just through the site and provide a dedicated pedestrian route to cross the road safely for school and residents on the other side of Braywick Leisure Centre.

2. Map Reference HA7 & HA 8

- a. Improve/ enhance existing PROW to offer residents at HA7 &, HA6 HA8 Cox Green etc access to Ockwells Park.
 - b. Create a network of ‘green ways’ within these sites; this green network can be an activity network connecting Ockwells Park and Greenway.
- 3. Map Reference HA11**
 - a. Potential for permitted path to be dedicated ROW
- 4. Map Reference HA19**
 - a. Missing link added from lower Cookham Road to the Thames path.
- 5. Map Reference HA20**
 - a. Area is bounded by PORW. Development should aim to increased use as well as connectivity to Ockwells Park.
 - b. PROW should be enhanced by the development.
- 6. Map Reference HA21**
 - a. Potential missing link – millennium walks and link across Railway Bridge.
 - b. Improve access to Furze Platt School
- 7. Map Reference HA22**
 - a. This is open access land and development here would lead to loss to accessible countryside and compensatory land would be required. However, this is not being accessed and used currently.
- 8. Map Reference HA23**
 - a. Protect and enhance bridleway.
 - b. Access to river PROW over Summerleaze bridge
 - c. Access to river at The Cut.
- 9. Map Reference HA25**
 - a. Access through the site to library, post office & park to help create better access to public amenities.
- 10. Map Reference HA26**
 - a. Crossing point across Vale Road to School & Dedworth Manor Open Space
- 11. Map Reference HA28**
 - a. Improve /Enhance safe access to New Thames Path
 - b. Footbridge to Lock Island to create a unique circular walk for the residents of the development and public.
- 12. Map Reference HA29**
 - a. Access pedestrian/ cycle path to Ballet School.
- 13. Map Reference HA30**
 - a. Improvement to pedestrian path along Station Hill will create significant improvement to pedestrian access site.
 - b. Full access from Sunninghill footpath 36 creating a gateway into Ascot Link, Station Hill & Sunninghill.

14. Map Reference HA31/32

- a. Improve access to school & cycle access to and into Ascot

15. Map Reference HA33

- a. Upgrading /Improving existing paths, new bridleway from Buckhurst Road to Sunninghill 5, potentially upgrading Sunninghill 5, thereby taking horses off London Road A329
- b. Scheme would link the great park from Ascot to Sunningdale.

16. Map Reference HA35

- a. Improve access to public amenity.
- b. Pedestrian and Cycle access through the site.

17. Map Reference HA38

- a. Pedestrian and cycle access from the site in to Windmill Road to improve access into the town centre and local facilities thereby easing pedestrian /cycle influx on Whyteladyes Lane.

18. Map Reference HA42

- a. Long term objective should be to provide access to reservoirs

19. Map Reference HA46

- a. Pedestrian /Cycle route through the site.

20. Map Reference HA48

- a. Retain & enhance entrance footpath.

Note: updated list of 'housing allocations' from the '*Borough Local Plan (2013-2033) Submission Version incorporating proposed changes October 2019*' is shown below:

Site reference		
Maidenhead		
Maidenhead Town Centre	Site	Estimated Number of Residential Units (Net)
AL1*	Nicholsons Centre, Maidenhead	500
AL2*	Land between High Street and West Street, Maidenhead	278 (22 in commitments)
AL3*	St Mary's Walk, Maidenhead	120
AL4*	York Road, Maidenhead	67 (383 in commitments)
AL5*	West Street Opportunity Area, Maidenhead	240
AL6*	Methodist Church, High Street, Maidenhead	50
AL7*	Maidenhead Railway Station	150
AL9*	Saint-Cloud Way, Maidenhead	550
AL10*	Stafferton Way Retail Park, Maidenhead	350
AL12	Land to east of Braywick Gate, Braywick	50

	Road, Maidenhead	
South West Maidenhead		
AL13	Desborough, Harvest Hill Road, South West Maidenhead	2600
Other Maidenhead		
AL23	St. Mark's Hospital , Maidenhead	54
AL24	Land east of Woodlands Park Avenue and north of Woodlands Business Park, Maidenhead	300
AL25	Land known as Spencer's Farm, north of Lutman Lane, Maidenhead	330
AL26	Land between Windsor Road and Bray Lake, south of Maidenhead	100
Windsor		
West of Windsor		
AL21	Land west of Windsor, north and south of A308, Windsor	450
AL22	Squires Garden Centre Maidenhead Road Windsor	39
Other Windsor		
AL29*	Minton Place, Victoria Street, Windsor	100
AL30	Windsor and Eton Riverside Station Car Park	30
AL31	King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor	47
Ascot		
Ascot Town Centre		
AL16*	Ascot Centre	300
AL17	Shorts waste transfer station and recycling facility, St Georges Lane, Ascot	131
AL18*	Ascot Station Car Park, Ascot	50
AL19	Englemere Lodge, London Road, Ascot	10
AL20*	Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot	250
Other Ascot		
AL32	Sandridge House, London Road, Ascot	25
Other places		
AL33	Broomhall Car Park, Sunningdale	30
AL34	White House, London Road, Sunningdale	10
AL35	Sunningdale Park, Sunningdale	230
AL36	Cookham Gas holder, Whyteladyes Lane, Cookham	50
AL37	Land north of Lower Mount Farm, Long Lane, Cookham	200
AL38	Land east of Strande Park, Cookham	20
AL39	Land at Riding Court Road and London Road, Datchet	80
AL40	Land east of Queen Mother Reservoir, Horton	100
	TOTAL	7,891
Sites marked with an asterisk (*) are allocated for mixed use development.		

APPENDIX 9

Outstanding recorded problems on public rights of way

Parish/Path number	Issue	Date reported
Bray Footpath 40 (off Windsor Road)	Muddy surface	12/02/20
Cookham Footpath 54 (off Mill Lane)	No cycling sign reported as damaged and removed	14/02/20
Eton Footpath 31 (off Meadow Lane)	Writing on sign has worn away – new sign required	06/03/20
Eton Footpath 49 (off Summerville Road)	Fly tipping requires removal	06/03/20
Hurley Bridleway 14 (off Rose Lane)	Poaching and deep mud	04/03/20
Hurley Restricted Byway 53 (off Knowl Hill Road)	Fly tipping requires removal	03/02/20
Maidenhead Restricted Byway 70 (Malders Lane)	Potholes and surface deterioration	12/02/20
Sunninghill Byway 17 (Burleigh Lane)	Ongoing issues with construction traffic	29/02/20
Waltham St Lawrence Restricted Byway 5 (Uncle's Lane)	Poaching and deep mud at northern end	04/03/20
Waltham St Lawrence Restricted Byway 30	Fallen tree	24/02/20
White Waltham Byway 24 (Pendry's Lane)	Obstruction reported preventing vehicular use	09/03/20
Windsor Bridleway 2 (Roses Lane)	Potholes	11/02/20

Further information on public rights of way in the Royal Borough, including maps of all the paths and ways, and an electronic version of this document, can be found on the Borough website:

http://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200215/rights_of_way

**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Place Directorate
Communities
Parks and Countryside Team
Town Hall, St Ives Road
Maidenhead
Berks SL6 1RF**

If you require information in an alternative format please contact the Parks and Countryside Team on 01628-683800

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

What - The LAF is a statutory body established under sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Purpose - To advise RBWM on matters that affect public access to countryside and green spaces for outdoor recreation, enjoyment and sustainable travel. It also advises the borough on its Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Milestones Statement. Working closely with the borough's Rights of Way team, agreeing and monitoring the annual Milestone targets for maintaining and improving access to the Countryside.

Who - The Forum is an independent group made up of appointed members who represent various groups that include- walkers, landowners, equestrians, cyclists, Parish Councils and those with special needs. There are also three councillors representing the borough.

Name	Representing
David Clenshaw	Rights of Way – Walking
James Copas	Land and estate management
Steve Gillions	Walking
Cllr Phil Haseler	RBWM Councillor
Lisa Hughes	Accessibility
Cllr Maureen Hunt	RBWM Councillor
Alan Keene	Land and estate management
Geoff Priest (Chair)	Open countryside, access for younger users
Dom Lethbridge (Vice-chair)	Land and Estate Management
Trisha Mentzel	Horse riding
Lynn Penfold	Wildlife Conservation
Cllr Julian Sharpe	RBWM Councillor
Anne Woodward	Horse riding

Meetings - The Forum usually holds 2 public meetings a year. The agenda and minutes of these meetings are published on the boroughs website (*insert link to relevant page*). Outside of these meetings the Forum has a number of working groups addressing specific issues and the Forum may seek volunteers with subject matter interest to join these groups.

Contact - Jacqui Wheeler Secretary of the LAF Parks and Countryside Access Officer RBWM
Email prow@rbwm.gov.uk
Geoff Priest Chairman LAF
Email geoff.priest@btopenworld.com

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RBWM Local Access Forum Riding & Multi-user Sub Group Rider Survey, March 2020

By Anne Woodward, Trisha Mentzel, Stephanie James

Mission Statement

- ▶ To improve safety and minimise risk for equestrians, who are legitimate, vulnerable road users, by expanding the off-road multi-use network and provide safe alternative linkages between PROWs.

Impact of Urbanisation in the Borough

The growth in population and subsequent number of vehicles on the roads around the Borough will further impact the on-road safety of vulnerable users.

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Year	Population (1)	Estimated # cars (2)
2001	133541	80,125
2010	143988	86.393
2019	151 422	90,853
2031	156,000	93,600

(1) Source; Public Health for Berkshire 2017

(2) Car ownership rates, RAC Foundation 2012 (605 per 1,000 population)

Multi-use PROW by Parish

Parish	Footpath (km)	Bridleways & Byways (km)	Total km	% access for multi-user
Bisham	13.15	4.75	17.90	27%
Bray	36.80	12.75	49.55	26%
Cookham	34.14	2.85	36.99	8%
Cox Green	8.40	1.40	9.79	14%
Datchet	4.76		4.76	0%
Eton	18.40	3.56	21.96	16%
Horton	1.20	1.25	2.45	51%
Hurley	31.61	13.02	44.63	29%
Maidenhead	29.80	3.04	32.83	9%
Old Windsor	4.57		4.57	0%
Shottesbrooke	3.24	1.61	4.85	33%
Sunningdale	3.55	2.00	5.56	36%
Sunninghill	11.24	4.89	16.14	30%
Waltham SL	17.73	7.21	24.94	29%
White Waltham	11.01	5.04	16.05	31%
Windsor	4.34	3.90	8.24	47%
Wraysbury	9.65		9.65	0%
	243.58	67.28	310.86	22%

- Across the Borough, only 67km out of a total 311km are accessible for horses.
- Cookham is well below the average, having 37km of PROW, but only 8% or 3km are accessible.

Government Initiatives

- ▶ The Agriculture Bill, replacing the CAP, aims to increase public access for recreation through subsidy payments to landowners & farmers.
- 55 ▶ Dept of Transport has acknowledged the issues encountered by horses on roads and confirmed a review of the Highway Code to improve safety for horse riders by implementing specific passing distances and speeds of vehicles. (Appx 5)

Rider Survey

Purpose

- ▶ To gain insights into the current riding experiences within the Borough and make recommendations on how these might be improved. The full survey can be viewed here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-K3P3SNXM7/>.

Methodology

- ▶ An on-line survey was distributed to riding clubs, livery yards, Facebook groups etc, across the Borough.
- ▶ Variety of questions regarding riding habits, on-road and off-road experiences and safety issues, as well as specific questions relating to Cookham and Knowl Hill Bridle Circuits.
- ▶ The survey was open from 16th - 31st March 2020 and attracted 129 responses, with an estimated 1,450 horses in their community. (Appx 1)

Riding Habits

- ▶ 68% of riding time is spent hacking
- ▶ Only 47% of this is off-road
- 57 ▶ 48% only hack directly from their yard
- ▶ 35% do not have any transport
- ▶ 100% wear hi-viz

On-Road Experiences

Riders were asked to recollect their experiences over previous 24 months

		Caused by vehicles	Caused by cyclists
Impact/injury/fall	> 5 incidents		.83%
	1 - 5 incidents	6.67%	3.31%
Put safety of rider and horse at risk	> 5 incidents	29.5%	4.1%
	1 - 5 incidents	53.28%	58.2%
Behaviour e.g. verbal, threats	> 5 incidents	19.67%	5.74%
	1 - 5 incidents	45%	22.95%

- 83% had experienced safety issues with vehicles
- 62% had experienced safety issues with cyclists
- 65% had experienced unpleasant/threatening behaviour from motorists
- 29% had experienced unpleasant/threatening behaviour from cyclists

Off-Road Experiences

Riders were asked to recollect their experiences over previous 24 months

		Cyclists	Dogs	Dog owners/walkers
Impact/injury/fall	> 5 incidents			
	1 - 5 incidents	6.56%		
Safety issue or dog attack	> 5 incidents	1.64%	5.74%	
	1 - 5 incidents	30.33%	52.46%	
Behaviour	> 5 incidents	.82%		2.46%
	1 - 5 incidents	12.3%		34.43%

- Cyclists were less of an issue off-road with 32% safety incidence rate
- The bigger problem lie with dogs worrying or attacking horses 58% and threatening behaviour from their owners or walkers 37%

Cookham Bridle Circuit

- ▶ Created more than 30 years ago, as a pleasant circular route around quiet country lanes, by-ways and woodland. However, as much of the route is on-road, increasing urbanisation now causes safety issues. (Appx 2)
- ▶ Cookham Parish has only 8% of the PROW accessible to horse riders, which is the 2nd lowest in the Borough, with only to Datchet, Old Windsor & Wraysbury having less.
- 60 ▶ Horses stabled in Cookham Village, can only access the route via Cookham Rise or B4447, proving harrowing for the respondents.
- ▶ Only 40% of respondents have ridden the route, 20% did not know about it.
- ▶ Those not riding the route cited the following reasons;
 - ▶ 16% too many road sections
 - ▶ 22% no transport
 - ▶ 20% no parking

Cookham Bridle Circuit (2)

61

- ▶ Respondents suggested improvements;
 - ▶ Return the route through Bisham Woods to Cookham Dean rather than ending on A302.
 - ▶ Permitted bridleway closure through Park Farm now prevents a circular route, back to Cookham Common.
 - ▶ Parking to be able to join the route in a safe place.
 - ▶ More off-road sections needed e.g. field margins, upgrading footpaths, access to Green Way
 - ▶ Unsuitable surface on Bridleway 19, from Malders Lane to Long Lane.
 - ▶ Upgrade cycleway on B4447 to multi-use

Knowl Hill Bridle Circuit

- ▶ The route was established over 20 years ago and has a northern and southern section, across the Parishes of Hurley, WSL and Shottesbrooke, dissected by A4. (Appx 3)
- ▶ 54% had ridden part of the route, 10% did not know about it
- ▶ Reasons for not riding the route;
 - ▶ 20% too many road sections
 - ▶ 30% no transport
 - ▶ 20% no parking
- ▶ Respondents suggested improvements in following areas;
 - ▶ Safe crossing of A4 (Knowl Hill and Littlewick Green)
 - ▶ Alternative to riding Warren Row Road
 - ▶ Alternative to riding Burchett's Green Lane to link up with CBC
 - ▶ Reducing speed of traffic and improving safety at junctions
 - ▶ Attention to maintenance on southern section near Castle Royale Golf Club

General sentiments

- ▶ 71% of respondents felt that riding had become less safe over the last 24 months and they would prefer to avoid riding on roads but have little option.
- 3 ▶ 61% find it extremely frustrating that over the evolution of time, many bridleways now end at a main road.
- ▶ 65% would ride more if there was a better network of off-road linkages.
- ▶ 64% were in favour of upgrading all rights of way to multi-use access.

Key Findings

- ▶ Motor vehicles presented the highest safety related issues on-road, with respondents reporting worsening of behaviour over last 24 months.
- ▶ Riding off-road, dog attacks and owners/walkers were the biggest hazard, with dogs often not under full control.
- ▶ 67% of safety incidents go unreported to Police or BHS, so official data is grossly understated.
- ▶ Increases in urbanisation and the related traffic, means that the Cookham and Knowl Hill routes are no longer the safe haven for equestrians that they were intended to be. The same goes for on-road linkages to bridleways across the Borough.
- ▶ Only 22% of PROW in the Borough are accessible for equestrians.
- ▶ Equestrians do not use roads by choice, they would prefer local safe off-road riding. Transporting horses to off-road facilities that offer permits, such as Windsor Great Park and BCA, or further afield to more rural locations, is not possible for 35% who do not have transport and not feasible, in terms of time and effort to do so on a regular basis, for the remaining 65%.

Recommendations

- ▶ Education programme for vehicles, cyclists, dog owners and riders, so that how we can harmoniously share multi-use access. This could include signage in known hotspots.
- ▶ Licencing or accreditation of commercial dog walkers, to encourage greater responsibility around horses.
- ▶ Continue to work with RBWM PROW to investigate improvements to Cookham and Knowl Hill circuits to increase both safety and usage by creating additional multi-use paths, linkages, off-road riding access e.g. Ashley Hill Forest, provision of parking and safe road crossings.
- ▶ Invite more volunteers for sub-group to fully investigate safety improvements in all areas of the Borough, particularly for Windsor and Ascot.
- ▶ Review speed limits and improve signage in Cookham and Cookham Dean, Lee Lane, Burchetts Green Lane, Warren Row Road, Terry's Lane, Mileys Road, Twyford Road. Consideration could also be given to the 'Quiet Lane' initiative by CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England).
- ▶ Identify which highway verges, cycleways, open spaces owned by RBWM could be opened to multi-use, in order to separate horses from motor traffic.
- ▶ Planning and developments in the Borough to consider impact on horse routes and incorporate multi-use access, rather than cycling only.
- ▶ Create a dialogue with local landowners regarding the potential subsidies available through the new Agriculture Bill, as a conduit to opening up access to field headlands and upgrading footpaths/cycleways to multi-use, in order to create safe linkages and additional off-road routes.
- ▶ Educate local riders to report maintenance issues to RBWM PROW and safety to Police or BHS.

Advice on Non-motorised user routes in England and Wales

The
British
Horse
Society

The law and management of public access rights varies between the four countries of the United Kingdom. This advice note applies to England and Wales only

If this is a printed copy, please check www.bhs.org.uk/accessadvice for the latest version (date top of page 2).

BHS Statement

The majority of off-road routes could and should accommodate all non-motorised vulnerable road users—equestrians, cyclists, pedestrians and mobility buggy users—and therefore be truly (non-mechanically propelled) multi-user¹ routes.

None of these users should be excluded from a motor-free route and thus forced onto carriageways with the increased danger to them and to motorists. All non-motorised vulnerable road users need off-road routes so it is inequitable and poor value to create a safe off-road route which excludes any non-motorised users.

The Society welcomes the Government's policy², expressed by Richard Benyon in 2011, that highway authorities and other providers should accommodate horse riders as well as cyclists and pedestrians on all off-road routes where it is practicable. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gave statutory access rights to most land for all users in Scotland and such an approach should be followed in respect of cycle routes in England and Wales.

With the increasing attention to cycling and the advent of the government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, the BHS calls for horse-riders and carriage-drivers to be included in any provisions for cyclists or pedestrians which could physically include equestrians. Equestrians are minority users but are heavily reliant on public bridleways and byways to allow them off the roads. Horse riders in England and Wales have access to only 22% of legally recorded public rights of way and carriage drivers to no more than 6%, which means large areas have no off-road access at all. In addition, an increasing number of those few bridleways and byways are physically unavailable or inaccessible.

¹ Multi-user has no legal definition and is often confused in its meaning but generally means all users, not only pedestrians. The BHS takes it to mean all non-motorised users.

² 14 June 2011, Richard Benyon MP, the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, letter to Anne Main MP

It should be noted that:

- Routes that cater for all non-motorised vulnerable road users represent best value in public spend.
- Off-road routes reduce the number of vulnerable road users (including equestrians) on the roads, increasing safety for everyone and reducing delays for motorists.
- Ease of access for people with impaired mobility is increased by shared use paths. Many people who ride or carriage-drive could not walk or cycle.
- Equestrians, walkers and cyclists have comfortably shared use of paths in urban and rural environments for the last 150 years since bicycles became commonplace.
- If all possible routes are promoted as traffic-free shared use³ (not as 'cycling routes', as on Ordnance Survey leisure maps) inclusive of all non-motorised users, it creates acceptance of other users and consideration of all needs.
- The number of horse riders on most cycleways is likely to be few compared with cyclists and pedestrians but the route may be crucial for those users. They are likely to avoid times which are busiest for cycling.
- Horse riding and driving have considerable health benefits⁴ and equestrians should not be prevented from enjoying open air exercise and recreation by failure to provide safe routes.
- The economic value of the equestrian sector was £4.7 billion in 2019⁵

Addressing Common Concerns

Concerns about whether to include equestrian users on cycleways are:

1. **Assumption of Conflict** – Incidents of real conflict are rare and on investigation are usually found to be perceived rather than actual conflict or arising from lack of understanding of who may use the route or lack of consideration for others⁶. The solution is to better educate all users and promote understanding and tolerance by shared use on all routes.
2. **Width** – There are many bridleways which are less than 3m wide and shared by riders, cyclists and pedestrians without problems. Intermittent verges or occasional passing places or refuges may be feasible even if the whole length cannot be wider. There are unlikely to be so many horses as to make narrow routes impractical but including those equestrians who need the route could save lives.

³ Durham Railway Paths has an excellent [charter](#) for users and no history of conflict on 100 miles of path.

⁴ [BHS Health Benefits of Riding 2011](#)

⁵ British Equestrian Trade Association National Equestrian Survey 2019

⁶ Countryside Agency report CRN32, How people interact on off-road routes

3. **Cost of surface** – Surfaces suitable for all users can be provided at a lower cost than tarmac, and even a non-slip tarmac surface off-road is safer for equestrians than motor roads. Horses are unlikely to have a detrimental effect on a surface which would be provided for cycle use.
4. **Cost of barriers** – Barriers to prevent motor vehicular use but permit all other users are used successfully at relatively low cost. They must be legally authorised and comply with the British Standard. They should only be used where there is a genuine danger from motor vehicles and where the loss of accessibility of the path to all legitimate users is justified by that danger.
5. **Horses' droppings** pose no hazard to human health and quickly disperse. Where horse use is high, providing an unsealed surface for part of the width and encouraging riders to use it or to keep to one side can be effective so that the other side will be dung-free.

BHS Policy on Widths

Circumstances vary and every route should be considered independently on its own merits and potential benefits for increasing safety by taking equestrians off roads. A less than ideal width may be acceptable where a narrow off-road route is safer than the alternative road. Passing places, attention to vegetation or adjacent hazards (e.g. barbed wire) and encouraging cyclists to slow down may be adequate mitigation to provide safety for all.

Share With Care

The BHS strongly advocates promotion of sharing and tolerance between all users. There are a great many examples nationally, including most bridleways and byways, where amicable shared use is normal.

It is very common that investigation of an alleged problem finds that it is only a matter of misperception or misunderstanding. It is essential to make clear to all users that horses are permitted and what behaviour is expected of all users—Be Aware, Take Care, Share. Promoting a route as a cycleway often leads to minority users being discriminated against and made unwelcome, even if it is a bridleway. This is morally wrong and there is no need.

Appropriate signs will help considerably in passing the message that horses are welcome. The BHS has examples which are successfully in use to promote consideration (contact access@bhs.org.uk). The more that horse use of routes is normal, the better the cooperation will be between users, if the use is promoted for all. Social media and posters at local livery yards can be helpful in encouraging use.

Design

Design of shared use routes is well covered in the government document [On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes](#).

The dilemma of what surface to use to accommodate horses where cycles are the majority user and desire a sealed surface can be met by using resin or polymer bound rubber crumb. This has been successful on a number of trails where it has been liked by all users. It has the bonus of using a waste product (vehicle tyres) as well as being free-draining, smooth to wheels and comfortable under foot and hoof.

Examples of paths shared by riders, cyclists and walkers

In addition to bridleways, byways and unclassified roads, the examples below show that shared use paths and trails for walkers, riders and cyclists are successful in rural and urban situations and continue to be developed. They may accommodate wheelchair and mobility scooter users subject to barriers.

- Monsal Trail and Tunnels, Peak District: 8.5 miles, opened in 1981 and extended in 2011, funded by the Dept of Transport, with a code of conduct.
- Chiseldon to Marlborough Railway Line, Wiltshire: approx. 7 miles in use since 1988.
- Railway Paths, Durham. Over 100 miles on 11 paths, in use since the 1990s, with a further four paths under development. Charter to encourage responsible use.
- The Camel Trail, Cornwall: 18 miles, 400,000 users each year. Through conservation areas (SSSI and SAC).
- The Meon Valley Trail, Hampshire: 11 miles with part also open to carriage-drivers.
- Pennine Bridleway: 280 miles in total with the Mary Towneley Loop 47 miles.
- The Derbyshire Greenways: 22 shared use trails.
- Great Northern Railway Trail, Bradford.
- Letchworth Greenway, Hertfordshire 21km trail around Letchworth.
- High Peak and Tissington Trails, Peak District, Derbyshire: 17 and 13 miles.
- Gellings Green Ways and Little Wood, Knowsley and Liverpool
- The Liverpool Loop Line and Halewood Triangle, Trans Pennine Trail
- The Dream and Mineral Line, St Helens and Halton

Many more examples are available from the BHS.

RBWM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM
Riding and Multi-User sub-group

Horse Rider Survey
March 2020

RBWM Local Access Forum – Riding and multi-user sub-group

Report of Horse riders survey March 2020

Representatives; Anne Woodward, Trisha Mentzel, Stephanie James

Introduction

The riding and multi-user access group has been established with the mission to;

Improve safety and minimise risk for equestrians, who are legitimate, vulnerable road users, by expanding the off-road multi-use network, providing safe alternative linkages between PROWs and education of road and PROW users.

The group's mission is aligned with the safety campaigns of the British Horse Society (BHS) to both get horses off the road and to improve education of road users and dog owners.

The Milestone report 2020, showed that on average only 22% of the total PROW were accessible for riders (bridleways & byways). However, this varied between Parish, shown below in kilometres.

Parish	Footpath	Bridleways & Byways	Total km	% access for multi- user
Bisham	13.15	4.75	17.90	27%
Bray	36.80	12.75	49.55	26%
Cookham	34.14	2.85	36.99	8%
Cox Green	8.40	1.40	9.79	14%
Datchet	4.76		4.76	0%
Eton	18.40	3.56	21.96	16%
Horton	1.20	1.25	2.45	51%
Hurley	31.61	13.02	44.63	29%
Maidenhead	29.80	3.04	32.83	9%
Old Windsor	4.57		4.57	0%
Shottesbrooke	3.24	1.61	4.85	33%
Sunningdale	3.55	2.00	5.56	36%
Sunninghill	11.24	4.89	16.14	30%
Waltham SL	17.73	7.21	24.94	29%
White Waltham	11.01	5.04	16.05	31%
Windsor	4.34	3.90	8.24	47%
Wraysbury	9.65		9.65	0%
	243.58	67.28	310.86	22%

Urbanisation in the RBWM has been increasing, giving rise to additional traffic on-road and increased cycle and walkers off-road. As the population grows, then the dangers of on-road will only become more acute.

Year	Population (1)	Estimated # cars (2)
2001	133541	80,125
2010	143988	86,393
2019	151 422	90,853
2031	156,000	93,600
(1) Source; Public Health for Berkshire 2017 (2) Car ownership rates, RAC Foundation 2012 (605 per 1,000 population)		

In the Borough Local Plan 2017, section 6 covers Green Belt and we noted the intention to improve off-road routes for equestrians, in section 6.8.22;

6.8.22

Encouragement will be given to off road riding facilities such as headlands or bridleways within farm units.

Government initiatives

One of the aims of the Agriculture Bill is to increase public access for recreation, in return for subsidies.

In response to BHS, Grant Schapps stated “The Department is keen to make certain that those who choose to ride their horses on the highway feel safe. We also want to ensure that those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm, in the event of a collision, bear the greatest responsibility to take care and reduce the danger they pose to others. That is why we are currently reviewing The Highway Code and, further to a public consultation, propose to implement new measures to improve safety for horse riders, such as creating specific passing distances and speeds for other vehicles. The Highway Code and, further to a public consultation, propose to implement new measures to improve safety for horse riders, such as creating specific passing distances and speeds for other vehicles.” Copies of both letters are shown in appendix 4 & 5.

Horse Owner Survey

To gain insights into the current riding experiences within the Borough, a survey was developed, the results of which are summarised below. The full survey can be viewed here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-K3P3SNXM7/>.

Methodology

An on-line survey was distributed to riding clubs, livery yards, Facebook groups etc, across the Borough, covering a variety of questions regarding riding habits, including how much hacking is on-road, experiences and safety issues on and off-road, as well as specific questions relating to the RBWM promoted bridle circuits around Cookham and Knowl Hill. The survey was open from 16th – 31st March 2020 and attracted 129 responses, with an estimated 1,450 horses in their community.

Appendix 1 shows the distribution of the respondents.

Key areas of the survey

Riding habits

All respondents hacked in some form, 48% only hack directly from their yard, so riding environment in immediate locality is important. 35% do not have any transport to have the possibility to ride elsewhere.

On average, 68% of their riding is in the form of hacking, but only 47% of this is off-road. So, 53% of the riders' time is spent on roads. This reflects the low % of PROW available to horses.

All responders wore Hi-Viz, with 60% on both horse and rider.

On-road experiences

Riders were asked to recall, over last 24 months;

1. Incidents that resulted in an impact, injury or fall
2. Incidents that threatened the safety of horse and rider
3. Threatening or intimidating behaviour

		Vehicles	Cyclists
Impact/injury/fall	> 5 incidents		.83%
	1 – 5 incidents	6.67%	3.31%
Safety issue	> 5 incidents	29.5%	4.1%
	1 – 5 incidents	53.28%	58.2%
Behaviour	> 5 incidents	19.67%	5.74%
	1 – 5 incidents	45%	22.95%

Whilst thankfully, incidents resulting in injury were comparatively low at 6.67%, 83% of riders had experienced significant safety issues with vehicles, with 29.5% experiencing this more than 5 times. 62% experiencing issues with cyclists.

But these statistics are potentially skewed as people who go on roads are not the owners of nervous horses.

The verbal and threatening behaviour of both motorists and cyclists is also a concern, 65% experiencing unpleasant behaviour from motorists, less from cyclists just under 30%.

Hot spots for on-road incidents were identified as;

B4447 Maidenhead to Cookham (including Lightlands Lane)

Long Lane, Cookham

Terry's Lane, Cookham

Sutton Road, Cookham

Lee Lane, Maidenhead

Warren Row Road, Cockpole Green/Warren Row

Rose Lane, Hurley/Cockpole Green

Old Windsor

Dorney Common Road

Crossing A30 Sunningdale to Shrubs Hill

Some common issues experienced include;

- Driving too fast particularly on country lanes, where extra hazards of narrow/single track roads and blind bends
- Drivers and cyclists passing too closely
- Overtaking in unsafe places, impatient to wait
- Threatening behaviour, verbal abuse, holding hand on horn
- No longer hack on roads due to high risk
- Car passed so close, clipped stirrup iron

67.77% did not report these incidents to Police or BHS, so clearly incidents are under-reported.

Off-road experiences

The same questions were asked regarding cyclists, but experiences were also sought regarding dog attacks and behaviour of dog owners/walkers.

		Cyclists	Dogs	Dog owners/walkers
Impact/injury/fall	> 5 incidents			
	1 – 5 incidents	6.56%		
Safety issue or dog attack	> 5 incidents	1.64%	5.74%	
	1 – 5 incidents	30.33%	52.46%	
Behaviour	> 5 incidents	.82%		2.46%
	1 – 5 incidents	12.3%		34.43%

Incidents with off-road cyclists are half that of on-road at 31%. The biggest issue relates to dog attacks, with just under 60% experiencing uncontrolled and dangerous behaviour. Threatening behaviour of dog owners or walkers is higher than motorists or cyclists at around 37%.

Less issues reported regarding cyclists, with dogs and owners more of a problem.

Hot spots for dog incidents were identified as;

Knowl Hill Bridleway Circuit - 3 incidents reported involving German Shepherd, Huskies,
 Bowsey Wood – on KHBC
 Pudding Hill – on KHBC
 Maidenhead Thicket/ Pinkney's Green- 5
 Cookham Dean
 Jubilee river – 2
 Swinley Forrest
 Windsor Great Park

Common comments from respondents;

- Owners not having dogs under control and unable to recall.
- Allow dogs to roam, often out of sight.
- Bad behaviour includes aggressive barking, charging at horses, snapping at heels.
- Professional dog walkers with >4 dogs, not on leads can quickly going into pack mode.

- Verbal abuse towards riders, from owners who object to putting their dogs on a lead or complaining that horses 'shouldn't be there'.

66.39% did not report any of these incidents to Police or BHS, so official statistics are under-reported.

Cookham Bridle Circuit – Appendix 3

The circuit is promoted by the Borough and created more than 30 years ago, with a view to creating a pleasant circular route around quiet country lanes, by-ways and woodland. However, much of the route is on-road, with any horse owners located in Cookham Village, needing to hack through Cookham Rise or Along B4447, to reach the circuit. Cookham Parish has only 8% of the PROW accessible to horse riders, which is the 2nd lowest in the Borough, with only to Datchet, Old Windsor & Wraysbury having less.

Note; The current map is out of date as the permitted bridleway through Park Farm, was withdrawn several years ago.

40% of respondents have ridden the route, but 20% did not know about it. The remaining 40% who knew about it, but had not ridden it, cited the following reasons;

- 16% too many road sections
- 22% no transport
- 20% no parking

Specific comments reported by respondents;

- Track through Bisham Woods ends on A302.
- Lack of parking to be able to join the route in a safe place.
- Too much road work, field edges that have been accessible, now closed off.
- Unsuitable surface on BW19, from Malters Lane to Long Lane.
- Bridleway sections heavily used by walkers & cyclists, dogs not under control.
- Permitted bridleway closure through Park Farm now prevents a circular route, back to Cookham Common.
- More off-road sections needed
- Would be good to have access to Green Way
- Could cycleway on B4447 be upgraded to multi-use

Knowl Hill Bridle Circuit – Appendix 3

The circuit is in 2 sections, which are dissected by A4. The northern section can link up with Cookham circuit by using an underpass at Stubbings. The route was established more than 20 years ago. There is a higher % of PROW accessible to riders, compared to Cookham, with average 29% (combining Hurley, WSL & Shottesbrooke).

More respondents had ridden this route 54%, with only 10% not knowing about it. The reasons for not riding the route;

- 20% too many road sections
- 30% no transport
- 20 % no parking

Parking is available at BCA, but a permit is required costing £80 per year. 20% of the respondents had a permit, 28% didn't know about it and 23% said, either didn't want to pay or couldn't afford it.

Common issues reported by respondents;

- Crossing the A4, which dissects the north and south section of the circuit is dangerous, some form of crossing would help, at Knowl Hill and Littlewick Green.
- Too many busy roads and junctions.
- Speed of traffic, specific mentions of Twyford Road and Miley Road (WSL).
- Would like better off-road connections, specific mentions of linking
 - Pudding Hill to southern section of circuit – avoiding Warren Row Road.
 - Linking KHBC at Burchett's Green to Pinkney's Green and CBC– avoiding Burchett's Green Lane.
- Maintenance
 - Drainage of section Uncles Lane/Brook Lane, east side of Castle Royale golf course.
 - Overhanging tree branches, in particular, west of Castle Royale golf course.
 - Dangerous holes
 - Signage warning of horses at road crossings and where bridleways join roads.

General comments

71% of respondents felt that riding had become less safe over the last 24 months and they would prefer to avoid riding on roads but have little option. 61% find it extremely frustrating that, over the evolution of time, many bridleways now end at a main road and 65% would ride more if there was a better network of off-road linkages. 64% were in favour of upgrading all rights of way to multi-use access.

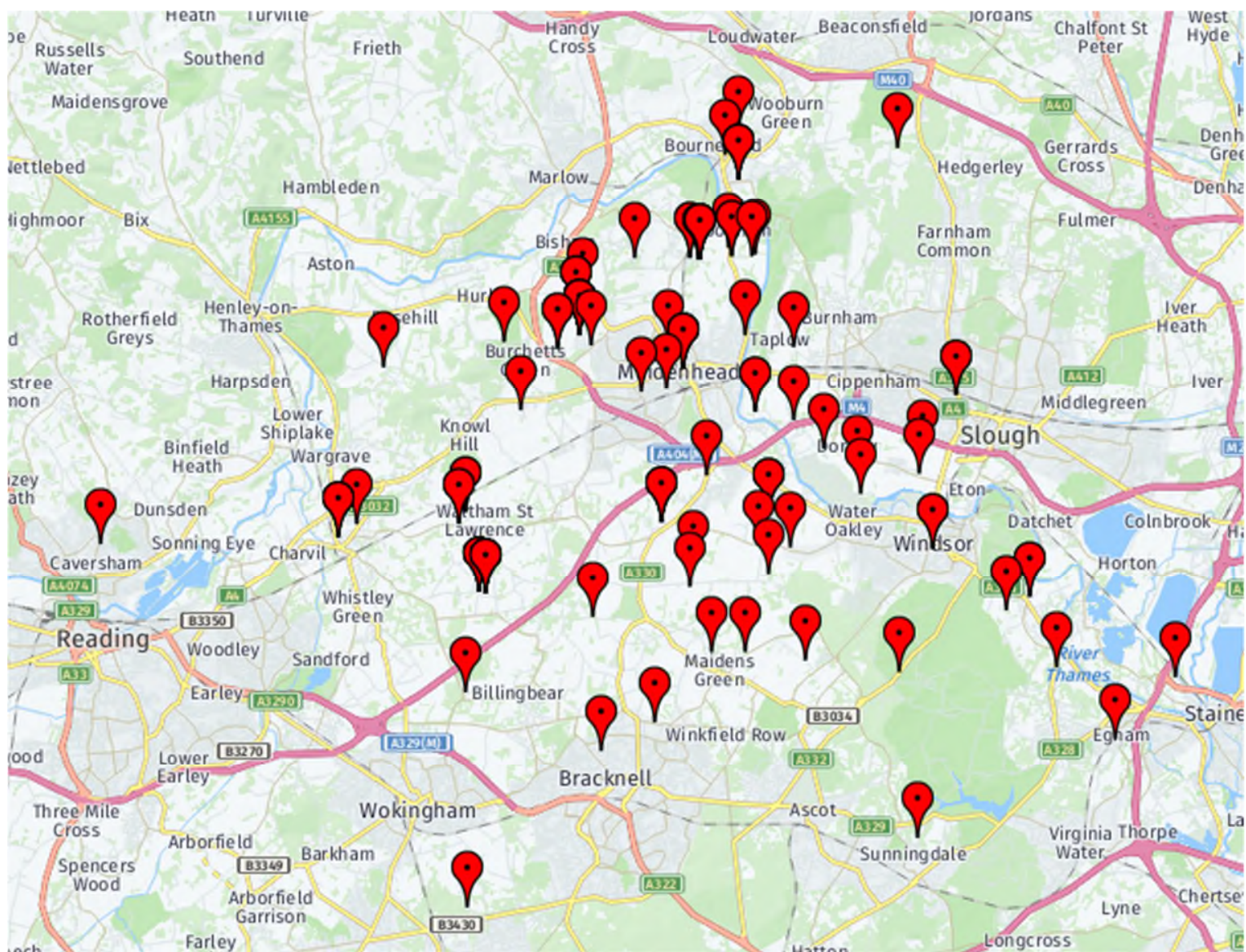
Key Findings

1. Motor vehicles presented the highest safety related issues on-road, with respondents reporting worsening of behaviour over last 24 months.
2. Riding off-road dog attacks and owners/walkers were the biggest hazard, with dogs often not under full control.
3. Most incidents go unreported.
4. Increases in urbanisation and the related traffic, means that the Cookham and Knowl Hill routes are no longer the safe haven for equestrians that they were intended to be. The same goes for on-road linkages to bridleways across the Borough.
5. Only 22% of PROW in the Borough are accessible for equestrians.
6. Equestrians do not use roads by choice, they would prefer local safe off-road riding. Transporting horses to off-road facilities that offer permits, such as Windsor Great Park and BCA, or further afield to more rural locations, is not possible for 35% who do not have transport and not feasible, in terms of time and effort to do so on a regular basis, for the remaining 65%.

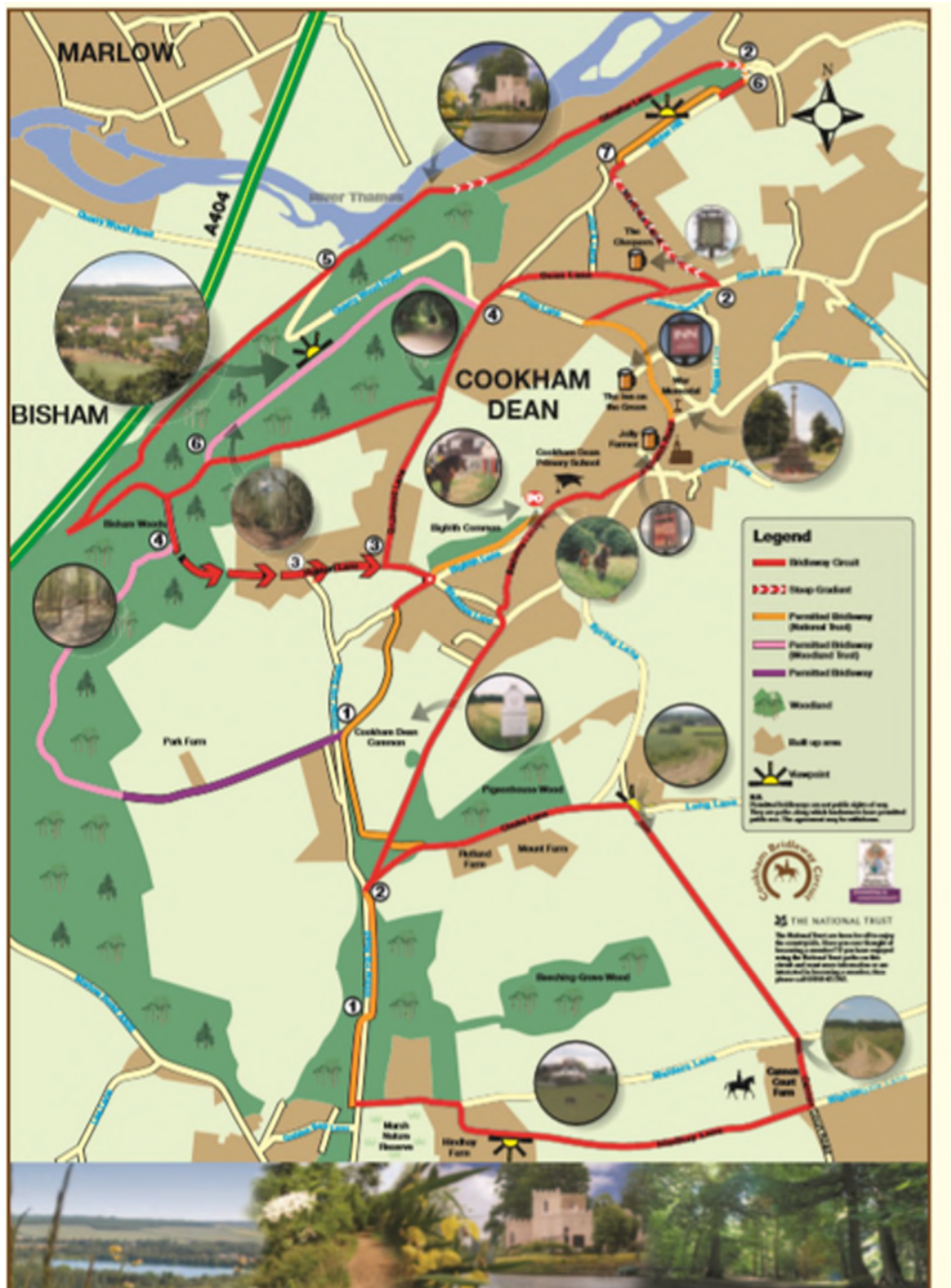
Recommendations

1. Education programme for vehicles, cyclists, dog owners and riders, so that how we can harmoniously share multi-use access. This could include signage in known hotspots.
2. Licencing or accreditation of commercial dog walkers, to encourage greater responsibility around horses.
3. Continue to work with RBWM PROW to investigate improvements to Cookham and Knowl Hill circuits to increase both safety and usage by creating additional multi-use paths, linkages, off-road riding access e.g. Ashley Hill Forest, provision of parking and safe road crossings.
4. Invite more volunteers for sub-group to fully investigate safety improvements in all areas of the Borough, particularly for Windsor and Ascot.
5. Review speed limits and improve signage in Cookham and Cookham Dean, Lee Lane, Burchetts Green Lane, Warren Row Road, Terry's Lane, Mileys Road, Twyford Road. Consideration could also be given to the 'Quiet Lane' initiative by CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England).
6. Identify which highway verges, cycleways, open spaces owned by RBWM which could be opened to multi-use, in order to separate horses from motor traffic.
7. Planning and developments in the Borough to consider impact on horse routes and incorporate multi-use access, rather than cycling only.
8. Create a dialogue with local landowners regarding the potential subsidies available through the new Agriculture Bill, as a conduit to opening up access to field headlands and upgrading footpaths/cycleways to multi-use, in order to create safe linkages and additional off-road routes.
9. Educate local riders to report maintenance issues to RBWM PROW

Appendix 1 - Distribution of respondents



Appendix 2 - Cookham Bridle Circuit



Note; Section marked in purple through Park Farm is no longer accessible, landowner withdrew permission.

Appendix 3 - Knowl Hill Bridle Circuit



Appendix 4



The Right Honourable Grant Shapps MP

Secretary of State for Transport

21 May 2020

Dear The Right Honourable Grant Shapps MP,

Re: Statutory guidance - Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19.

I refer to the above and read with interest the following advice: *'When the country gets back to work, we need them to carry on cycling, and to be joined by millions more. With public transport capacity reduced, the roads in our largest cities, in particular, may not be able to cope without it.*

We also know that in the new world, pedestrians will need more space. Indications are that there is a significant link between COVID-19 recovery and fitness. Active travel can help us become more resilient.

That is why towns and cities in the UK and around the world are making or proposing radical changes to their roads to accommodate active travel.

We recognise this moment for what it is: a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change in how we make short journeys in our towns and cities.'

The British Horse Society believes that in delivering any network management in response to Covid 19 it is important that active travel solutions do not exclude equestrians who are the most vulnerable road user. If equestrians are not provided for in such schemes they can find themselves in the very unsafe position of being sandwiched between speeding cyclists on one side and speeding cars and lorries on the other – a recipe for certain disaster.

Since 2010 the Society has had 4,645 road incidents involving horses reported to it, 1080 horses have been injured, 395 horses have died and 44 humans have lost their lives. The Society estimates that only 10% of such incidents get reported to it.

Horse riders have access to only 22% of the public rights of way network and carriage drivers to just 5%. Invariably equestrians have to use the road network to access their nearest bridleway or byway and it is important that they are able to do this safely and are provided with safe routes just as walkers and cyclists are. Including equestrians provides even better value for the public purse.

Alan Hiscox, the Society's Director of Safety, and myself would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further virtually with you and your Ministers.

Yours faithfully

Mark Weston

Director of Access

07967973196

Mark.weston@bhs.org.uk

Appendix 5



Department
for Transport

Mark Weston
Director of Access
The British Horse Society

From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: grant.shapps@dt.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dt

Our Ref: MC/291747

1 June 2020

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2020, about statutory guidance and the Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19.

As lockdown measures are eased, the Government's priority is to help the fight against coronavirus. The advice remains to stay at home, as much as possible, and if people need to travel they should consider if their journey is necessary and stay local if they can. However, as the country gets back to work, it may not be possible for many people to work from home or stay local. With pressures on our public transport system and the need to maintain social distancing measures, it is sensible to promote alternative forms of transport.

It is also sensible that our transport recovery plans look to support our goals to decarbonise, and to improve air quality and public health. This takes account of how people's travel habits and preferences have changed, as a result of coronavirus, and how we can embed the active travel benefits that we are seeing in both our cities and rural communities.

The Department is keen to encourage cycling and walking as healthy and environmentally friendly forms of travel that support social distancing. We believe that these can be easily adopted as alternatives to commuting to work on public transport or in a private car, whereas horse riding is generally considered a leisure activity.

That said, the Department is keen to make certain that those who choose to ride their horses on the highway feel safe. We also want to ensure that those in charge of vehicles that can cause the greatest harm, in the event of a collision, bear the greatest responsibility to take care and reduce the danger they pose to others. That is why we are currently reviewing The Highway Code and, further to a public consultation, propose to implement new

measures to improve safety for horse riders, such as creating specific passing distances and speeds for other vehicles.

You may be aware that we have been working closely with Alan Hiscox, representing the British Horse Society, and other key stakeholders on the review.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

LAF recommendations for RBWM Parks and Countryside :

Improving the accessibility of walks and green spaces for People with Disabilities

December 2019

Background

A working group within the LAF was set up in October 2018 to advise the LAF on the accessibility (for people with disabilities) of popular walking routes and those with high amenity value within the borough. The main aims of the working group are

1. To make recommendations that
 - Feed into the 2020/21 Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Improvement Plan
 - Result in access improvements to the PROW network and green spaces in RBWM for people with disabilities. This also benefits older people and parents / carers with young children
 - Focus on practical achievements rather than the production of standards
 - Advocate for Inclusive Design in PROW and green space to be an integral part of the planning process
2. To identify key routes / sites in RBWM
 - Places with high potential for developing routes for people with disabilities
 - Popular / heavily used places
 - Start / finish point has good access to parking and/or public transport.

The importance of information

Everyone planning a walk needs information to decide whether the route is suitable for them. Key aspects include distance, terrain and ground conditions together with other information such as access barriers and resting places of importance to parents with young children, people with disabilities and older people. A standard approach for footpath mapping and information, whether on-site, online or in hard copy, can provide potential users with key information.

Approval Process

- The approach and top-level recommendations were presented by the working group to the Local Access Forum on 26th November 2019.
 - The recommendations were unanimously approved by the LAF.
- It was agreed that the next step would be for the working group to meet with Anthony Hurst of RBWM Parks and Countryside and discuss the recommendations

Recommendations

1. RBWM to aim to establish a network of urban, semi-urban and highly used footpaths to be reasonably accessible for people with disabilities, older people and parents / carers with young children.
 - a. The initial six localities to be surveyed are Battlemead, The Green Way, Ockwells Park & Thrift Wood, Cock Marsh, Boulters Lock and the Thames at Old Windsor
 - b. Recommendations from the annual footpath surveys to be considered for inclusion in the annual Milestones Statement and Rights of Way Improvement Plan
2. RBWM to investigate best practice path surface materials that enable people with disabilities to use public rights of way and other footpaths.
 - a. RBWM to use the results to develop a list of suitable surfaces and the circumstances in which they might appropriately be used.

3. RBWM to adopt the signage and information approach used by South Downs National Park for all on line and hard copy maps of green spaces and accessible walks / routes.
 - a. Access for All / Many / Some
 - b. Mapping symbols include Gradients, Resting Places and Access Controls
 - c. Standard information templates
4. RBWM to consider the needs of people with disabilities in all footpath design and improvement programmes. Key aspects to consider
 - a. Access to the route / site
 - b. Appropriate footpath surfaces and width
 - c. Removal of access barriers
 - d. Resting places
 - e. Connections with other footpath / green spaces and transport (parking, bus stops)
 - f. Signage and Information
5. RBWM to develop a footpath survey template for use in areas where access for all or some routes are considered feasible. It should include the following elements
 - a. Footpath surfaces, gradients and condition
 - b. Obstacles (access barriers, stiles, gates, steps)
 - c. Hazards (Tree roots, overhanging or intrusive vegetation, barbed wire)
 - d. Signage and information
 - e. Resting places

ITEM 6 - BATTLEMEAD COMMON UPDATE REPORT

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Forum on continuing progress concerning the priorities and management of Battlemead Common.

2. **SUPPORTING INFORMATION – Friends of Battlemead Common Meetings and Consultation**

2.1 The Friends of Battlemead Common meeting of the 4th May 2020 had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions, however, the situation has not stood still. A consultation was carried out with the Friends group during May to receive comments on the following documents:

- Wintering bird survey: report completed by Austin Foot Ecology.
- Ecological Management Plan: report prepared by Austin Foot Ecology, in collaboration with RBWM officers.

As a result of feedback received from this consultation, plans for the site are now under review with an outcome due sometime in July 2020.

2.2 Feedback received during the consultation included:
“A Way Forward” – Friends of Battlemead Proposal dated 27/05/2020 along with representations from the following groups and individuals:

1	Maidenhead Civic Society
2	Cookham Society
3	Cookham Parish Council
4	East Berks Ramblers
5	Cllr Greg Jones (ward councillor for Maidenhead Riverside)
6	Maidenhead Waterways
7	Wild Maidenhead
8	WildCookham

These representations are available in this document pack for your information.

2.3 Dog Walking Access - a new representative for dog walkers has been asked to join the Accessibility Sub Group.

- 2.4 People and Dog Walking Survey – volunteers and member of the Friends group have been collecting evidence of how the site is used by dog walkers over a 5 week period in May. Some points from the survey are:

Monitoring period: 5 weeks, 23 April to May 28 6 observers filed in total 16 observations; 6 morning, 6 early afternoon, 4 late afternoons	
Ratio Bikers on bikes (cycling)	70%
Ratio Dogs on lead	38%
Ratio Dogs on path	89%
Average dog numbers per visit	4
Average biker number per visit	0.6

- 2.5 Data is also being gathered via the Community Warden visiting the site about dog walkers' behaviour and observance of the rules stated on the signage. New larger more robust signage was erected in early May stating "Dogs must be on lead, wildlife sensitive area and community wardens patrolling".
- 2.6 No Cycling Signs have also be erected at the access points to the site.
- 2.7 Benches at 6 locations were installed in March 2020– see photos

	<p>Location B2 (ref: LAF Accessibility Audit Report) – next to the Maidenhead Boundary stone to allows views across wetlands towards Cliveden and back across West Field</p>
	<p>Location B6 (ref: LAF Accessibility Audit Report) – good view of Cliveden</p>

- 2.8 Field Names – historic names of fields provided as per Battlemead Common Historic Landscape Analysis by Sarah Rutherford were discussed and agreed at the FoB Comms & Information Sub group.
A plan showing these is available in this document pack for your information.
- 2.9 **LAF Response/Recommendations** – Comments from members on this item can be forwarded via the LAF representatives on the Friends of Battlemead group, Lisa Hughes and Dom Lethbridge.

Battlemead: a Way Forward

This is a third version of the document submitted by the independent group of Friends to the January 2020 Friends meeting. It has been modified to take on board some, though not all, of the comments submitted to them before or after that meeting. The authors stress that compromise will be needed if the Friends are to have a useful on-going role and it is hoped that common ground can be achieved at the RBWM review in May. The authors have taken note of the Terms of Reference for the Friends and believe that their proposals are fully in line with the Terms.

This version of the document is the agreed consensus of the authors, and is presented to the Council as such. The authors are Mike Copland, Ann Darracott, Martin Woolner, Steve Gillions, Ian Rose and Ian Caird.

1. Overview

The Friends

- 1.1. accept the Royal Borough's view that public ownership of Battlemead Common will ensure future generations of people and wildlife can continue to enjoy the area as a natural outdoor space (with possible future educational value) and will also allow the completion of a missing link in the Millennium Walk
- 1.2. confirm that the future plans for Battlemead should embody the need for an appropriate balance between the biodiversity and access considerations
- 1.3. agree that biodiversity in both terrestrial and aquatic habitats should be protected and enhanced. This can take as its starting point the proposals presented by Austin Foot in their EMMP dated June 2019 and in other reports.
- 1.4. agree there should be managed public pedestrian access, including disabled access
- 1.5. agree that a circular walk encompassing the Thames towpath should be available if this is supported by ecology and related investigations
- 1.6. agree the general principle that visitors to the site will be encouraged to keep to designated paths through the use of maps, signage, fencing, hedges or management regimes (e.g. mowing)
- 1.7. agree that the White Brook will need to be managed on an on-going basis and monitored but that its route and size will not be significantly altered
- 1.8. recognise that the White Brook and parts of Battlemead Common form a critical route for the drainage of flood water from the south of Cookham. All management and maintenance decisions should at least maintain and if possible improve the overall flood flows across the site
- 1.9. recognise that there should be a clear policy on dog access and dogs should be excluded from certain areas.

Specific proposals for each of the main areas of Battlemead are:

2. West Field

- 2.1. The field could be developed and managed as a mosaic of habitats comprising open grassland, scattered new trees, the restoration of the two lines of mature trees - one of oak, one mainly lime/horse chestnut (though the latter may not be sustainable) - and the creation of scrub areas (probably a mix of planting and allowing growth of existing plants)
- 2.2. The marginal woodland should be allowed to drift out into the field to create a more graded habitat suitable for a range of wildlife
- 2.3. The botany should be respected and given time to develop.
- 2.4. Agreement should be reached with the National Trust to prevent cattle encroaching from the adjoining National Trust land onto the bank to the North of the field
- 2.5. The fencing can be retained and the Council should maintain the mowing policy already adopted to encourage visitors to keep to the paths
- 2.6. The Northern Perimeter path can be an all-weather track similar to the track in the North Field to allow service vehicle access
- 2.7. There can be a circular path around the perimeter of the field (far enough into the field to prevent disturbance to the resident badgers), with wheelchair accessibility and benches as resting places
- 2.8. The mown path across the field from the car park to the causeway should be retained to give a short route across the field. However it is recommended that its precise route should be flexible and take into account any future planting plan adopted and that there should be adequate screening of any West Field activity from the wetlands areas in the East Field.

3. North Field (including the pond)

- 3.1. A plan for the future of the pond area should be developed, with consideration given both to some clearance of the existing pond and its immediate surrounds and to the creation of new ponds alongside the existing one to provide a variety of habitats that are at different stages of succession, supporting different species. The Friends' preference is for the current pond to be managed, with some clearance (reeds and other vegetation, as well as over-hanging trees) and, depending on further studies, the possibility of some de-silting.
- 3.2. Consideration should be given to the eventual siting of a hide by the pond (the precise location to be determined based on further study and evidence that the wildlife there merits such a development) and the provision of some basic facilities to allow study visits, including one or more dipping areas. This will need serious consideration of the impact of such visits to avoid any significant damage to the site, including the impact of access infrastructure. Such facilities would need appropriate access, including wheelchair access

Section 4 is void

5. The Willow Wood

- 5.1. The Friends consider that it is appropriate and feasible to provide a circular path around the entire site if this can be done sensitively to avoid significant impact on the habitats and their biodiversity. There is an acceptance that access to the East Field should be limited (and only be accessible along a tightly defined route during the dry season) so an additional route is suggested - through the Willow Wood. Whilst this is a habitat of special interest, it is felt that a route can be defined through the Willow Wood, based on the existing (broken) bridge site or a replacement nearby. To ensure that the impact of this is minimised it is suggested that such a route would be over a boardwalk which would keep visitors to a defined path (and would also provide wheelchair access). Such a path would take some of the pressure off the East Field at certain times of the year. Routing would need to avoid disturbance to resident badgers and to birds and other wildlife accessing areas of open water in East Field.
- 5.2. This path should be fully fenced so that dogs on leads may be allowed on it.
- 5.3. Funding will be a major consideration for this to go ahead and so it is unlikely to happen in the very near future. In the short term, therefore, consideration could be given to a longer period of summer opening for the East Field (see below) than might be needed if an additional route can be created.
- 5.4. Trees should be removed as required at a minimal level and other work undertaken, drawing on the Austin Foot proposals.

6. East Field

- 6.1. The field should be closed to the public during the wet season to ensure no disturbance of wildfowl/waders. The closed season dates should be decided following consideration of the over-wintering bird surveys, also taking into account other proposals, including from Austin Foot, for habitat development to encourage other wildlife into the field
- 6.2. During the dry season access across the causeway could be allowed with the following caveats:
- 6.3. Dogs not to be allowed
- 6.4. The route of the path to be defined to limit access across the field as a whole and made very clear via mowing regime and other means to be agreed (e.g. hedge)
- 6.5. Additional scrapes to be considered (as per Austin Foot and also see Waterways Management below)
- 6.6. Hides and/or screens to be considered giving views onto the wet areas.

7. Waterways Management

- 7.1. Consideration should be given to managing the White Brook to achieve a balance between adequate flow and biodiversity. The Brook should be managed so as not to exacerbate flood risk and, if possible, minimise it. Further decisions should follow the trial relating to the wetland levels currently permitted by the Environment Agency on a stretch of the stream and consideration should be given to keeping the central 2.5m of the brook clear of major impediments such as fallen trees/branches, dense in-channel growth and silting. Following the wetland levels trial consideration could be given to extending some form of clearance work to

the length of the stream through Battlemead. However it is felt that there should be no major widening of the waterway.

- 7.2. The banks should generally be restored, and stabilised, to address problems of poaching caused by cattle but still allowing for seasonal flood-meadow. These banks can provide nesting sites. Consideration to be given to the possibility of water voles returning and the related issue of control of mink.
- 7.3. The Environment Agency should be asked to consider the creation of an additional winter wetland area to the north of the East Field. The impact on the White Brook needs to be considered.

8. Dog access

- 8.1. The Friends agree that control of dogs on site is needed, given the adverse impact they can have on flora and fauna. Indeed, we feel the potential damage that could arise from a lack of effective dog control may be greater than that from human visitors. The policy adopted needs to be clear, to be pragmatic, and to achieve the desired result of a balanced management approach.
- 8.2. We noted the following in coming to our view:
 - There will be considerable pressure from dog walkers to use Battlemead
 - Informal surveys on Battlemead and anecdotal evidence from elsewhere show that 'dogs on lead' notices are observed by less than half of dog walkers
 - Dogs present no significant risk to wildlife when they are in a contained environment such as a fenced path
 - Dog owners are less likely to enter areas clearly marked as 'No Dogs Allowed' if there are areas where dogs can be walked
- 8.3. We do not consider uncontrolled dog access appropriate for any part of Battlemead. Two other policy options remain: to ban dogs entirely; or to introduce a 'dogs on lead' policy. We do not think either suitable for all of Battlemead, but rather that an appropriate policy be adopted for each parcel of the site.
- 8.4. We therefore propose that a 'dogs on lead' policy be adopted for the West Field, the Northern Perimeter path, and the proposed Willow Wood path; and that the East Field be designated a 'no dogs allowed' zone and clearly signed as such. We recognise that a 'dogs on lead' policy will in practice have a limited effect and accordingly those areas where dogs are allowed should be properly fenced in order to prevent escape.
- 8.5. Signage relating to the dogs policy should be very clearly displayed and the policy explained.
- 8.6. Consideration should be given to the use of Dog Control Orders.

9. Car park

- 9.1. This document does not address issues relating to the car park since this is currently subject to a planning application.

10. Information

- 10.1. There will be information boards at the main entrances to Battlemead. These will set out the history as well as the ecology of the site.
- 10.2. There should be a prominent sign at each entrance making it clear that dogs are either not allowed or that they must be kept on a lead at all times, depending on location. The sign to detail which fields/areas on Battlemead dogs on leads are allowed.
- 10.3. People walking multiple dogs (whether professional dog walkers or groups of dog owners bringing a significant number of dogs) need to be discouraged: research into how this is handled elsewhere should be helpful. There should also be a ban on drones and model aircraft.

11. Resourcing

- 11.1. The viability of any plan for Battlemead, beyond basic maintenance, will require funding not at present allocated. We are confident that an imaginative and well-prepared plan can attract external funding and such a plan is needed urgently.
- 11.2. Consideration also needs to be given from the outset to the day to day management of Battlemead in the medium to long term - both to ensure that the habitats are managed effectively and to resource additional activities (educational, site visitors etc.). It is therefore likely that, in addition to support from RBWM, local residents, through local interest groups, must be able to demonstrate at an early stage that they have the membership, expertise and enthusiasm to support such activities. The Volunteer sub-group of the Friends of Battlemead should investigate this as a priority.

May 2020

Friends of Battlemead Common: comments on 'Wintering Bird Survey' (Austin Foot ecology, March 2020) and 'Ecological Management Plan' (Austin Foot ecology, March 2020)

1	Maidenhead Civic Society
2	Cookham Society
3	Cookham Parish Council
4	East Berks Ramblers
5	Cllr Greg Jones (ward councillor for Maidenhead Riverside)
6	Maidenhead Waterways
7	Wild Maidenhead
8	WildCookham

Comments on the Battlemead Ecological Management Plan March 2020 and the Wintering Bird Survey 2020

The comments of the Civic Society will concentrate on the following:

- 1) How the recommendations in the reports relate to **public access** as one of the reasons given for the purchase of what is now Battlemead Common was to provide the missing link in the Millennium Walk from Widbrook Common to the Thames Path.
- 2) How the recommendations in the reports relate to the **maintenance of flow in the White Brook**, the main source of water in the northern stream system that provides flow into Maidenhead town centre.¹ The success of the regeneration of Maidenhead town centre via the renovation of the waterway depends on adequate flow.
- 3) **Gaps in the reports** relating to the impact of the non-native species, the **Canada Goose** on the aquatic environment, and the absence of any evaluation of the presence of the **American Mink**, a predator on young birds and small mammals.
- 4) **Other comments** on woodland management and dogs.

1. PUBLIC ACCESS

The Millennium Walk, a joint project of Maidenhead Civic Society and East Berks Ramblers, is routed from Hurley across country to Maidenhead Riverside, following the 1934 boundary of Maidenhead once it reaches Pinkneys Green. On Battlemead this means skirting the north and east side of the West Field, crossing the gravel haul bridge and then over the causeway and the East Field to reach the Thames Path.

The *Battlemead EMMP March 2020* report on p15 referring to the East Field says:

4.1.24. This field will remain closed to the public, in order to protect its value to wildlife, in particular nesting and wintering birds, with the exception of the millennial and boundary walks which occur once a year in April and October. During these two days, the causeway will be opened to walkers only (no dogs) and be marshalled in order to ensure the public do not deviate from the designated route.

This is totally unacceptable as the Millennium Walk is designed to be used at any time.

Evidently there was some confusion with an event planned for 24th May to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the inaugural Millennium Walk in the year 2000 that crossed the East Field.

The Millennium Walk will eventually be signed as is the Boundary Walk. In October 2019 the Boundary Walk charity event crossed the East Field even though the Boundary Walk signage put up by the Royal Borough directs walkers away from the boundary along a longer northern perimeter path.

With regard to nesting birds, we appreciate the need to ensure that nesting swans are not disturbed. Most other nesting birds remain largely hidden but swans are more vulnerable. We understand that in Windsor Great Park nesting swans are given protection by closing off

¹ The stream has failed to reach Maidenhead several times in the recent past because the northern stream system is a man-made construct that is not self-cleansing. Maintenance of this system now relies on the Maidenhead Waterways volunteers.

the area around the nest with temporary fencing. Nesting swans are not usually disturbed by the presence of people at a distance so closing off the causeway path during nesting should not be necessary.

The *Battlemead Wintering Bird Survey March 2020* p4 summary says:

1.1.3. In order to maintain (or increase) the wintering bird interest of the site, measures are recommended in terms of restricting access to some areas, particularly the causeway in the south-east and areas adjacent to the brook, whilst wintering bird species are present.

It justified (p21) continued restriction of access to the causeway path to avoid disturbing wetland bird species as regular disturbance could result in the possible abandonment of the site by sensitive species such as teal, gadwall and widgeon.

However, although access to the causeway was restricted during the survey, the report shows that two of these three sensitive birds were only present for a short time on Battlemead. Gadwall (max no 8) were recorded in late autumn and early winter but were later absent whilst widgeon (max no 17) was present only in early winter. Only teal (max no 81) were present in variable numbers, presumably throughout the winter (see pages 12 & 17).

It also notes (p4) that the assemblage of 60 species using the site was dominated by species that are common and widespread in Berkshire as well as nationally, with no evidence of any individual species being present in numbers that are significant at the regional or national level.

The *Battlemead Way Forward* document suggested a closed season for overwintering birds. The data presented in this report suggests the causeway path could be closed for a few months at the beginning of winter when migrant birds arrive and then leave. Startling teal does not seem to be sufficient justification for the permanent closing off access to the causeway path throughout the winter.

2. MAINTENANCE OF FLOW IN THE WHITE BROOK

The *Battlemead EMMP March 2020* report says:

Standing Water and Wetland Habitats

Aim

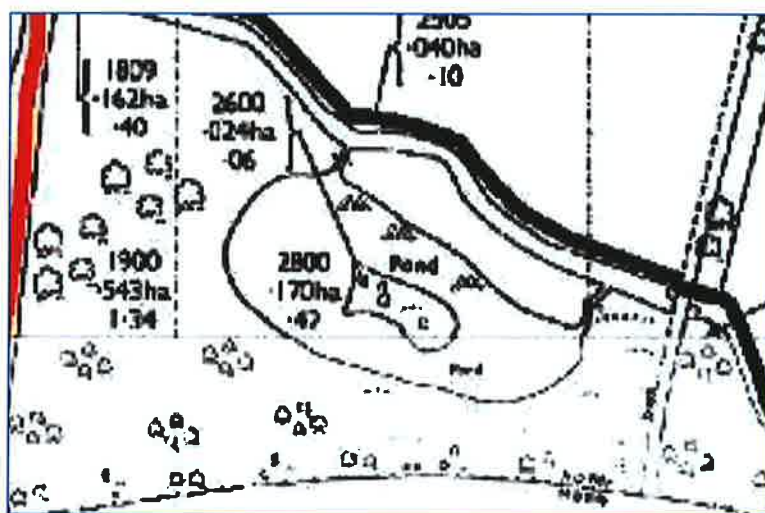
- 1.1.1. To ensure that standing water remains on site year-round with waterbodies to be managed to prevent annual drying and future succession to scrub. Riparian habitat will also be enhanced

Prescriptions

- 1.1.2. The waterbody SW3 located within woodland BW4 appears highly silted and covered in dense stands of common reed. In order to improve the value of this waterbody the pond will be desilted with stands of reed also removed in order to create areas of deeper open water. Removing silt from the waterbody will also help to ensure that it holds water year-round and would halt succession of the waterbody to scrub habitat. Creating open water habitat would help to increase the botanical diversity of this waterbody as well as providing an improved habitat resource to a range of faunal species including great crested newts and other amphibians which display in open water during the breeding season. Without future

intervention, it is likely that the waterbody will continue to become overrun by emergent vegetation and eventually succeed to scrub or other terrestrial vegetation. Therefore, regular removal of emergent vegetation will be undertaken, in order to maintain a cover of no more than 20% of the surface area of the waterbody. Control of submerged vegetation will be required and coverage of submerged plants will not exceed greater than 50% of the pond area.

This pond was created between 1912 and 1955 so it is not naturally occurring. Certainly as the report notes it is highly silted and covered with dense stands of common reed. What the authors of the report appear not to have been aware of is that it is fed by two connections to the White Brook. These would also need to be desilted for any chance of the pond retaining water over a reasonable period of time.



From Historic OS map 1955²

The invasive fern *Azolla*³ has been recorded in this pond which was treated with weevils in the summer 2019 by Maidenhead Waterways volunteers.

The **Battlemead EMMP report** further says (p8):

Objective 1: Enhance and maintain the diversity and quality of habitats within the site

1.1.4. The project presents opportunities for enhancement and positive management to benefit wintering bird species (and overall biodiversity) such as:

- Managing the flooded pools in the south-east of the site (at least in part) to create a more stable pool or scrape.

² OS maps in Rutherford S, 2019, *Battlemead Common Berkshire - Historic Landscape Analysis* for RBWM; see p74 for the 1955 map.

³ The preliminary ecological appraisal of June 2019 reported an absence of invasive species (see Battlemead EMMP March 2020 p17). *Azolla* was present but may not have been observed.

These are the wetlands on either side of the causeway path; deepening them should only be considered if there is proof that it will not influence flow in the White Brook. See remarks about blanket weed below.

In the earlier Ecological Appraisal Report (2019) by Austin Foot it was suggested that these scrapes could provide increased storage for flood water (para 5.2.11, page 33). However, it was found that during the recent near flood event of February 2020 the wetland was drained by the flood so increased storage seems unlikely.

- Managing the pond in the north-west of the site (within woodland) to maintain a mixture of open water and marginal vegetation habitats.

Managing the pond has been commented on above.

- Increasing reed bed habitat along the brook corridor

Reeds spread and collect silt, eventually slowing or stopping flow, accompanied by a deterioration in diversity of the aquatic fauna. The White Brook is already clogged with silt which has helped to create the wetland along with the poaching by cattle and probable damage to the banks by large wildfowl such as the Canada Goose. It is illogical to advocate adding reeds to the brook corridor while removing them from the pond, especially as the pond is fed by the brook.

Given the hoops that Maidenhead Waterways have to go through to remove any silt from the White Brook it is not sensible to make their work harder, work that aims to maintain flow to Maidenhead town centre.

3. GAPS IN THE REPORTS relating to the impact of the non-native species, the Canada Goose, on the aquatic environment, and the absence of any evaluation of the presence of the American Mink, a predator on young birds.

Canada Goose

The wintering bird report (p4) notes that within the context of the site, the central brook corridor and associated wetland areas in the south-east of the site are likely of greatest value and ecological sensitivity. The woodland and marginal areas also provide conditions for a variety of species, with the open grasslands being typically of lower importance at present, but still of value to introduced and naturalised geese plus low numbers of other species.

I am surprised that there is no discussion in the report of the known environmental impact of the Canada Goose on both grassland and wetland. Data presented in the report shows that the open grassland of the East Field is dominated by the introduced and naturalised Canada Goose (285 counted on one occasion) plus in lower numbers the Greylag Goose (81) also an introduced species. Not surprisingly there are low numbers of other birds.

The Canada Goose on Battlemead was to be discussed at the postponed meeting of the Biodiversity sub group of FOBC. It had previously been raised at the White Brook on Battlemead sub group. This is because, as has been pointed out in the English Heritage report on the Canada Goose.⁴

⁴ English Heritage (2014) *Landscape Advice Note: Canada Geese* 5p.

“Damage by the Canada Goose to grassland due to trampling and droppings is fairly well known. Possibly less well known is their effect on water bodies. The advice notes these as vegetation damage (affecting dissolved oxygen levels), droppings (increasing nutrient levels and affecting water quality) and physical damage (erosion of banks).



Canada Geese on the Causeway wetland in April 2020

The new wetland next to the causeway was created by erosion of the banks of the White Brook. The cause was poaching by cattle. However, if the English Heritage report is to be believed then the large numbers of Canada Goose on the site also contributed.

Last summer the wetland on Battlemead Common developed a bloom of filamentous algae (blanket weed) that eventually died off leaving in September a white deposit on the wetland (below); evidently the consultancy Austin Foot was not aware of this happening as it is not mentioned in either report.



The white deposit on the wetland in September 2019

At a biodiversity sub-group meeting in 2019 it was suggested that the bloom was due to the presence in the soil of agricultural fertiliser. If another bloom occurs in 2020 it will be more likely due to droppings, mostly from the Canada Goose – droppings that put high levels of nutrients in the water. Eutrophication due to increased nutrients can impact on the aquatic fauna.

If as seems likely a further bloom of blanket weed occurs in the wetland this summer then the wetland will, in the autumn as last year, have a dry white deposit of salts on it which reduces the productivity of the land. It is unlikely that deepening the wetland will prevent such blooms

We agree with the report that the central brook corridor and associated wetland areas in the south-east of the site are likely of greatest value and ecological sensitivity. An ongoing survey of the aquatic fauna begun in January 2020 shows that the brook is home to a variety of adult species and is also a nursery ground. It is unfortunate therefore that no evaluation of the impact of the large numbers of Canada Geese was given by the consultants, probably because they were not aware of the blanket weed bloom in the causeway wetland in 2019.

The American Mink

No reference is made to the presence of the introduced American mink, although in the 2019 report mink paw prints were noted on silt banks on the brook during the survey visit.⁵ Similarly the report does not record any evidence of otters on the site. Does this mean that no paw prints were seen, which is somewhat surprising?

The *EMMP March 2020* report (p21) gives as an adverse impact predation by pet dogs visiting the site. However dogs will be passing through with their owners whereas mink and otters are potentially present all the time. Mink and even otters are thought to prey on cygnets and other young birds, water voles and also fish, it would have been helpful to have an idea of their presence on Battlemead.

4. OTHER COMMENTS

Woodland

We accept the recommendations relating to woodland especially the aim of protecting and maintaining open grown trees particularly in the meadow in the western sector of the site and to providing additional tree planting to maximise biodiversity value and the continuity and restoration of the historical field pattern. However, there seems to have been no comment on trees in woodland parcel BW2, on the west bank of the White Brook. The roots of many of these trees are eroded and they may fall at any time; some have already done so. Willows, especially, root once in water and obstruct the flow in the brook.

Given the large numbers of badgers on the site we suggest the trees be managed to avoid locating standing dead wood/tree stumps/hibernacula near to the brook. Recently badgers targeted the stump of a pollarded tree close to North Town Moor pond in search of stag beetles and their larvae. The resultant woody debris in the pond decayed into a black, probably anoxic, silt and caused a drop in faunal diversity.

⁵ Battlemead Common, Maidenhead Berkshire Ecological Appraisal June 2019 by Austin Foot p29.

Dogs

There are varying ideas on how to control any impact of dogs on wildlife. We are also aware that there is pressure to allow more access for dog walkers.

The *Battlemead Wintering Bird Survey 2020* (p22) says:

Consideration could be given to prohibiting dogs off the lead, or zoning of the site to allow dogs off the lead in some areas (e.g. parts of the grassland in the west of the site) whilst promoting dogs being on the lead in others. This could also help in managing access for different users of the site; e.g. bird watchers or parents with young children who may prefer some dog-free areas.

The *Battlemead EMMP March 2020* report (p16) says:

The Local Authority are currently considering the use of a dog control order for part or all of the site. Currently there is likely to be a dog control order from the bridge between BW2 and BW4 all the way along the fenced path to the Thames in the east. This will ensure that dogs are kept on leads along this stretch of the site in order to reduce the potential impact on wildlife species, such as disturbance to nesting or wintering birds. This may be extended the entire west field but this is still under consultation and will be discussed with the friends of Battlemead group.

The *Battlemead Way Forward* document (p 4) says:

1. The Friends agree that control of dogs on the site is needed, given the impact that they can have on flora and fauna. It is suggested that a 'dogs on lead' policy should be adopted for the West Field and for the Northern Perimeter Path. Consideration needs to be given to the policy in the North Field depending on decisions about the future of the field and its neighbouring pond(s). Dogs should not be allowed on the East Field nor on the proposed Willow Wood boardwalk and bridge.

Allowing dogs off the lead in the West Field as recommended in the wintering bird report seems more sensible than the implication that dog control orders cover the whole site as in the EMMP report 2020. In practice some walkers already allow their dogs off the lead in the West Field. If they were able to do this legally they should be more likely to abide by the dogs on lead or no dogs policy elsewhere in the site.

With regard to dogs the *Battlemead Way Forward* document also says:

People walking multiple dogs (whether professional dog walkers or groups of dog owners bringing a significant number of dogs) need to be discouraged; research into how this is handled elsewhere should be helpful.

The *Battlemead Wintering Bird Survey March 2020* (p21) gives as an adverse impact predation by pet dogs visiting the site. However, dogs will be passing through with their owners whereas mink and otters are potentially present all the time.

A final comment: it seems likely that the large numbers of Canada Geese, and to a much lesser extent Greylag Geese, both introduced species, are doing more damage to the grassland and aquatic environment of Battlemead than people and their dogs.

CONCLUSION

The EMMP March 2020 report concludes that:

“This management plan has been provided in support of a planning application for the change of use of an area of land known as Battlemead Common which is to be opened up to the public. Providing the measures detailed in this document are adhered to the ecological value of the site as a whole will be maintained and enhanced in line with national and local planning policy.”

We understand from RBWM officials that the planning application referred to relates to change of use of an area of land to allow the creation of a car park and does **not** refer to the whole of Battlemead Common.

Because of gaps in the survey, we are unable to comment on whether the ecological value of the site as a whole will be maintained or enhanced. It is evident that the reports are dominated by surveys of the bird life on Battlemead. Little or no attention has been paid to the aquatic environment beyond admitting that the central brook corridor and associated wetland areas in the south-east of the site are likely to be of greatest value and ecological sensitivity,⁶ and in June attempting to find out if the Great Crested Newt is present.

There must be more public access, not least because it was purchased as public open space and to provide the missing link in the Millennium Walk. It would be a pity if, after fifty years of trying, the only route from Widbrook Common to the Thames Path is via the current northern perimeter path. Currently, by preventing access to the causeway path on the East Field and through the willow fields, the two most attractive routes are closed off.



The causeway path across the East Field May 2020

⁶ In June Austin Foot will sample the brook for eDNA to see if the Great Crested Newt is present. Maidenhead Civic Society has been sampling sites in the White Brook since January 2020. The only amphibian recorded so far was sampled at the beginning of May when tadpoles of either frog or toad were found. These had no external gills so were not newt larvae.



The path through the willow field May 2020

The Civic Society supports the Battlemead Way Forward document that advocates restoring the path through the willow fields to provide another route to the Thames Path when the causeway path needs to be temporarily closed for a few months around the beginning of winter. **This will allow a circular route to be present on Battlemead throughout the year.**

The report *Battlemead Common Historic Landscape Analysis*, commissioned by the Royal Borough in 2019, notes the presence of heritage assets, including the 1934 Boundary Stones (BS) on Battlemead and the Boundary Marker that separated the land of William Waldorf Astor of Cliveden from that of Edward Wagg of Islet Park. The willow field route will also facilitate viewing of BS no26 and the Boundary Marker.

We note that information boards about birds have been recommended.⁷ We hope that similar boards and history trails will feature its historic past. Battlemead Common is well named: the *Historic Landscape Analysis* report gives details of its past as common land and describes a history that tracks changes in land ownership that closely reflect changes in the way this country has been governed.

Battlemead is both an ecological and a heritage asset and we would like to see it used as much as possible in the way that was intended. However, the planning application for the change of use of an area of Battlemead Common for a car park is supported by a management plan which, as outlined above, is flawed. If it is submitted unchanged the Civic Society will object.

Ann Darracott
Maidenhead Civic Society
May 2020

⁷ Wintering Bird Survey March 2020 p23.

Battlemead Common - The Cookham Society Perspective

The present RBWM management documents related to this site are the Masterplan 2020 drawing and the Austin Foot Ecology Management Plan. We understand that the Ecology Management Plan is a draft and may be amended.

The Ecology Management Plan is an extensive document and we support its aims of preserving and enhancing the natural habitat of the area. It provides a vital study from which to develop the management of the whole area for the benefit of residents and visitors whilst protecting and improving the critical areas of habitat for wildlife.

Future Management

With regard to the future management of the site we identify four key objectives:-

1. Public access to as much as of the site as possible whilst protecting the most important areas of habitat from disturbance by people or dogs.
2. Maximising the public enjoyment of the towpath alongside Battlemead Common by establishing a circular walk using the existing northern path and creating a southern link from the West Field to the towpath.
3. Completing the missing link for the Millennium Walk so that it is available throughout the year for walkers (with dogs).
4. Ensuring that flood water that exceeds the in-channel capacity of the White Brook has an unobstructed route across the lowest part of the site to the Thames.

Public Access

We accept the general principle in the Austin Foot report of keeping the public (and dogs) out of the high value woodland and wetland areas, but we can not accept the suggestion that the public should be permanently excluded from the whole of the East Field as most of this field is just rough grazing. Excluding the public from the whole of East Field as well as the other woodland areas would mean public access to significantly less than half of an area which has been purchased as Public Open Space. This restriction would be unacceptable. We believe that the East Field should be divided by additional fencing roughly as sketched on the attached copy of the Masterplan. The public should then have unrestricted access to the north east of this fence.

Southern Access route to Towpath

For the southern access to the towpath, a board walk through the willow plantation was suggested in the Way Forward document.. In our view a better (and probably cheaper) route would be as sketched on the attached copy of Fig. 2b of the Austin Foot plan. This would run from the south east corner of West Field through the narrow neck of woodland and south and east across the grassland (SNG2) down to where the

White Brook crosses the southern boundary of the site. A new footbridge would be provided at this point and the path completed close to the southern boundary of the site in the willow wood. With a relatively small amount of additional fencing this route could be separated from the rest of the woodland areas. At the White Brook bridge the route would have to cross a very narrow piece of land not owned by RBWM. Ideally the owner would give permission for the path but if not could the Borough not use compulsory purchase powers to establish the route?

Causeway bridge and central wildlife area.

With the southern access in place and a large part of the East Field open to the public as outlined above we would not object to the causeway bridge being closed permanently to the public. This would create a central wildlife reserve including the most important habitat areas. The public could walk round but not enter this area. Suitable hides or viewing platforms could be provided at a later date.

Flooding

It is very important for Cookham to keep the A4094 over Widbrook Common open as long as possible during a flood as this is the last access road to the village to become inundated and closed. It is particularly relevant in the minor (but much more frequent) type of flood events.

When the flow of flood water exceeds the capacity of the White Brook channel, additional flow runs across the North and East fields. Because of the very flat gradient in this area even vegetation can constitute a significant impediment to flow. In any adopted management plan for Battlemead, we would like to see a designated route free of above ground obstructions (including vegetation) for this flow to take place all the way into the Thames. Hopefully, advice on the detail of this can be obtained from a flood specialist at EA. As a preliminary guide, we believe that a strip between 10 and 20 meters wide should be adequate and a route close to the proposed additional fencing in East Field would be suitable. Some minor earthworks might be required at the Thames end of this channel in order to optimise its performance. The management plan should include the routine inspection and maintenance of this route.

Dogs

It appears that dogs are a particularly contentious issue. Many residents own dogs and there is no doubt that Battlemead will be an attractive area for residents to exercise them. Many dogs need to run free in order to get sufficient exercise and some residents will probably allow them to do this whatever regulations are put in place. In our view it is better to have one designated area where dogs are kept on leads and other walkers (particularly children) can not be frightened by free running dogs. A second area should then be identified where off lead exercise is permitted. The towpath is not owned by RBWM over most of this length. RBWM therefore do not have

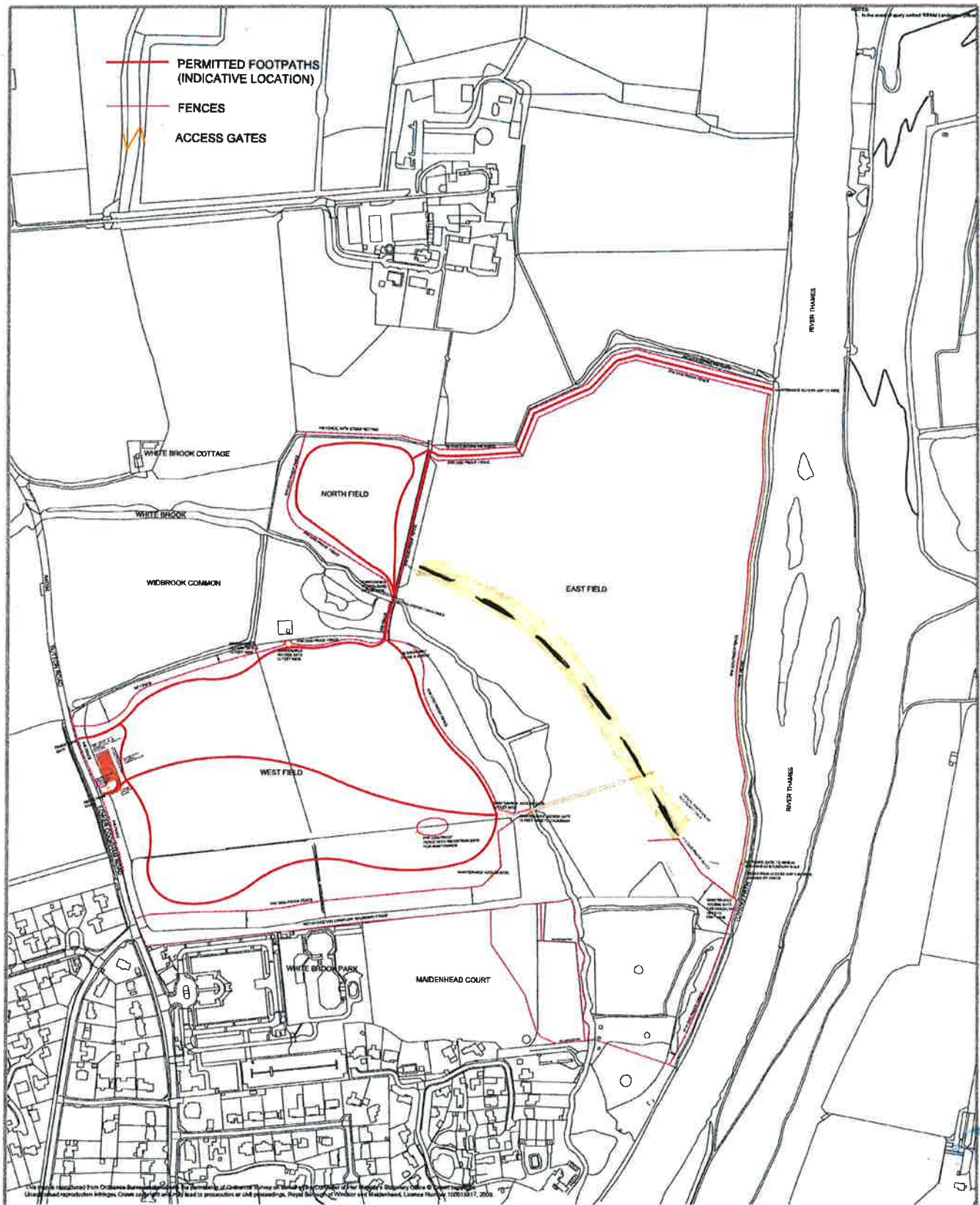
any control over dogs on it. As the East Field abuts the towpath, we would suggest that on the adjoining opened up area of East Field dogs should be “under full control of the owner” whilst on West Field dogs should be kept on a lead.


Timing of Improvements

There has already been significant expenditure on measures to protect wildlife on the site. We suggest that it would be extremely inappropriate for money to be spent on any habitat improvement for wildlife before proper reasonable access for residents (as detailed above) has been provided.

The Cookham Society

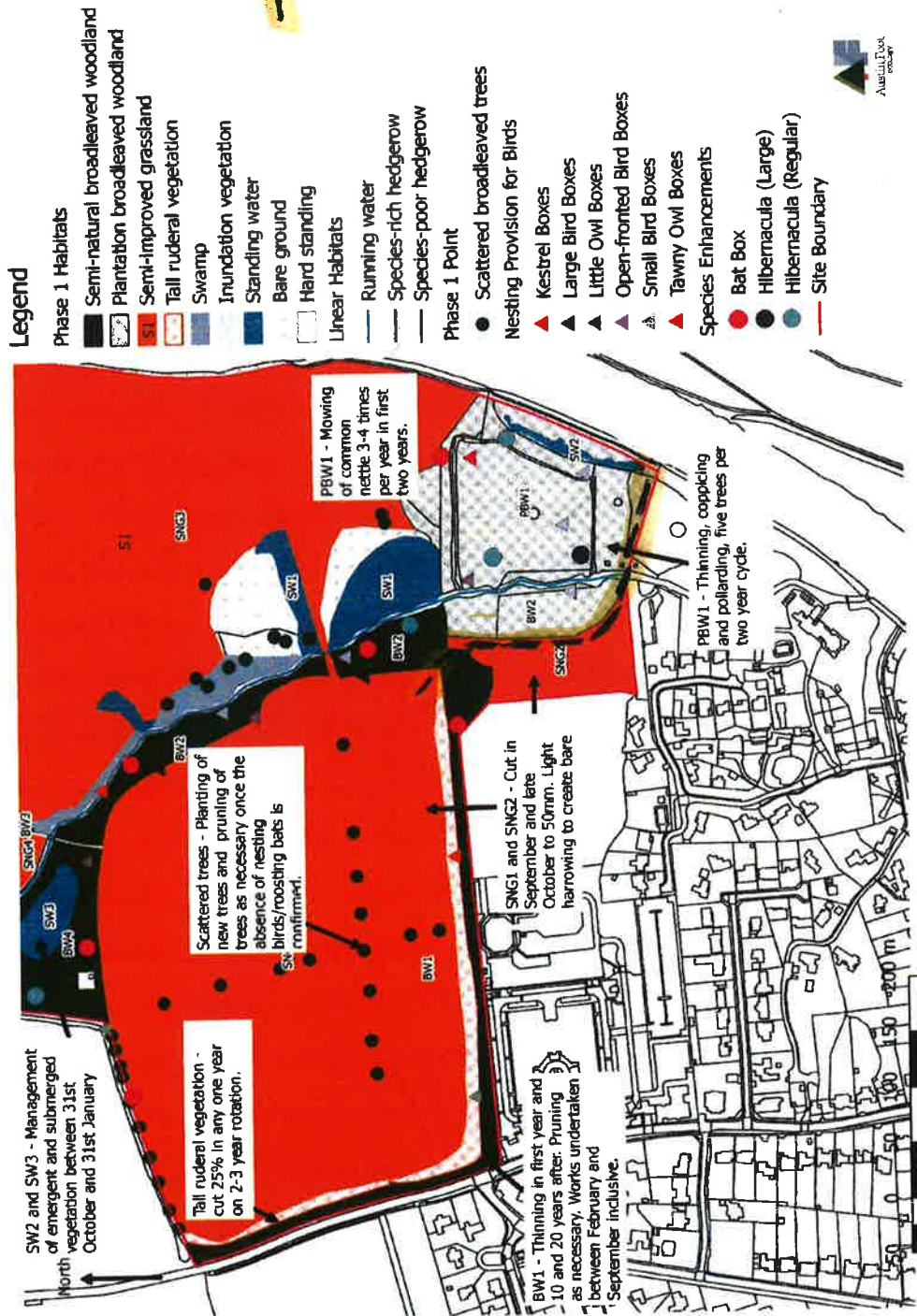
May 2020



 <p>The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Town Hall St. Ives Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 1RF Tel: 01628 796482 Fax: 01628 796738</p>	Project BATTLEMEAD COMMON	Date 05.06.2019	Scale 1:2000@A1	
	Title MASTERPLAN JAN 2020	Drawn AC	CAD AC	Checked AH
	Rev Amendments	Dwg No. 201810-L-05	Rev. C	
	C Removed diagonal paths B Replaced bunds with bollards A Amended as per feedback from FoB	AC 180919 AC 220819 AC 240619	Base Ref. Y:\ARCVIEW\BUREAU\LANDSCAPE\Maidenhead\Battle Mead Common	

Proposed additional fencing in East Field

Figure 2b: Management Prescriptions and Enhancements (2 of 2)



New Southern
link footpath

Anthony Hurst

To: Anthony Hurst
Subject: FW: Battlemead Common Ecological Management Plan

From: Jane Perry <janeperry480@gmail.com>
Sent: 25 May 2020 12:56
To: Anthony Hurst <Anthony.Hurst@RBWM.gov.uk>
Subject: Battlemead Common Ecological Management Plan

Dear Anthony,

As you are aware I am one of the representatives of Cookham Parish Council on the Friends of Battlemead. Unsurprisingly we largely agree with the Cookham Society's views on this document.

East Field Management, SNG3

The issue of flooding of/ across the A4094 Lower Cookham Road/Sutton Road is of particular concern to residents in Cookham, as I have mentioned before at meetings. The A4904 is the last of the roads into Cookham to flood, when this happens Cookham is cut off to all but a few high vehicles and a few 4x4s. Therefore the proposals to allow most of the East Field to grow long grass and for the North Field not to be cut for 5 years are very worrisome. This will impede the flow of water back to the River Thames making flooding of Cookham much more likely. In the floods in 2014 Cookham was cut off for a considerable amount of time with the resulting damage by flood water to homes and businesses and loss of income to many of those businesses. Widbrook common and those fields were underwater for a considerable time.

It would be disappointing if Battlemead which was bought by RBWM as Public Open Space were to have large areas permanently fenced off including all the woodland and the East Field. It would be a pity if there were be no public access to the woodlands as children enjoy exploring woodland. I understand the wish to protect wildlife but reasonable access should be possible.

I note the East Field will be open for only 2 days a year to enable residents to walk the Boundary and the Millenium Walks in April and October. What is the reasoning for this? Cllr Simon Dudley said at the time of this purchase of the 112 acres of White Place Farm completed the missing link in the Millenium Walk but it seems for only 2 days a year. I am sure residents of the Royal Borough would like to have the opportunity to do this walk more often. Many people walk the sections of this walk that are accessible and would like to complete it.

SNG3 The East Field

The East Field has been used for cattle grazing May - October for many years and by geese and other overwintering birds the rest of the year. The field was therefore close cropped and acquired the flora and fauna associated with such fields. I am concerned about the proposal to allow the grass and other vegetation to grow long until late summer when only a third of it will be mown to a height of 50-100mm in August. This will adversely affect the existing flora and fauna of the field allowing thistles, gorse and other plants which will change the natural ecology of the field. To protect the existing flora and fauna the field need to be mown regularly or grazed during the summer months thus giving continuity.

SNG4 The North Field

This field was also grazed by cattle or horses if nothing is done to this field for 5 years apart from the cutting the margins for paths around the perimeter it will be overrun with gorse and other ruderal vegetation and become impenetrable! It is already becoming overgrown with thistles etc. You only have to look at what happened to land

at Winter Hill overlooking the Thames that the National Trust decided not to manage and are now having to put a lot of effort and are asking for volunteers to assist with clearing gorse and other vegetation!

It will also mean the likelihood of flooding along the A4094 and thus Cookham will be greater especially if the hedges are going to be encouraged to be denser with an 'A' shape thus impeding water flow back to the river.

In conclusion I think RBWM needs to decide whether Battlemead Common is a Nature Reserve with limited public access or a Public Open Space? Many people are enjoying this area but dog owners wonder why dogs must be kept on leads when the vulnerable areas are fenced off. I know the name cannot be changed but that adds to the confusion because there are no such limitations on other commons in the borough.

Kind Regards,

Jane Perry

Friends of Battlemead Common

East Berks Ramblers response to Over Wintering Bird Survey and Ecological Management Plan.

1. Context

1.1. Our response to the Over Wintering Bird Survey produced by Austin Foot and the Ecological Management Plan produced collaboratively by Austin Foot and RBWM is based on the following key considerations

- Battlemead Common was purchased by RBWM with the express intention to 'safeguard the open green space and improve access for residents and visitors. Ownership of the site ... will allow the Council to reopen a missing link in the Millennium Walk and ensure future generations and wildlife can continue to enjoy the area as an unspoilt outdoor space, with breath-taking views of Cliveden and the surrounding countryside'. (RBWM News Release published 20.12.2018)
- Battlemead Common is not a Nature Reserve or a public park. Its management and usage will need to strike a balance between the wildlife, access and water management issues.
- The *Way Forward* document produced by a number of individual members of the Friends of Battlemead Common and supported by Cllr Donna Stimson, Lead Member for, inter alia, Parks and Countryside, set out a balanced and proportionate approach to the forward management and development of the site.
- RBWM need to develop an integrated Management Plan for the site that takes proper account of the various interests and pressures involved.

1.2. Battlemead Common has been in Council ownership since December 2018. Since then RBWM has spent considerable sums of money on fencing and other works and external consultants and continues to do so. A new car park is planned at a cost of some tens of thousands of pounds. Yet in spite of this, and the parlous state of its finances, RBWM has still not produced a comprehensive plan for Battlemead's future management and usage that takes account of the balance that needs to be struck between various interests. The *Way Forward* document showed this can be done. The Royal Borough's disconnected approach to forward planning and lack of commitment to working through consensus do not serve Battlemead or the community well.

1.3. East Berks Ramblers main interest - and area of expertise – is in access issues. We do however understand that access is not all, and that a balanced approach is needed. Many of our members have a keen interest in and knowledge of wildlife and are very supportive of efforts to improve and enhance it in the Royal Borough. We therefore feel able to comment on a wide range of matters outside of the access issue.

1.4. The irony of RBWM purchasing Battlemead Common as public open space whilst at the same time being party to a Management Plan proposing (para 4.1.24) that over half of the site should only be open to the public for 2 days a year, and then only under draconian conditions, is not lost on us.

1.5. No supporting evidence is given for this view. The authors of/parties to the report seem to be under the misapprehension that the Boundary and Millennium Walks are only used on two days each year. The Boundary Walk is permanently waymarked and in conjunction with the Maidenhead

Civic Society we hope to waymark the Millennium Walk soon in recognition of its 20th anniversary. Leaflets on both walks are produced and people encouraged to walk them at any time of the year

2. Comments and Questions on the Over Wintering Bird Survey

2.1. We studied the report with interest, having already accepted that the hard evidence it delivered would be a key determinant of our position on access to the Causeway Path, the route of the Boundary and Millennium Walks. We did accept that some limited closure over the winter season was probable but did not wish to come to any firm views until we had the facts.

2.2. The report is comprehensive although there are some points on which clarification would be of interest. The survey was carried out between September and March and the overall conclusion is stated to be that “no individual species was present in numbers indicating national or regional significance”. No thresholds for Local Wildlife Sites were met, despite considerable speculation in the report about Water Rail, where a peak count of 1 was recorded.

2.3. We would like to understand a little more about the numbers in the report in order to get a clearer picture of bird levels. Although peak counts - the highest number of the species on the site on one day - are given, is this the highest number seen at one point in time, or total sightings throughout the day? Whilst the report contains some broad comments about bird numbers over the survey period, no details or averages are given: are there any notable trends during the winter period?

2.4. The Causeway Path is of particular interest to us. The ponds to either side of the western end of the path are where most ducks were observed. The numbers for ‘flighty’ species were Gadwall (peak count 8, in small groups and scattered pairs in early winter but not later); Wigeon (peak count 17, a small flock in early winter only) and Teal (peak count 81, ‘regular presence in varying numbers’ but no other data provided). The Breeding Bird Survey undertaken between April and June 2019 reported Teal present only during the early part of the survey but were not noted later, suggesting these were late wintering/passage birds. This would not appear to present a significant issue in winter, and certainly not beyond April. It is our firm view that any issues would be dealt with by closure of the path for some of the over-wintering season; banning of dogs whether on or off lead; and possibly fencing to both sides of the path. To our knowledge the present path closure has been respected and we see no reason at all why a temporary closure, albeit for some months, would not be in future. This approach would be in accord with the *Way Forward* document.

2.5. That document also proposed a year-round route through the Willow Fields. This would provide an alternative circular route for any times when the Causeway Path is closed. We support the development of such a route but for the avoidance of any doubt we see it as an addition to the Causeway Path, not an alternative.

2.6. We would remind the RBWM that Natural England has a programme to secure public access to all its National Nature Reserves (NNR) and similar holdings unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. We have previously pointed this out to you, together with their statement that in order to achieve this they will ‘... use the least restrictive protection for sensitive features on the site. Restrictions or exclusions can be put in place for specific times of the year...’ It is unclear to us why the RBWM will not pursue such a policy, especially when it has already been suggested to them.

2.7. Although the report refers to the access issues it is hard to escape the conclusion that it contains an inbuilt presumption that bird issues have primacy. We do not accept this, any more than we think

that access should have primacy. We think there should be a sensible balance, based on the available facts and on what is currently there at Battlemead not on speculation about what might be. We do not accept that any actions or activity on Battlemead that may on occasion disturb birds should automatically be ruled out. Mitigation of disturbance is possible in a number of ways and we have suggested some in para 2.4. above.

2.8. Section 5 of the report - Outline Impacts and Recommendations – unfortunately seems to have been written with scant regard for the balance needed to bring about a way ahead for Battlemead that all interested parties can sign up to. It focuses almost entirely on management of the site as a de facto nature reserve with the only reference to ‘the public’ being in the very last bullet point in para 5.3. Whilst the report recognises that visitor numbers cannot be predicted it speculates that use of the Causeway Path MAY cause disturbance and refers to the POSSIBLE abandonment of the site and the POSSIBLE reduction in numbers. None of these are givens, but the action we suggest above would most certainly mitigate any such risks to a point that we consider acceptable.

2.9. We agree that information boards and educational programmes are an excellent idea, and indeed some are already in place. But they will mean little if all the public can do is peer over the fence into a very large proportion of the public open space they have paid for.

3. Environmental Management Plan

3.1. The disclaimer on the front page of this report seem at odds with the comment in Anthony Hurst’s email that this report was ‘written in collaboration with RBWM officers’. There is also a reference in the report (para 1.3.1) to the ‘Ecological Mitigation and Measures that WILL be delivered’. This implies that the decisions, including the closure of the East Field, have already been taken and consequently that any comments will have no impact. Would RBWM please clarify whether this report and its contents as they stand have the support of the Council or not? And how any comments will be dealt with.

3.2. We have few comments on the details of this plan as it largely lies outside our expertise. However, we require an assurance that none of the proposals contained in it would affect the pathways already in place, including the cross field path on the West Field. Our comments on the Causeway Path have already been made elsewhere. We can see no evidence in the Summer Breeding Bird survey previously undertaken by Austin Foot to justify refusing access to the East Field.

3.3. There are a number of references in the plan to fauna, for example Great Crested Newts, that ‘are considered to have the potential’ to be present on the site. We will not accept a situation whereby access, either now or in the future, will be limited by such speculation. We would like an assurance that the future management of Battlemead will not in any way be determined by speculation of this nature: it should be determined by hard evidence.

4. Key Questions

4.1. What is the thinking behind the Royal Borough’s decision to reduce access to the East Field so drastically and what evidence has it used in coming to it?

4.2. RBWM has stated that it is ‘inviting comments’ on the Ecological Management Plan although the Plan itself contains numerous references to measures that ‘will’ be used. Does this mean the plan as it stands is already agreed and is Council policy? If not, what is its status?

4.3. We had understood that the Friends of Battlemead Common was a consultative group that would have input into decisions about Battlemead. Can RBWM explain how this squares with the unilateral publication of the Environmental Management Plan with no prior discussion or attempt to seek consensus?

4.4. What status will comments on these reports have and how will they be dealt with?

4.5. What is the RBWM's response to the assurances sought in Section 3 above and the further information requested on the Wintering Bird Survey?

4.6. What is RBWM's position with regard to the proposals in the *Way Forward* report?

5. Conclusion

For RBWM to spend significant amounts of public money on some 110 acres of open space and then propose to ban people from over half of it for all but 2 days a year is risible. We accept and support the need for a balanced management approach. We see no reason why the Causeway Path should not be open for a considerable period of the year to enable people to enjoy the wildlife there; to appreciate the fine views of Cliveden; and to have a direct link to the Thames Path. After all, this is what RBWM originally said were the reasons for the purchase. We hope you will reconsider.

5

Anthony Hurst

From: Anthony Hurst
Sent: 26 May 2020 07:33
To: Anthony Hurst
Subject: FW: Battlemead Reports

From: Cllr G Jones <Cllr.G.Jones@RBWM.gov.uk>
Sent: 12 May 2020 12:53
To: Anthony Hurst <Anthony.Hurst@RBWM.gov.uk>
Cc: Cllr Stimson <Cllr.Stimson@RBWM.gov.uk>
Subject: Battlemead Reports

Dear Anthony,

Thank you for the reports and I trust you are keeping well.

The reports have not changed my mind but have strengthened my resolve about dogs on the "public open space" which is Battlemead. This is a public asset, bought with Council Tax money and should have full access given to the public. If large parts are to be closed off to the public we may as well sell it to the RSPB (or Wild Maidenhead/Cookham) and spend our taxpayers money elsewhere.

The birds reported are in the huge majority "common or widespread" and remember we are surrounded by thousands of acres of private green land and a National Trust Nature Reserve directly across the river.

In my view Battlemead should allow dogs in all areas. Some more sensitive areas may require dogs to be kept on a lead but other less sensitive areas should allow off-lead exercise.

I would perhaps agree that the East Field could be closed over the nesting season (3 months maximum) but the payoff would be a circular walk for dogs on leads through the East Field back to the tow path near the wood (where the current five bar gate) is for the rest of the year.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Greg Jones - Riverside Ward

07831 444408

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Town Hall

St Ives Road

Maidenhead

SL6 1RF

Anthony Hurst

From: Anthony Hurst
Sent: 26 May 2020 07:51
To: Anthony Hurst
Subject: FW: Friends of Battlemead Common - Maidenhead Waterways comments

From: irose262@aol.com <irose262@aol.com>
Sent: 22 May 2020 22:57
To: Anthony Hurst <Anthony.Hurst@RBWM.gov.uk>
Cc: ijcaird@outlook.com
Subject: Re: Friends of Battlemead Common - Maidenhead Waterways comments

Dear Anthony,

Hope you are well, and thanks for sending the two Austin Foot documents which Ian Caird and I have looked at.

In our understanding the Wintering Bird report aims to provide information, the actual management being in the "prescription" part of the Ecological Management Plan.

The Ecological Management Plan prescriptions are in 4.1.3 to 4.1.6, 4.1.8 to 4.1.10, 4.1.12 to 4.1.15, 4.1.17 to 4.1.19 (Standing water and Wetland habitats), 4.1.21 to 4.1.25 and 4.1.27 to 4.1.31.

From Maidenhead Waterways viewpoint I read especially **4.1.17 to 4.1.19**, which are about standing water (ponds and scrapes) with little about flowing water (the White Brook). In 4.1.10 under Plantation Broadleaved Woodland there's also a section about strimming nettles on the East bank of White Brook, which would be fine for us.

The aim in 4.1.16 states "To ensure that standing water remains on site year-round with waterbodies to be managed to prevent annual drying and future succession to scrub". From our observation, the amount of standing water is closely related to the Thames river level, whose management is by the EA, and so outside RBWM's control. This is just a comment for information, as the prescription itself doesn't cover it. We're OK with the wording in the prescription.

We believe that the White Brook maintenance plan should be developed from the Friends of Battlemead Way Forward document, and also taking into account the SEW/Jacobs study of which the White Brook is a key part.

The reason for this approach is that the Austin Foot report, good though it is, doesn't consider the whole downstream system and Local Wildlife site, nor the effect of Thames level, the hydraulics, and how it affects the wetland areas. All these, along with maintaining biodiversity and habitat, need to be taken into account to decide how to manage the White Brook.

I hope these inputs help, please feel free to contact me if it isn't clear or if discussion would be useful.

Best regards

Ian Rose
Maidenhead Waterways
01628 637908



Comments on Ecological Management Plan and Wintering Bird Survey for circulation to Friends of Battlemead from Wild Maidenhead

Wild Maidenhead is grateful for the opportunity to comment on these documents commissioned by RBWM.

Documents

WBS Wintering Bird Survey by Austin Foot, March 2020

(0286.03 Battlemead Wintering Bird Report 30.03.20easf.pdf)

EMP Battlemead Ecological Management Plan, by Austin Foot, March 2020

(Battlemead Common-Ecological Management Plan.docx)

The balance between biodiversity and public access

The Friends of Battlemead are working together to find ways to manage the often competing needs of biodiversity and access as well as waterways, flood resilience and other uses. We are pleased that the Wintering Bird Survey (WBS) sets out the causes of harm to wintering birds on this site from public access. By understanding them FoB can make better decisions. WBS 5.2.1 states "The used of the site as public open space may lead to a variety of adverse impacts on wintering birds such as:

- Increased disturbance of birds via increased number of visitors (particularly those with dogs).
- Increased predation risk of birds from pet dogs visiting the site.
- Loss or change in quality/amount of suitable foraging or roosting/loafing habitat through changes in management or increased human activity."

It is not correct to say in the WBS (para 5.2.3) that 'promotion of the site as a public open space including the creation of a car park' was the 'primary aim of the project'. It may have been the initial inspiration of the Council, but subsequent observations of the site, lead to a Terms of Reference that also give emphasis to biodiversity.

Recommendations

- 1. RBWM officers and FoB acknowledge the potential adverse impacts on wintering birds and use them in future decision-making**
- 2. RBWM officers and FoB note that the WBS statement of the primary aim is incorrect and reaffirm their support for the FoB Terms of Reference**

Compliance - national law, local law and Council policy

Any site in Windsor and Maidenhead is subject to local and national planning and wildlife law, including those owned by RBWM. National compliance is required with several acts of parliament concerning wildlife and the National Planning Policy Framework, and locally we have the RBWM Local Plan.

Taking action to protect wildlife and enhance habitats for biodiversity is not only a matter of good judgement for the benefit of residents health and well-being, we would say, but also of compliance with the law.

For example, all wild birds in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation protects the birds and their young from killing and injury, and prohibits damage or destruction of their active nests and eggs.

The EMP we are considering here is linked to the planning application for change of use of Battlemead and a car park (19/03103). The Borough ecologist requires a condition on the planning application that an EMP must be approved and implemented. This is because without the EMP, the proposals in the planning application will not comply with the NPPF and the RBWM Local Plan (Submission Version) policies NR3 and SP4.

The EMP has been carefully formulated to try to ensure biodiversity net gain on the site in compliance with the NPPF and RBWM Local Plan (Submission Version) and Wild Maidenhead broadly supports its contents. We make a few recommendations, and note that the EMP process allows for review and amendment as new species are found.

In June 2019, the Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency, adding the importance and urgency of responding the climate change emergency and the ecological crisis to its policies. Battlemead is by definition governed by this new policy, and failing to adopt ecological management for biodiversity net gain and carbon sequestration would be contrary it.

Recommendations

3. FoB urge the Council to support adoption and implementation of the EMP

Wintering Bird Survey

Wild Maidenhead surveyors have previously heard Water Rail at the site, and although few were found on these particular occasions, this is a suitable habitat for them, and improvements such as enhanced reed beds could encourage greater numbers, which would be a strong addition to Battlemead's 'list'.

We agree that this is a habitat suitable for Skylarks and we should aspire to them breeding here as part of the local recovery of nature. Preserving the North Field for wildflowers could add valuable additional habitat for several insect, bird and other species.

The bird survey data is of regional importance and should be shared. This could be achieved by sending the bird counts to the County Recorder.

Recommendations

- 4. In addition to the WBS recommendations consideration should be given for preserving the North Field for wildflowers**
- 5. The bird count charts should be copied to the County Bird Recorder for the 2019 Bird Report**

Ecological Management Plan

We are surprised that there is relatively little to say on the tree-scape and very mature trees. We observe that the site's mature trees are gradually falling down, and there are already many on the

ground. We estimate that the line of trees on the Hitachi side must be near 50% leaning or fallen. Several of the centre Oaks are in poor condition. The large Willows near the NW pond and mast may need a safety inspection. The northern tree-lined edge of the whole has lost very significant trees in recent winters. This creates opportunities for replanting that the tree officer would be able to help advise on.

We feel more biodiversity net gain of bird species, in particular, could be achieved if higher and wider hedgerows were accommodated in suitable locations on the site. Different species need different heights and widths of hedgerows (eg R E Green, P E Osborne & E J Sears 1994)

Botanical survey work should continue so that species that have not emerged on the site in the particular weather and conditions of 2019 can be identified and protected.

We note that the site has some of the markers for Local Nature Reserve status "Habitats and Species of special importance, a mosaic of at least seven habitat types, public access and potential for educational use.

The nettle species in the west Field is not the usual perennial nettle but Annual Nettle which, to our knowledge is poorly represented in the Borough. Therefore less frequent mowing should be applied

Recommendations

- 6. We suggest that the RBWM Tree Officer is asked to recommend a planting plan for the site to compensate for fallen and falling trees.**
- 7. Hedgerow maintenance should be revised to accommodate a greater variety of heights and widths to meet the needs of a different bird species.**
- 8. Botanical surveys should continue on the site.**
- 9. The potential for Local Nature Reserve status should be kept under review**
- 10. Reduce the proposed mowing frequency in the West Field to protect the Annual Nettle.**



Battlemead

WildCookham response to Austin Foot Winter Bird Survey and Ecological Management Plan

Objectives and context

Thank you for circulating the Austin Foot Winter Bird Survey and the Ecological Management Plan. As a general comment WildCookham considers that the two documents, and more specifically the Ecological Management Plan, provide a good basis for the future enhancement of Battlemead's natural capital and its biodiversity. Both were commissioned by the Council to provide a professional, science-based assessment of Battlemead, and to offer prescriptions built on this assessment. We were surprised to read in the Wintering Bird Survey (para 5.2.3) that 'promotion of the site as a public open space including the creation of a car park' was the 'primary aim of the project': this may be a question of interpretation but it suggests a more open access policy than is in the agreed Terms of Reference for the Friends group and might suggest a bias in the commissioning that was misplaced.

Despite this, we believe that the EMP achieves a sensible balance between the varying views and objectives of the Friends of Battlemead (FoB) group. None of us will achieve everything we seek but, after more than a year of discussion, we now need to move forward: and to do that on the basis of professional advice. Indeed, given the perceived primary aim of the commissioned study and reports noted above, the consultants' findings and conclusions pointing towards the need to protect and enhance the environment at Battlemead gain added weight.

We also note that the Council (subsequent to acquiring Battlemead) has declared an Environment and Climate Emergency. The original stated purpose for the acquisition (mainly as a public amenity) has been overtaken by events and, whilst public access must remain a key element in any plans for Battlemead, the focus must now be onto the role of Battlemead in enabling the Council to meet its net biodiversity targets; failure to realise the biodiversity gain from Battlemead would be contrary to the Emergency. Battlemead also represents 'low-hanging fruit'. It is a piece of land that has not had public rights of access for many decades, arguably centuries, so limiting it now takes away no rights from local citizens. Managed in the right way it has the potential to make a very significant contribution to our biodiversity whilst adding to the local natural habitats accessible by the public.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the statement of objectives relating to the purpose of the Austin Foot projects is clarified**
- 2. That the declaration of an Environment and Climate Emergency by the Council is noted and that future decisions concerning the management of Battlemead give precedence to policies and strategies developed to meet the natural capital challenges of the Emergency**

Visitor numbers assumptions/car park plan

Whilst not directly an issue for the EMP, the planned car park needs to be viewed alongside it. The Plan was commissioned in the context of the planned car park at Battlemead. This assumes spaces for 26 cars and eight bicycles. Unsurprisingly, the Plan does not attempt any discussion of the relative impact of different sizes of carpark: this is understandable since the scale of the planned car park was a given. But the original decision in favour of 26 spaces was, as far as we can determine, not based on any reasoned view of the size of park that would be appropriate, a point acknowledged in para 5.2.3 of the Winter Bird Survey Report. So there is a danger that any broad agreement with the findings of the Plan will imply agreement with the need for the car park. This is absolutely not the case.

This is not the place to discuss in detail the merits or not of the car park, other than to say that that the EMP does not give a sound basis for agreeing to the car park as currently envisaged.

WildCookham, along with other Friends of Battlemead, is totally opposed to a car park of the size proposed. It is not justified by the size of the site and of the type of use envisaged; there is no evidence offered as to the basis for choosing this size of park; it brings with it the significant risk of abuse (professional dog walkers, evening 'entertainment' are just two potential problems); and it is our contention that, in proposing such a large car park facility, the Council is effectively saying that Battlemead is no more than a public park with some interesting ecology. In so doing it is in contention with its own Environment and Climate Emergency which places a duty on the Council to address urgently the massive challenges of climate change and the related environmental damage and habitat loss.

We state that the current plan for the car park must now be reviewed. If, for any reason, the current plan is accepted we urge the council to begin by providing a smaller parking area and to review its use for some time. This will, among other benefits, avoid further unnecessary expenditure at a time of severe financial difficulty.

The above comments concerning the car park also raise more general questions about the footfall data used by the consultants as the basis for their recommendations. The consultants state that 'an exact number of anticipated public visitors....is not known'. So what assumptions were made in order to reach the various conclusions about the impact on biodiversity? Clearly a larger number is likely to have a greater impact: this is one of the issues underlying our concern about the car park, but it also creates uncertainty as we view the EMP proposals.

Recommendations:

1. That the Council clarifies the assumptions as to predicted visitor numbers to Battlemead which underlie the Ecological Management Plan (and, by inference, the carpark proposals)
2. That the Council or its consultants clarifies how the assumptions of possible biodiversity loss were determined if there was no assumed visitor numbers target
3. That the Council reviews its car park proposals, assuming that the data on which it was based is open to doubt and
4. That as a minimum response any car park development should be on a phased basis allowing for extension up to an allowed maximum over time if the need is justified

General comments on the Winter Bird Survey and Ecological Management Plan

Our overall view is that the work done by Austin Foot in cooperation with the Council's officers provides a good basis for beginning the project to revive the natural capital of the Battlemead site. The steps proposed will allow a process of regeneration to begin and we welcome the statement in para 3.3.1 of the EMP that 'The site supports or is considered to support (now or in the future) a variety of species' (our emphasis). The progressive enhancement of the habitats is an important issue and underlines the need for decisions about the use of the land to be based on what it can be as much as what it is. This also means that actions and decisions about the management of the land, and access to it, deemed appropriate today may need reviewing and changing in the future.

As the project proceeds we envisage a continuing process of evaluation with every opportunity taken to build on experience in order to further enhance the site's potential, with the needs of natural restoration and biodiversity enhancement at all times being a prime driver of policy.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the Council/FoB confirms that its policy for all aspects Battlemead should be based on the natural capital and biodiversity potential in the long term and not on the current status**
- 2. That, as indicated at various points in the documents under consideration, all parties are open to discussion about changes to policy and actions where merited to achieve this long-term potential.**

Winter Bird Survey

Paragraph 4.4.3 examines whether Battlemead qualifies for LWS status. Whilst it may be the case that Battlemead does not currently meet the necessary criteria for LWS or other status, we suggest that the Survey, and the previous Summer 2019 survey, downplay the current status. We have current Battlemead records of seven of the UK Birds of Conservation Concern Red Listed species and 16 of the species on the Amber List. Surveys by members of WildCookham and Wild Maidenhead have also found evidence of plants not included in the 2019 Austin Foot study. By confirming that the site does not yet meet the requirements for elevated conservation status, the impression will be given that it is not of significance and that measures to prevent disturbance will be relaxed. Given the legal sanctions behind the protection of species we suggest that i) appropriate steps need to be in place to safeguard the threatened species we know to be there and ii) that ongoing studies, across all categories and in particular of the flora of the site, be carried out and that we should keep under review a future application for LWS or other conservation status.

Under para 5.3 we note an option to expand the reedbed habitat along the White Brook (though this is not taken up in the EMP). This will depend at least on Environment Agency views and is likely to concern those seeking a reasonable water flow along the brook. Whilst we would welcome any moves to create a richer set of habitats along the White Brook we would hope that an open-minded discussion between interested parties can achieve a sensible balanced outcome as suggested in the *Way Forward* document drafted by several Friends of Battlemead.

A general point, relating to the Survey Report and the EMP, is that grassland, hedgerow and reed bed management ideas were included, but rather less is said about the tree-scape. Beyond the trees in the 'cross' in the centre of the West Field, some of which are in poor condition, many of the very mature trees are gradually falling down, and there are already many on the ground. The line of trees on the Hitachi side of the West Field are leaning significantly or have fallen. The large Willows near the NW (SW3) pond and mast are in a very bad way with many large branches in need of removal before any pond work could be safely undertaken. The northern tree-lined edge of the whole has lost very significant trees in recent winters. There is little reference to this issue and no real emphasis on the need for a great deal of planting and infilling if we want the long-term nature and scenic value of the site to be retained.

Recommendations:

1. **That surveys of the site be continued, in particular of the flora, with a view to building a case for LWS or similar classification and, in the meantime, that appropriate measures are taken to protect the habitats and individual species there in line with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) requirements**
2. **That the issues around the White Brook vegetation be discussed further with a view to addressing the concerns of the different FoB members and achieving a compromise as envisaged in the *Way Forward* document.**
3. **That further consideration be given to the tree-scape, and its maintenance and restoration, across all of Battlemead.**

Ecological Management Plan

As stated above we welcome the overall thrust of the Plan. Specific comments are:

4.1.12 and 4.1.21 et seq SNG1

We welcome the move to create a buffer on either side of the two tree lines though we consider these areas of scrub can be increased to provide a denser more protected area for birds nesting, away from any intrusion. It is worth remembering that loss of breeding has already happened on this field, most likely due to the intrusions over the past year or so. Barn Owls nested in the field until 2018, did not breed last year and there is no sign of them breeding this year. Such evidence should continue to inform any decisions made about public access.

For the same reason we continue to query the value in the longer term of the path that cuts across the middle of the field. The circular path has proved itself to be the most popular route for walkers, with benches at two points along the route, both giving excellent views of Cliveden House: the central path adds little and we question its value for the future. At the very least we would like to see this path kept under review and that consideration is given to removing it once the central scrub area develops.

Recommendations:

1. That the Council/FoB acknowledge that some species are known to have been affected already by increased visitor numbers at Battlemead; that intentional or reckless disturbance of birds is illegal under the WCA; and that great care must be taken to protect against further damage
2. That the size of the scrub area around the trees on the field be kept under review and consideration given to increasing it
3. That the continued use of the path across the West Field from the car park and the causeway be reviewed and either removed now or its route be kept under review to ensure that it does not present any threat to wildlife and that it continues to serve a useful purpose

4.1.17 Waterbody SW3

We welcome the proposal to desilt the pond and assume that this has/will have the blessing of the Environment Agency, recognising that the viability of the pond depends on available water flows and ground water. The pond may provide a valuable educational resource in due course: it will also be an excellent opportunity to engage the support of local volunteers, both in the initial work and in on-going maintenance.

4.1.22 SNG2 (Willow wood)

We understand that the suggestion of a path through this area, put forward in the *Way Forward* document, has been rejected on the grounds of cost and difficulty. Whilst there are obvious challenges with this suggestion (though Council funding was never assumed by those putting this idea forward to be the financial solution) we do suggest that it may still offer a long-term opportunity to create a circular walk around Battlemead. More ecological studies would certainly be needed, as well as other viability studies, but our contention is that, due to the nature of the habitat and the species dwelling there, it is possible that disruption caused by a public path might be minimal and managed.

Recommendation:

1. That the possibility of a path through the Willow Wood is given proper consideration as one approach to creating a circular path around Battlemead

4.1.23 et seq SNG3 (East Field)

The proposed mowing regime is welcomed and it is hoped it will encourage a more mixed habitat bringing a wider range of species, and can reduce the preponderance of Greylag and Canada Geese. Given the biodiversity potential which we believe this field has (a view which appears to be endorsed by the EMP) and the risk this creates of illegal damage to wildlife, we also welcome the Plan's commitment to keeping the East Field closed to public access through the year, with the agreed exceptions of specific walks. We suggest that additional guided walks (wildlife/heritage) for small groups might also be considered. We note that the suggestions made in the *Way Forward* document are not reflected in the EMP: discussion of these might offer a means of meeting the wish for a circular path around Battlemead whilst protecting the habitat.

We also believe that this field has the potential to deliver greater biodiversity with a more imaginative plan, especially in the north part of the field. We hope that discussions with the Environment Agency can offer a way forward on this.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the Council/FoB consider the possibility of additional managed walks across the East Field**
- 2. That suggestions for a circular walk around Battlemead are considered by the Council/FoB**
- 3. That discussions with the Environment Agency and others be continued to consider habitat changes in the field to encourage greater biodiversity**

4.1.25 et seq SNG4

This relates to the North Field. We believe that a more imaginative approach could be taken to this field. It is perhaps too rich at present to support a significantly different regime but we believe that there is scope for this to be developed as a wildflower meadow (suggestions have been made that this could be a 'Coronation Meadow'. Access along the eastern edge of this field is part of the Northern Perimeter Path and, whilst we do not object to the current path round the edge of this field, alternative uses of the land might call for a different approach to the path that currently traverses the field: we query whether this path serves any useful purpose that outweighs the possibility of discouraging nesting birds in the centre of the field.

Recommendations:

- 1. That consideration be given to alternatives futures for the North Field**
- 2. That the footpath crossing the field be kept under review and removed if it is thought likely to impact breeding or foraging wildlife**

4.1.28 et seq Native hedgerows

We suggest that decisions about the ideal height of hedgerows be considered carefully. There is evidence related to the ideal height to support a range of bird species indicating that the higher the better and likewise for the width to be sufficient to encourage a good understory for breeding, foraging and movement along the natural corridors.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the Council considers further the management regime for these hedgerows**

4.3 Dogs

We welcome the EMP's intentions concerning dogs at Battlemead and the need for dogs to be on a lead at all times on the permitted access parts of Battlemead. Whilst not part of the Austin Foot remit, we remain concerned about the possible use of Battlemead by professional dog walkers, and others with multiple dogs, who we fear will be attracted by the free car park proposed. Such use

should be prevented at Battlemead, and, as proposed above, a smaller car park will alleviate the problem. The dogs survey currently being undertaken at Battlemead will give further insights on the use of the site.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the EMP proposals concerning dogs are accepted**
- 2. That steps should be taken to prevent the use of Battlemead by professional dog walkers**
- 3. That the results of the current survey of dog walkers at Battlemead should be reviewed and note taken of any findings from this.**

4.5 Litter

Litter collection must be an-going process. By all means have a big litter pick twice a year but volunteers must be encouraged either formally or informally to collect any litter they see at any time (with suitable equipment) and advise the Council if bigger items need to be removed.

Recommendation:

- 1. That litter collection should be a year-round job, with FoB and other volunteers supporting this**

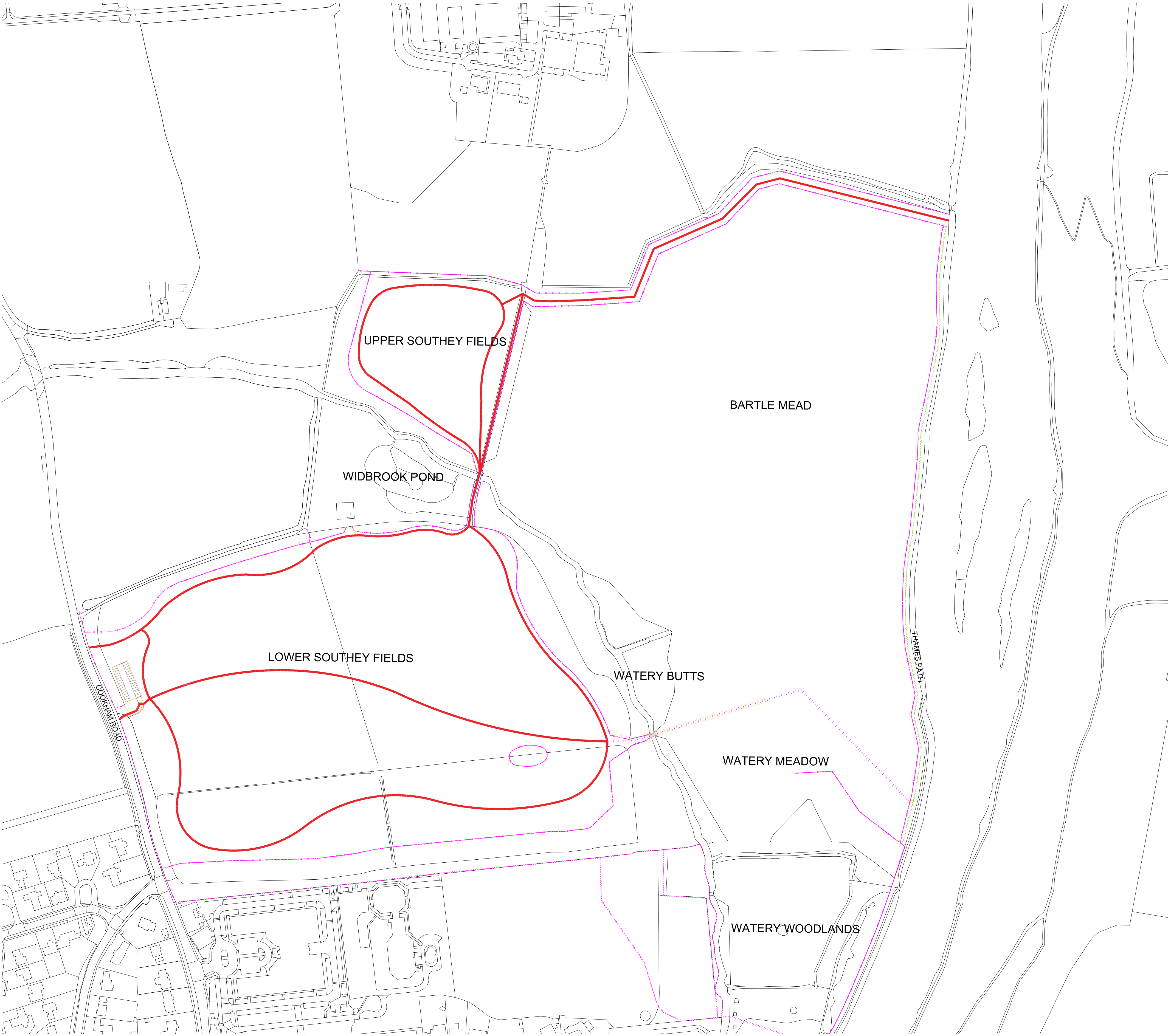
4.6 Bird and bat boxes

A general observation is that there is likely to be scope for more boxes – for bat and different bird species – than are recommended in the EMP. The local Bisham Nest Box Group is available to facilitate this and can install them with the help of volunteers. This can also be a great opportunity for local people/families to make nest boxes and be involved in installing them. Indeed this should be the default source for any nest boxes.

Recommendations:

- 1. That provision should be made for more nest/roost boxes at Battlemead**
- 2. That the Bisham Nest Box Group, as well as local volunteers, should be the considered as the default option for their production and installation.**

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Project

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