

Section 4. The Strategy and Themes

4.1 The Strategy

The parish of West Bletchley consists mostly of a series of residential estates with ‘internal’ often invisible parks and large areas of incidental open space, with limited Green Infrastructure provision currently. The parish is bounded by enclosing major road and rail lines that restrict access, often with large parks and spaces just beyond. This is in marked contrast to the rest of Milton Keynes. The mature urban character of the area means that there is little scope to create completely new open spaces, so the strategy needs to focus primarily on how the **existing spaces can be enhanced and joined-up** to meet the needs of residents and provide enhanced habitats.

The approach is to propose **four main Themes** that set the high level objectives for Green Infrastructure provision, within which we identify a series of practical **Projects** that aim to implement that theme. Projects will provide wide-ranging benefits beyond their immediate theme – that is a characteristic of Green Infrastructure. For instance the planting of street trees (part of 1A Securing 20%+ for Nature to be discussed further later in the document) to establish wildlife corridors also creates new habitats and food sources for insects and other wildlife and helps strengthen routes across the parish for wildlife movement. Tree planting also helps to lock-in carbon and slow storm water runoff. Street trees enhance the appearance of streets, and create a sense of wellbeing and encourage people to go out more. Attractive streets enhance the character and value attributed to an area, which can have a positive impact on local investment. So there are interconnections between each of the projects and the wide range of issues and opportunities they aim to address.

Themes

Theme 1: Creating a New Vision for Open Space

This focuses on maximising the benefit that can be provided by the existing areas of parks and green space by re-orientating how they are designed, used and managed. To do this, it will be necessary for each space to provide wide-ranging benefits, so that no space is defined as being for one purpose, such as only being playing fields. All spaces should be designed and managed to provide wide-ranging benefits and enjoyment to people of all ages and ensures that it provides opportunities for wildlife to thrive. This will require a change in attitudes to open space management and a recognition that management cultures need to change to make more of the valuable but limited, spaces we have.

Each green space must be managed to support the needs of wildlife. Without changes, wildlife cannot thrive but small changes can allow wildlife to develop – often a ‘hands-off’ approach to allow areas to regenerate naturally will be appropriate, and sometimes new planting and further encouragement will be necessary along with carefully considered management practices. ‘Tidy’ places are ecologically barren – changing perceptions is key. Allowing grass to grow long, leaving fallen branches, and allowing decay is all part of the natural cycle, and one that needs to be nurtured so that wildlife can thrive.

The four key projects under this Theme are:

- 1A: Securing New and Enhanced Habitats
- 1B: Providing Richer Parks and Open Spaces
- 1C: Enhancing Access to Natural Green Space
- 1D: Reimagined Places

Theme 2: Making Connections

This Theme is to enhance Green Infrastructure connections across the parish. This is pervasive and affects access to parks and green space, the access to schools and the college, and to facilities such as Bletchley Station and Town Centre. Enabling safe enjoyable green routes to walk and cycle across the parish is the backbone of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and will help enhance the quality of life for everyone.

There is also a need to improve connections across the parish for wildlife. The urban nature of the parish will always make this difficult for many species, but there is much that can be done to strengthen links and establish wildlife corridors

The four key projects under this Theme are:

- 2A: Creating Wildlife Corridors and Flyways
- 2B: Bridging the Gaps
- 2C: Establishing Safe Sustainable Routes to School
- 2D: Promoting Parish Walks and Rides

Theme 3: Engaging Residents

This Theme enables all residents to engage with the natural environment and contribute to the Green Infrastructure Strategy in a way that will enhance their enjoyment and understanding of where they live and work and enhance health and wellbeing.

The five key projects under this Theme are:

- 3A: Promoting Wildlife Gardening and 20%+for Nature in Gardens
- 3B: Focus on Fronts
- 3C: People’s Patch Pledge
- 3D: Monitoring the Wildlife
- 3E: Supporting Allotment Holders

Theme 4: Making and Strengthening Partnerships

This Theme recognises that most of the landownership within the parish is in the control of others. Therefore, achieving the Green Infrastructure Strategy will need other organisations to recognise the West Bletchley Green Infrastructure Strategy and work collaboratively to help to achieve the objectives.

The four key projects under this Theme are:

- Project 4A: Forum with Milton Keynes City Council
- Project 4B: Landowners, Land Managers and Local Businesses Forum
- Project 4C: Encouraging Local Residents to Act
- Project 4D: Funding Strategy

Figure 4.1 Green Infrastructure Master Plan illustrates the main strategic elements of the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The individual projects are explained in the remainder of this section.

- Existing Wildlife Corridor
- Potential Wildlife Corridor
- Additional Links
- Priority Zone for Water and Wetland
- Enhanced Woodland Connectivity
- Enhanced Road Crossing
- Enhanced Walking Route
- Parish Path
- New 'Green Centre'

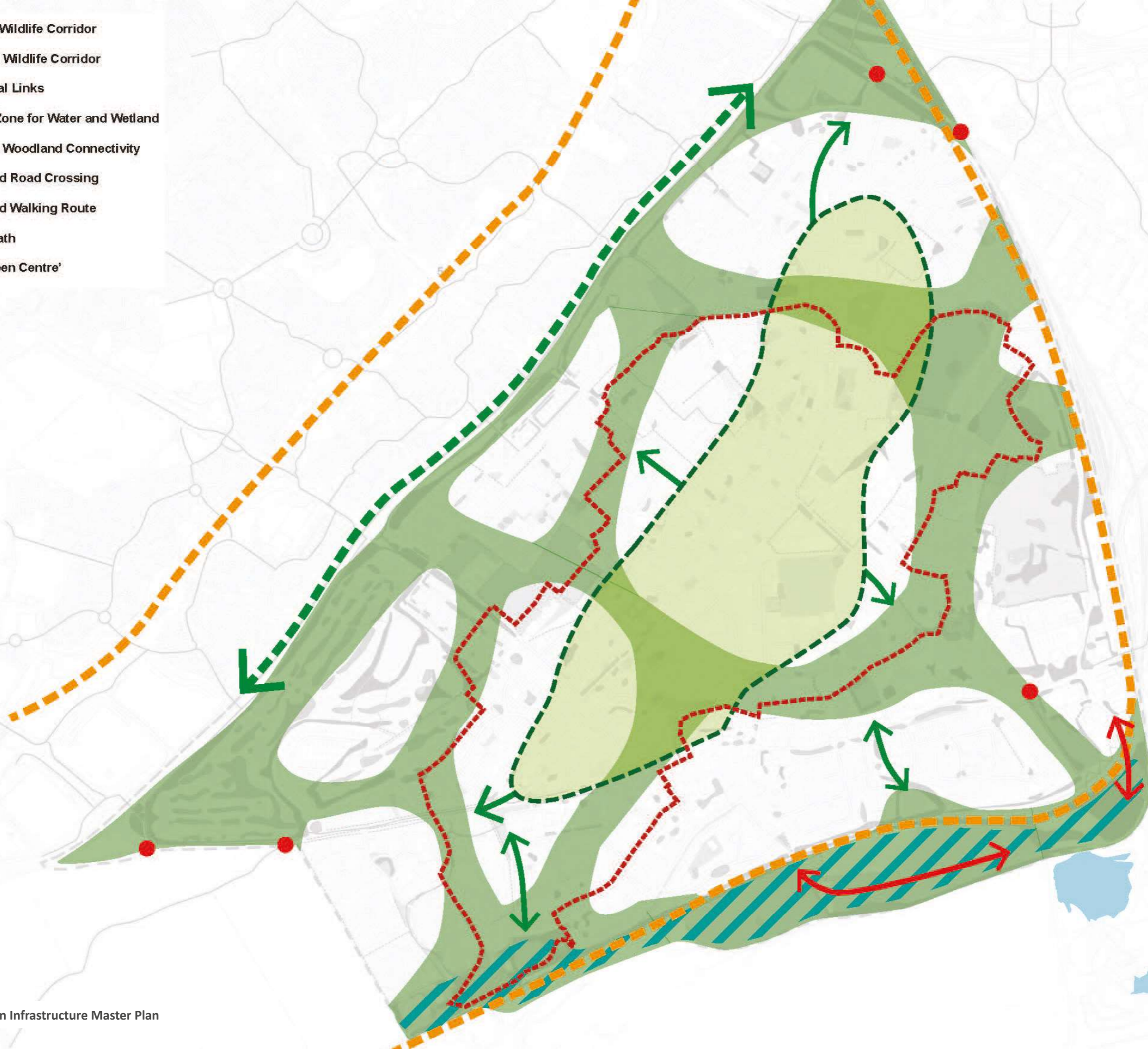


Figure 4.1: Green Infrastructure Master Plan

4.2 Theme 1: Creating a New Vision for Open Space

The aim of this Theme is to look at how the parish’s open spaces can be designed and managed so that they provide maximum benefit to both people and wildlife. This requires all sites to provide multiple benefits. For example, playing fields designated for football can be managed with hedgerows around them that provide valuable habitats and significantly help wildlife connectivity, and paths around the pitches can enable people to walk and cycle safely across the parish.

Projects:

- 1A: Securing New and Enhanced Habitats
- 1B: Providing Richer Parks and Open Spaces
- 1C: Enhancing Access to Natural Green Space
- 1D: Reimagining Places

Project 1A: Securing New and Enhanced Habitats

Objective: To enhance all green space within the parish so that it can provide more diverse habitats, over a larger area, to support biodiversity and improve the connectivity of habitats across the parish.

Context: The parish is an urban area so significant changes will be needed to all open spaces to improve habitats across the parish. The parish has stronger habitats on its boundaries with a central area where there are no large areas of semi-natural habitat and poor connectivity between the small areas of open space. In response to the review of the existing habitats, the aim is to improve habitats generally but also to use our understanding of the existing habitats and the potential of different areas to add a particular focus to different habitat creation and management in different areas. The priority is to enhance the central core of the parish. This is illustrated in Figure 4.2 Area Habitat Focus. The actual habitat proposals are refined to each of the parish’s 17-character areas in Chapter 5. Projects by Character Area.

Approach:

- To use these broad objectives for habitat enhancement to focus across the parish to help guide other projects.
- Habitat creation will not always require new planting or significant intervention, in many areas significant habitat enhancement can be achieved by reviewing and changing management practices. Often the less intensive management required to support wildlife will also reduce costs.
- Monitoring with increased surveying and recording will be important to understand the existing environment better and to guide management objectives and monitor biodiversity changes

1A.1 20%+ for Nature

Objective: As a broad objective to manage at least 20% of all green spaces to prioritise the needs of the natural environment.

Context: This can be through quite small changes. For instance, changing the mowing regime under tree groups so that the grass is allowed to grow long until July, and allowing leaf piles and logs to decay naturally transforms an area from one that is managed primarily for human benefit to one that is a thriving habitat. These changes will however change how the parish looks and residents will notice that some areas don’t look so ‘neat and tidy’. This project area aims to enable people to understand the vision and gain acceptance that this change is necessary for at least 20% of our open spaces now, with an increasing proportion in future, as we must to prioritise the needs of the environment in everything we do.

Approach:

- To aim to prioritise creating and managing good habitats in at least 20% of all the open spaces.
- To establish and promote the concept of “20%+ for nature” as a way of enabling people to appreciate the reasons for changes, such as less regular mowing and help them to engage with the project.

-  **Central Core** - Priority Habitat Creation Area
-  **Southern Edge** - Enhancing & Connecting Wetland Habitats
-  **Western Edge** - Enabling the Network Expansion Zone
-  **Historic Core** - Understanding & Protecting Habitats
-  **Northern Edge** - Strengthening the Woodland & Tree Network
-  **Southern Slopes** - Benefitting Pollinators, Orchard & Pond Creation

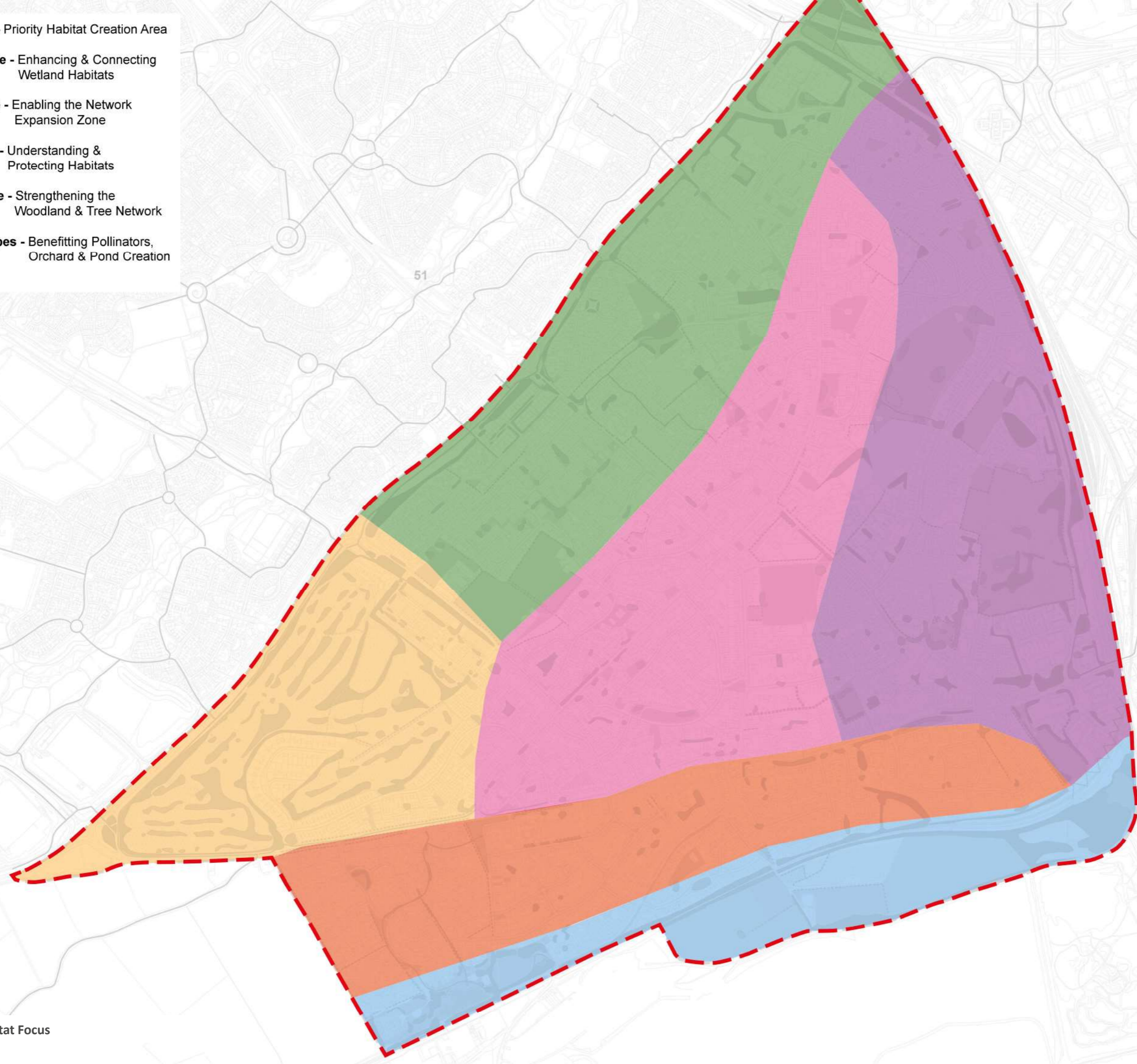


Figure 4.2: Area Habitat Focus

1A.2 Grassland Management – ‘Let the Grass Grow’

Objective: To enable grassland to provide greater benefits to wildlife, and particularly insects.

Context: A large proportion of the open space in the parish is regularly mown as amenity grassland. There is great potential to retain these areas as grassland, but to change the management regime so that they become valuable habitats, particularly for insects and small mammals.

Approach:

- **Establishing perennial wildflower meadows** – A perennial meadow doesn’t need reseeding each year but relies on cutting regime to enhance biodiversity. This could be achieved by extending and enhancing the meadow areas recently established in several parks, perhaps using “green strewing” techniques and the introduction of Yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). Yellow rattle is parasitic on the grass roots and so it helps a wide variety of wildflowers to become more prolific.
- **Reviewing mowing regimes** and a.) significantly reducing mowing regimes adjacent to existing woodland, scrub and hedgerows where feasible so that there is a boarder of at least 2m that is only mown (perhaps) every 4 years to stop any permanent shrub establishment. This would look less tidy but would have significant wildlife benefit b.) Revising mowing regimes of road verges and green spaces. Pilot projects along suggested wildlife corridors should experiment with alternative mowing regimes as promoted by Plantlife in “*Managing Road Verges*”.⁸ Their research suggests that even in areas where grass is mown short, considerable wildlife benefit can be achieved by reducing the mowing regime to not more than every 4 weeks. This enables Daisies, Clover, Speedwells and other low growing flowering plants to bloom, providing considerable benefits to pollinators. c) Reducing mowing under selective tree canopies to one mow per year.
- It will take time for the full benefit of altering the mowing regime to be appreciated and longer grass may be perceived as untidy by some residents. So, changes will need to be accompanied by **extensive public engagement** activities such as encouraging residents to join in with *The Big Butterfly Count*⁹ .

8 Plantlife - Managing Grassland Road Verges

1A.3 Existing Woodland

Objective: To enhance and extend existing woodland in the parish and ensure it is being managed to maximise its benefit for the environment and people.

Context: Within the parish there are small areas of woodland that are well-established and have been growing for at least 100 years. Most of the woods, however, are much younger. In all the woodland areas there are small changes which would help to enhance the biodiversity.

Approach:

- Encourage more native locally occurring ground flora by altering management practices and seeding with locally occurring woodland flora species.
- Planting to enhance the tree and shrub species mix of existing woodlands with more locally occurring native species and particularly those found in Howe Park Wood. The woodland in and around the golf course is particularly appropriate for this approach.
- Allowing existing small woodland areas to gradually expand outwards, by reducing management and grass cutting on woodland edges to enable woodland edge shrubs and scrub areas to develop and expand the area of woody habitat.
- Thinning and replanting where necessary to ensure a good tree age structure.
- Installing bat and bird boxes and creating leaf and log piles

9 Big Butterfly Count

1A.4 New Woodlands and Copses

Objective: To increase the tree and woodland cover in the parish.

Context: The built-up nature of the parish means there are limited opportunities to achieve significant areas of new woodland of scale. Copses of less than this 0.5Ha are of significant wildlife benefit as the woodland edge habitat is valuable for a wide variety of birds and insects.

The benefits of establishing new woodlands are significant for both enhancing biodiversity and the strength of wildlife corridors across the parish and helping to address climate change. To achieve this objective all opportunities will need to be assessed and a creative approach taken using a variety of techniques in different areas.

It will be important to ensure new woodland planting supports habitats for locally occurring native species and particularly those found in **Howe Park Wood SSSI**.

It will be important to ensure the ongoing management of new woodland and copses. Woodland planting projects provide great opportunities for community engagement.

Approach:

- Assess all character areas for woodland and copse establishment opportunities.
- Ensure any proposals for Windmill Hill Golf Course support Network Expansion Zone objectives.
- Work in partnership to achieve new woodland planting.
- Ensure new woodland is considered in proposals for Brickfields.
- **Tattenhoe Lane Playing Fields** appear to have space for small areas of new woodland, whilst retaining all the existing playing field space.
- Engage local communities in undertaking planting.
- Set up a monitoring programmes such as “Hogwatch” to assess numbers and movements of hedgehogs in the parish.

1A.5 Planting Street Trees

Objective: To significantly increase the number of street trees in the parish, both in verges along roads (where utilities allow) and in the small areas of green space set around the roadside environment.



Continue to enhance streets for people and wildlife with additional street trees

Context: The suburban nature of the parish and the time it was developed in the second half of the 20th Century means that street trees were a very significant element of the design of the public realm. There has been a lack of investment in replanting and enhancing the tree stock over recent years, but recently new tree planting is already having a positive impact.

As well as providing benefits to the natural environment and support to help species move across the parish, street trees also enhance the appearance of our streets and make them more attractive to walk and cycle along creating a buffer between the path and road.

In more built-up areas where it may not be possible to establish wildlife corridors at ground level, an aerial “flyway” can provide considerable benefit to invertebrates, bats, and small birds, providing them with an aerial route through the tree canopies to move across the parish.

Some trees with the greatest number of associated invertebrate species such as oak, do not generally make good street trees especially when their roots are covered by hard surfacing. There are fine oak trees in several locations generally in small green spaces but those are set back from the road.

The parish has a multitude of small areas of green space and establishing one or more oak trees in these areas might provide the greatest biodiversity benefit. This helps provide connected habitats across the parish for insect species whose survival requires these trees.

Research from the Forestry Commission has established that trees establish better and grow quicker if planted young. Planting small oak trees is likely to be more successful and overtake the planting of larger more mature trees. Oak trees often regenerate naturally by acorns growing up through scrub and brambles, which protects them from browsing animals. It might therefore be appropriate to consider establishing oak trees in small areas of fenced-off planting which includes shrub species, that help give the oak more protection from vandalism than a single specimen tree.

There are other notable large trees in the parish growing in green space. Other large trees to consider growing in areas of green space include Lime, Alder, Wild Cherry, and Poplar.

Smaller native trees such as hawthorn and field maple should be considered where there is not the space for larger trees. Other trees that are very valuable to wildlife include native crab apples and closely associated ornamental trees and other trees that provide nectar sources and berries.

Where the area of planting is more limited to narrow verges, a different approach will be required, and the planting should concentrate on establishing a continuous aerial canopy across the parish.

Approach:

- Set targets for new street trees in each character area.
- Achieve “Flyway” connectivity along wildlife corridors.
- Choose tree species to flower for pollinators over a long time periods and fruit for insects, birds and small mammals.
- Where space allows, establish oak trees and other large woodland trees as they offer the greatest ecological potential.

1A.6 Hedgerows and Scrub

Objective: To retain and extend the lengths of hedgerow and areas of scrub in the parish.

Context: Both hedgerows and scrub are very valuable for wildlife particularly when they are made up of locally occurring native species allowing all the associated insects to thrive. They provide important shelter, enabling birds, small mammals (including hedgehogs) to find shelter and space to raise their young. Some hedgerows are one of the few features that have remained unchanged since the area was developed from farmland, and so are an important historic resource of fungi and seeds.

Approach:

- Enhance connectivity along hedgerows by infilling hedge gaps and establishing new hedgerow trees.
- Establish an “A” shaped profile to hedgerows and enable grassland and wildflower margin at their base with appropriate limited mowing.
- Work with adjacent landowners to reinforce wildlife friendly management practices.
- Encourage existing areas of scrub to expand and allow new areas of scrub to develop on boundaries and in the corners of fields.

1A.7 Ponds, Watercourses and Wetlands

Objective: To strengthen water and wetland habitats across the parish. and particularly on the southern-side of the parish.

Context: The landform and built-up nature of the parish does not feature large ponds but there are valuable water and wetland sites and a water course along the southern boundary of the parish, these are principally located **within Area 2 Southern Edge** in **Figure 4.2**. There is therefore considerable benefit to encouraging the creation of new ponds to help wildlife connectivity across the area and into the adjacent areas. This would significantly benefit insects such as dragonfly and amphibians such as frogs and toads.

Approach:

- Support management of and access to ponds and wetland areas in the parish including Blue Lagoon LNR, and the proposed environmental mitigation areas in association with East-West Rail.
- Encourage the establishment of a network of ponds especially along the southern wildlife corridor.
- Provide information and support to encourage pond creation within gardens.
- Promote habitat enhancements along the course of Water Eaton Brook.

1A.8 Pollinator’s Pathways

Objective: To ensure all projects help to enhance the provision of plants for pollinators in the parish.

Context: There are considerable opportunities even within small areas of open space, to provide planting that can make a significant difference to the survival of pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Of particular benefit are plants that extend the season so they can find nectar, and if the amount of planting for pollinators is increased this increases pathways across the parish. This will be an objective of all areas shown on **Figure 4.2**, but may be particularly successful on the sheltered southern slopes of **Southern Slopes Area 6**.

Approach:

- To establish a list of plants for pollinators that grow well in the parish.
- Promote planting for pollinators both within open space enhancement schemes, and for people to plant in their own gardens.

1A.9 Orchard Planting

Objective: To establish small new orchards across the parish for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Context: The heavy clay soils of this area have long been associated with orchards and particularly apple orchards. Fruit trees grow well in the area and orchards are wildlife havens and UK Priority Habitat for Conservation. They provide food and shelter for thousands of animals and plants, many of which are species of high conservation priority themselves. Orchard planting can be considered with all open space enhancements

Approach:

- To consider small orchards within park projects.
- To encourage orchard establishment in association with community engagement activities.
- To consider small orchards as part of Park projects.

1A.10 Celebrating Decay

Objective: To increase the biodiversity of the parish by encouraging natural decay by promoting the retention of dead wood, log and leaf piles, and the composting of vegetation to support species of fungi, lichen, plants and animals that rely on natural decay.

Context: : Significantly greater biodiversity can be achieved by allowing natural vegetation to decay and break down rather than clearing everything away. Leaf piles are important for wildlife by providing shelter and valuable nesting spots for hibernating animals such as hedgehogs, small mammals, frogs, and countless insects. Achieving this will involve changing the way spaces look and engaging with the public so they understand why areas are changing.

Approach:

- Where safe, allow standing dead wood.
- Where appropriate create log piles from dead wood.
- Where leaves are swept up encourage the establishment of leaf piles.
- Work with contractors to establish management practices which enable composting within the parish of all material collected.
- Encourage residents not to put all green material in green bins but to compost and create their own leaf and log piles in gardens.

1A.11 Blue Lagoon LNR

Objective: To work in partnership to establish a Management Plan for the LNR, which includes improving access from West Bletchley and making the site feel safer and more welcoming, including proposals for community engagement activities.

Context: Blue Lagoon Local Nature Reserve is sited on the parish’s south east corner and extends into the parish. It is the most significant habitat in the parish, so how it is managed is very important to the wider biodiversity of the parish. The site doesn’t currently have a management plan, but our understanding is that one is currently being prepared by MKCC. There is a need to ensure that this is comprehensive and covers not just management to enhance habitats but also improving access to enable people to enjoy this important site without disturbing the important habitats.

Approach:

- Work in partnership with MKCC to establish a Management Plan for Blue Lagoon LNR.
- Ensure that improving access on foot and by bike to the site from West Bletchley is a key consideration within the Management Plan.
- Work with MKCC to improve access to make the site more welcoming so that people feel safe and stay longer.
- Provide support for the on-going management of the site to enable and support community engagement projects.
- Promote the proposed circular walk from West Bletchley **2D.4 Circular Walk to Blue Lagoon LNR.**

1A.12 Enhancing and Protecting Other Notable Habitats

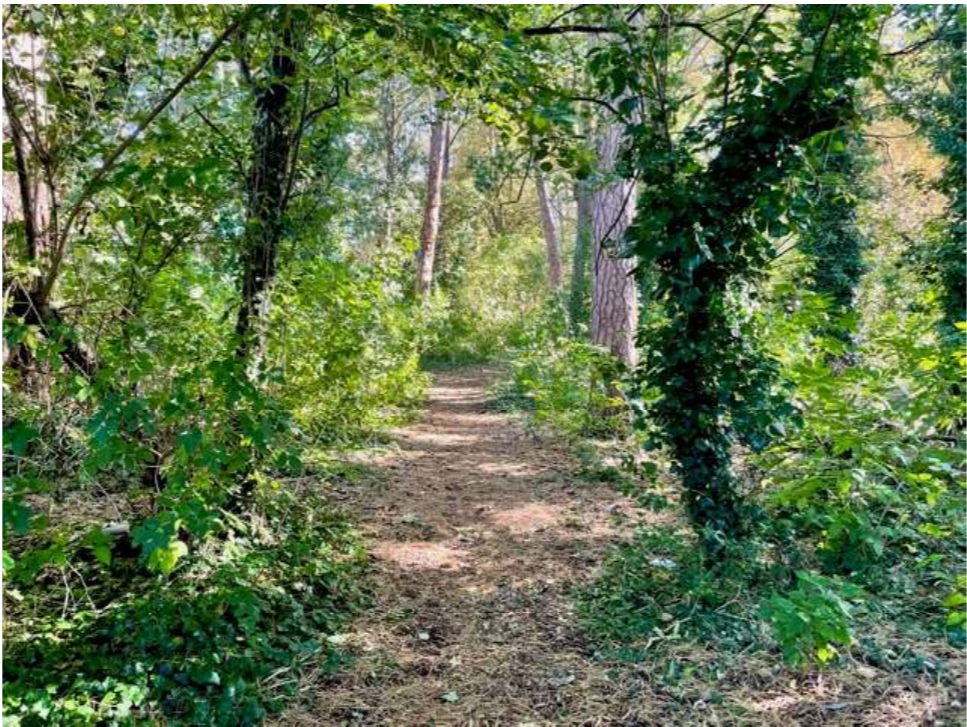
Objective: To ensure notable habitats in the parish are protected and better understood.

Context: The habitat assessment of the parish established that there are some habitats in the parish that are providing considerable wildlife benefit but which with better management could be enhanced further. Understanding these areas better, and the species they support would also help to ensure their protection. Many of these habitats are located within **Area 4 Historic Core** in **Figure 4.2:** These habitats include:

- St Mary’s Church and Churchyard.
- Remnants of Bletchley Park Estate, Woodland Trees and Hedgerow within parks, streetscapes, and gardens.
- Water Eaton Brook corridor.

Approach:

- To investigate opportunities to enable biodiversity surveys.
- To help create and revise management plans for these areas.
- To encourage citizen science projects to support survey work.



Woodland planting remnants of Bletchley Park Estate.

Project 1B: Providing Richer Parks and Open Spaces

Objective: To enhance residents access to attractive parks with good facilities for all ages and a variety of habitats.

Context: The review identified that many residents do not have the recommended access to parks, and that there is a great opportunity to improve parks and open space to provide wide-ranging benefits to both people and wildlife.

- Approach:**
- To consider the key issues and then to look in more detail at individual parks within each character area in **Section 5. Projects by Character Area**.
 - The broad strategy for park enhancements is shown on **Figure 4.3 Parks Strategy**

1B.1 All Parks and Open Spaces

Objective: To review all parks and open spaces to enable them to provide wider benefits for people and wildlife.

Context: By reviewing all open spaces it will be possible to enhance habitats across the parish whilst at the same time improving peoples access to parks. There is an opportunity to review some open spaces and upgrade them to provide small local parks in areas with poorer access.

- Approach:**
- To review all open spaces to determine how they can provide better facilities for residents.
 - To particularly consider upgrading small open spaces so that they can become valued small local parks.

1B.2 Large Parks

Objective: To enable all residents to have access to attractive large parks or sports facilities with a good range of facilities and habitats.

Context: The review identified that residents’ access to large parks is variable. Those living close to The Leys and Chepstow have good access to attractive well-maintained large parks with good facilities. It is a key issue for many residents that Rickley Park is lacking the facilities to function well as a large park for the parish. Some residents only have good access to a small local park. These also vary tremendously in the facilities they have and their level of use. Flowers Park which has recently been created has become a thriving centre of the community with high levels of use.

- Approach:**
- To implement proposals to enhance the character of Rickley Park for people and wildlife.
 - To implement proposals for Rickley Park to enable it to facilitate community events for the whole parish.
 - To enhance walking connections between parks to compensate for the small size of several parks.
 - To investigate opportunities to improve access to the edges of Windmill Hill Golf Course and Tattenhoe Lane Playing Fields to compensate for the lack of access to local parks in the north-west of the parish.

1B.3 Small Local Parks:

Objective: To ensure everyone has access to attractive open space on their doorstep where they can spend time, meet, and play.

Context: Small Local Parks provide a very valuable function as open space close to where people are living. They can help to build strong supportive communities. Some areas of the parish have good access to these parks whilst others do not.

There is a need to establish a network of smaller parks throughout the parish, but particularly in areas where nearby access to larger parks is lacking.

Suggested areas for enhancement are shown in **Figure 4.3 Parks Strategy**.

Approach:

- Small Local Parks would be carefully designed to provide a wide range of benefits to both people and wildlife. These parks are by their nature limited in size and therefore all features should appeal to multiple users. Play features such as mounded rubber surfacing, boulders and hillsides can be incorporated into the design as both a recreational element and to be aesthetically pleasing and add to the visual interest of the space.
- Incorporating both active and passive recreation facilities is another way to ensure benefits to all residents. Active play features might include fitness equipment, table tennis tables, and play features, whilst passive recreational amenities might include paths meandering through ornamental planting, native habitats and pollinator planting for wildlife watching, sociable seating areas and picnic and games tables. The intention is that every square centimetre of the park provides something to enjoy.
- Key Features to consider for all smaller parks includes:
 - 1) Attractive seating throughout the year.
 - 2) Seating which encourages social interaction, with long benches and groups of benches rather than isolated benches.
 - 3) Safe from traffic, which may mean fencing.
 - 4) Visually attractive play facilities especially for pre-school children.
 - 5) Use of strong planting in the form of hedges and tree groups to divide spaces.
 - 6) Opportunities for residents to be involved in the planning/design, planting and management.



A sandpit with bench around the back sheltered by planting makes an attractive place for children to play and parents and carers to sit and watch.



Small spaces designed to be fun for children to explore and play in, with bird boxes and planting to enhance biodiversity.



A water pump provides a very popular play feature, which takes up very little space

- Existing Large Park
- Existing Small Local Park
- Enhanced Pedestrian Access to Compensate for Lack of Access to Local Park
- Priority Park Enhancement Area

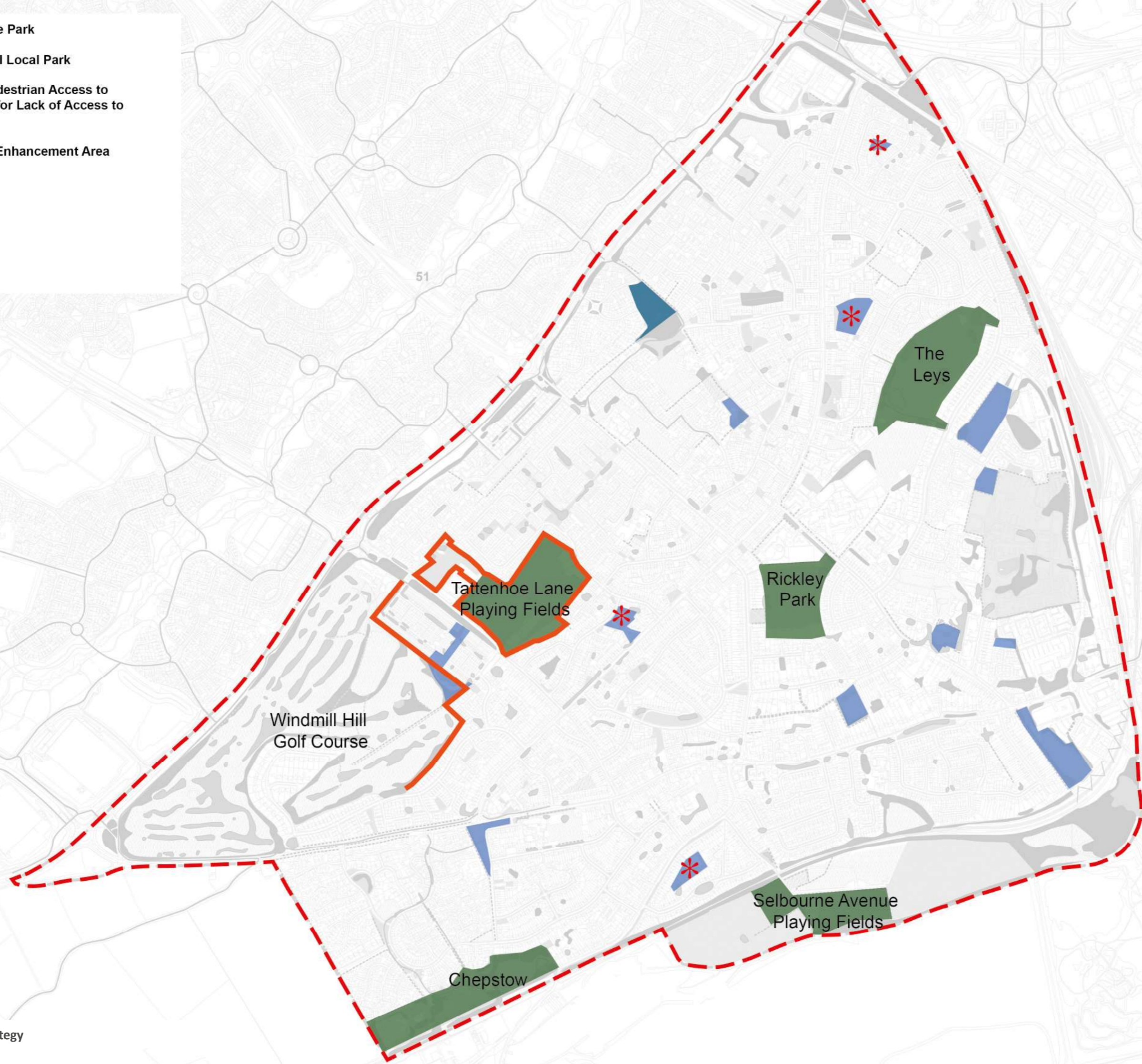


Figure 4.3: Parks Strategy

Project 1C: Enhancing Access to Natural Green Space

Objective: To improve resident’s access to natural green space to achieve national recommended standards

Context: The review of Access to Natural Green Space in relation to Natural England Recommended Standards (ANGST.) in Section 2 established that.

- There is a lack of **A. Doorstep Green Space** providing at least 0.5Ha within 200m less than 5-minutes walk.
- There is lack of **B. Local Natural Green Space** providing 2Ha within 300, 5-10 minutes walk 1-2 minutes cycle.
- There is a lack of **C. Neighbourhood Natural Green Space** providing 10Ha within 1km, 15-20 Minutes Walk, 3-4 Minutes Cycle and little opportunity to provide this.
- There is a good provision of sites around the edges of the parish which provide access to **D. Wider Neighbourhood Natural Green Space** of at Least 20Ha within 2km, 35 Minutes Walk, 6-8 Minutes Cycle, but there is a need to enhance and promote access.
- There is suitable provision for **E. District Natural Green Space** of more than 100Ha but at slightly more than 5km distance, 15-20 Minutes Cycle.
- The requirement for **F. Sub-Regional Natural Green Space** of more than 500Ha within 10km, 30-40 minutes cycle ride is not met.
- The parish does have access to a **G. Local Nature Reserve** which might provide 1Ha per 1,000 population but there is a need to improve access and management.

Approach: The built-up nature of the parish means that where the provision of access to areas of natural green space is lacking there are limited opportunities to create new areas. We have therefore focussed on areas where there is scope to enhance access and improve the quality of the ‘nature nearby’. Consequently, this means there are no projects that aim to provide **C. Neighbourhood Natural Green Space** of 10Ha or enhancing the existing provision of **E. District Natural Green Space**.

1C.1 A. Doorstep Green Space

Objective: To provide more residents with at least 0.5Ha of Natural Green Space within 200 metres, less than 5 minutes walk.

Context: There is a need to strengthen the network of Small Local Parks with diverse habitats across the parish to provide wide-ranging benefits to people and significantly support the improvement of habitats and wildlife corridors.

Approach:

- To enhance the habitat provision within existing Small Local Parks.
- To design and redesign Small Local Parks/Doorstep Greens with a strong diversity of habitats. Additional locations for Small Local Parks are suggested in **Figure 4.3 Parks Strategy**.
- To focus new natural green space particularly in central areas of the parish, which currently have poor access to Doorstep Greens. This is illustrated on **Figure 4.2 Area Habitat Focus** as the central priority area.

1C.2 B. Local Natural Green Space

Objective: To enhance residents access to local Natural Green Space.

Context: Access to local Natural Green Space is very variable and there are limited opportunities to establish new areas.

Approach:

- Enhancing the habitat diversity in all parks in line with measures set out in 1A. This can include letting grass grow under trees, opening culverts and naturalising streams, differential mowing regimes, creating meadow areas and small new woodlands. All will improve parks as places to access natural green space.
- Improving and promoting access to land south of the railway and creating circular walks to provide access to natural green space for people living in the south of the parish.
- **Windmill Hill Golf Course** already has access around the perimeter. A small amount of path improvement and signage would enable this to provide accessible Natural Green Space as well as compensate for the lack of access to a Park as described in 2B.2 and shown on **Figure 4.3 Parks Strategy**.
- **Tattenhoe Lane Playing Fields** have the potential to be enhanced to provide better habitats whilst at the same time retaining the required playing fields. This, with new paths would enable the area to provide accessible Natural Green Space in an area with poor access to both natural open space and a park now. This is illustrated on **Figure 4.3 Parks Strategy**.

1C.3 D. Wider Neighbourhood Natural Green Space

Objective: To improve and promote access to existing Wider Neighbourhood Natural Green Space.

Context: **Howe Park Wood** and **Tattenhoe Valley Park** provide access to large 20Ha+ sites with good Natural Green Space within 2km of much of the parish. There are good footpaths and cycleway links from the northern edge of the parish, but H8 Standing Way and associated underpasses create barriers to movement. **Blue Lagoon LNR** is a large area of Natural Green Space and the most important wildlife site. It is considered to have the potential to provide both access to Accessible Natural Green Space of 20 Ha and access to a Local Nature Reserve. There is however, a considerable issue at the moment in terms of access and management.

Approach:

- To promote links from the parish **2D Howe Park Wood** and **Tattenhoe Valley Circular Walks and Rides**. Illustrated on **Figure 4.8 Parish Walks and Rides**
- To improve access to **Blue Lagoon LNR** in association with a Management Plan. **Project 2D Circular Walk to Blue Lagoon LNR** and wider improvements to walking and cycling routes in the parish.
- To ensure the Blue Lagoon Management Plan enables the site to fulfil the need for better access to Natural Green Space from West Bletchley as well as ensuring the improved management of habitats.
- The Blue Lagoon Management Plan should also ensure the site is accessible to all users and considers how to reach out to people not visiting the site to understand and address any barriers to use.

1C.4 F. Sub-Regional Natural Green Space

Objective: To enhance residents access to large areas of Sub-Regional Natural Green Space of over 500Ha.

Context: The parish benefits from having the Greensand Trust land to the south and Marston Vale Country Park to the east.

Approach:

- Partnership working to encourage and support development of interconnected large areas of green space.

1C.5 G. Access to Local Nature Reserve

Objective: To provide access to Blue Lagoon Local Nature Reserve for all residents.

Context: Poor access and lack of a Management Plan means the LNR is not currently used as accessible Natural Green Space by many residents.

Approach:

- To improve and promote access to the LNR with projects 2D.
- To ensure via project 1A.11 that the Management Plan provides wide-ranging benefits to habitats and residents use of the LNR.

Project 1D: Reimagined Places

Objective: To enhance the landscape quality and public realm across the parish for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Context: The public realm across some estates that were developed in the mid-20th Century is beginning to look tired. The central area maps well onto the central core of the parish identified as the **Priority Habitat Creation Area** in **Figure 4.2**. Habitat creation in this area is very important both because of the lack of good strong habitats now and the fact that the central location of the area means habitat creation in this area can significantly help movement of species across the parish.

Approach:

- To develop a partnership project with MKCC and residents to enable these spaces to provide a better environment for residents and at the same time support biodiversity objectives.

1D.1 Enhancements to Drying Courtyards for multi-residential housing.

Objective: To enhance drying courtyards so that they can be used and enjoyed by residents, and possibly be planted to help address the identified need for habitat creation in the area.

Context: The courtyards (approximately 40) are identified on **Figure 4.4 Reimagined Places**; in total they occupy about 1 hectare of land. They are the only communal fenced open spaces accessible to residents. These tarmacked areas are often visually and environmentally poor and unattractive places for residents to spend time. Many residents appear to have young children under 5 and most of the housing has limited access to parks with play facilities.

The courtyards are large enough to create attractive gardens that if well designed could make the multi residential housing much more attractive places to live. At the same time, they would make an important contribution to enhancing local habitats

Approach:

- To seek a partnership with MKCC and residents to redesign the courtyards, providing improved spaces for people and wildlife.
 - o Establish requirements and restraints of both parties.
 - o Ensure space is retained for bins and drying facilities.
 - o Designs to feature attractive communal gardens that support wildlife with opportunities for seating, safe play space for younger children and growing plants or trees.

1D.2 New Green Centre

Objective: To enhance the public realm and open spaces in the centre of the parish with new planting, improved surfacing, new seating, and play features to make the areas more welcoming. To improve the biodiversity of the area with a network of small new habitats. To engage residents with the changes.

Context: The area is shown on **Figure 4.4 Reimagining Places** as a priority area for **Open Space Enhancement and Habitat Creation**. The area is predominantly close to the multi residential housing and garage courts where the landscape quality is poor. The landscape enhancements need to be viewed at a detailed level and in many areas will be associated with improvements to hard surfacing and the built environment to address decades of a lack of investment. Within these areas there are a wide range of small spaces that if planted and managed to support wildlife objectives could make a significant difference to the habitats in the parish and transform the centre to a ‘green core’. Rickley Park has been included within the area as facilities and new habitats there can be a catalyst to wider improvements across the area.

Approach:

- Set up a regeneration partnership project with MKCC.
- Identify areas for refurbishment.
- Engage with the local community.
- Set up pilot projects with community engagement.

● Drying Courtyards for Enhancement as Community Gardens

■ New Green Centre
Priority Area for Open Space & Public Realm Enhancements & New Habitat Creation

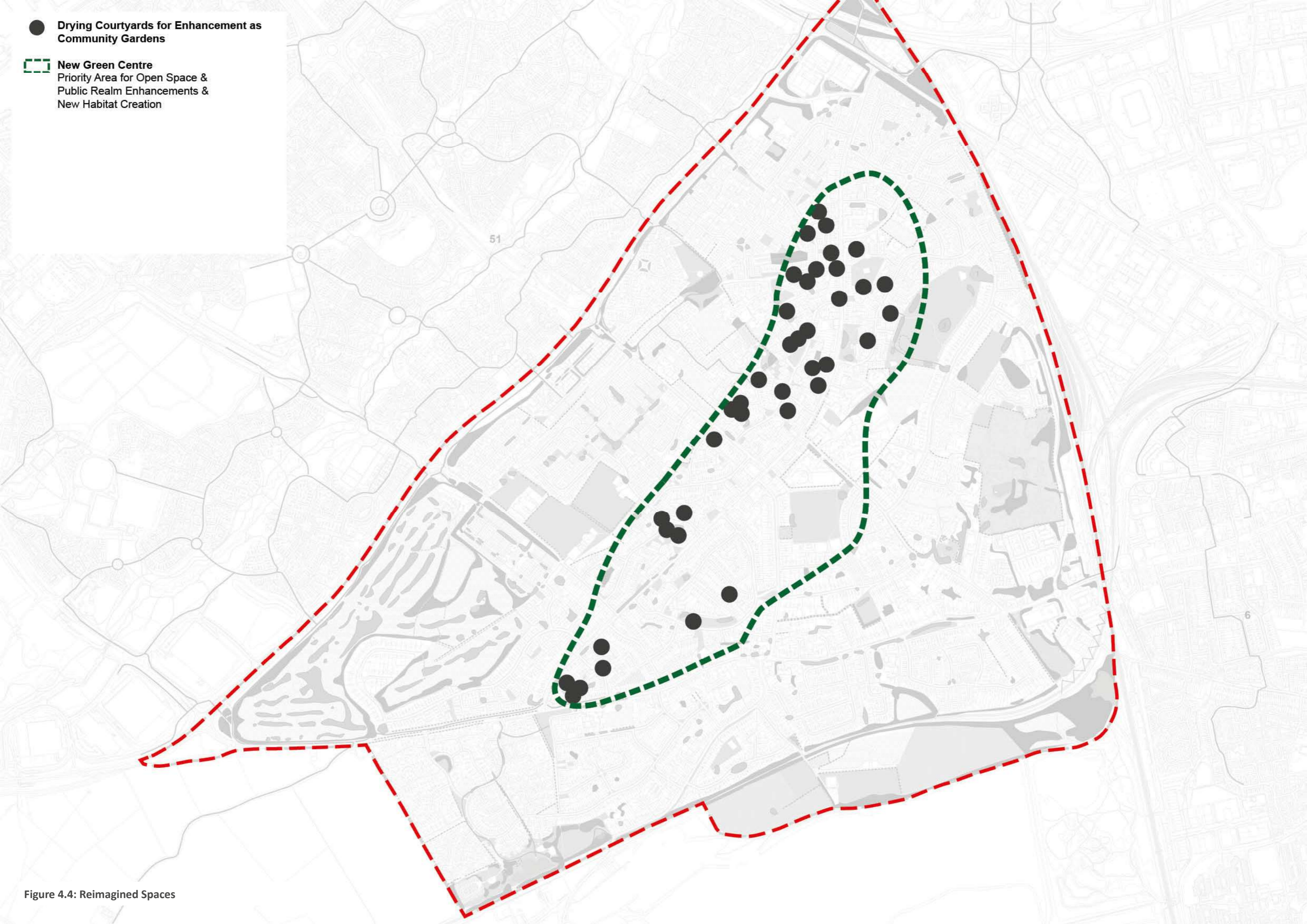


Figure 4.4: Reimagined Spaces

4.3 Theme 2: Making Connections

The aim of this Theme is to enhance movement across the parish for people and wildlife through 4 key projects. These aim to focus activity on the areas where enhancing habitats and improving connections for people can have the most significant broad reaching benefits. This means that whilst each project focuses on a specific topic, they are also designed to work together

Projects:

- 2A: Creating Wildlife Corridors and Flyways
- 2B: Bridging the Gaps
- 2C: Establishing Safe Sustainable Routes to School
- 2D: Promoting Parish Walks and Rides

Project 2A – Creating Wildlife Corridors and Flyways

Objective: To enhance the biodiversity of the parish by creating stronger, larger, and better-connected habitat corridors for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Context: There are no strong wildlife corridors across the parish but there are wildlife corridors on the parish’s boundaries. Those associated with planting along the railways is very vulnerable to railway projects that can lead to its removal. The strong planting along the H8 is developing into a valuable wildlife corridor. Perhaps the most significant corridors for wildlife are associated with the Water Eaton Brook on the parish’s southern boundary, and the Loughton Brook just to the north of the parish, running parallel to its north-western boundary.

Although the built-up nature of the parish will always limit the establishment of wildlife corridors, there is still considerable benefit in establishing links between existing habitats in the parish and understanding the valuable connecting features, such as historic hedgerows, so that these features can be protected and opportunities taken to extend and enhance networks. The north-west section of the parish occupied by Windmill Hill Golf Club is identified as a Network Expansion Zone for habitats which highlights the potential of this area to provide significant benefit to nearby habitats, particularly those associated with Howe Park Wood.

Approach:

- Figure 4.5 Wildlife Corridors** Corridors shows a proposed network of wildlife corridors. These link together existing habitats and locations where there are opportunities for habitat enhancement to support the development of these wildlife corridors.
- Flyways:** Ideally, each corridor would run along the ground and reach up to the height of a large tree, with a tree canopy connecting along its route. Where this is not possible at ground level because of built development, there is considerable benefit in connecting the corridor through a tree canopy as a “Flyway”. This aerial route would represent habitat enhancement and improved connectivity for a wide variety of species but particularly bats, birds and insects.
- The corridors do inevitably run across gardens and areas in private ownership. To achieve wildlife corridors in these areas a possible approach might be to target these areas for community engagement activities to encourage wildlife gardening and tree planting.

- Nature Recovery Network:** The north-western corner of the parish is within a Network Recovery Network area designated as a Network Expansion Zone. This signifies that the area has been designated on a national basis as a key area where biodiversity benefit can be achieved by creating and enhancing habitats. So achieving habitat enhancement and connectivity between habitats in this area is a priority. The initiatives in this area should focus on woodland creation and the use of locally occurring native species found in Howe Park Wood SSSI and other local semi-natural habitats. Other Wildlife Corridors in the parish should connect to this area to help strengthen the Network Expansion Zone.
- Historic Hedges:** Hedges provide a wide range of benefits to a great diversity of species, and many provide connections through areas where wildlife, including insects and small birds, might struggle to move without this linear type of green space. It is therefore important to ensure support their biodiversity value. In addition, opportunities should be taken to establish new hedgerows to support the wildlife corridors these hedgerows are maintained and managed to.
- Water Eaton Brook and Blue Lagoon Local Nature Reserve:** The southern edge of the parish has running water and large water bodies, and is therefore the most suitable area within the parish to establish water and wetland habitats to help expand existing and create new habitats increasing the viability of existing wildlife populations and providing opportunities for new species or lost species to repopulate the area.
- The creation of wildlife corridors is a key project. This can be achieved by championing it as a concept and targeting other projects (particularly those described in **1A. New and Enhanced Habitats** to establish the links and connections.
- The proposed network of wildlife corridors is designed to set the intent and help direct initiatives. The alignment of the network can be adjusted to reflect opportunities as they arise but the underlying principle of aiming to provide connections for wildlife across the parish should be retained.

- Existing Wildlife Corridor
- Potential Wildlife Corridor
- Additional Links 'Flyways'
- Priority Zone for Water and Wetland
- Enhanced Woodland Connectivity



Figure 4.5: Wildlife Corridors

Project 2B: Bridging the Gaps

Objective: To provide safe attractive walking and cycling routes through the parish and to key destinations beyond the parish boundaries.

Context: The Redway network does not extend across West Bletchley. The residential layout with extensive street parking makes road cycling difficult, particularly for the less confident cyclist.

We have reviewed the key gaps in the network where Redways are needed and assessed priority routes for people to access key facilities including Natural Green Space and recreational routes.

The lack of safe road crossings in several areas hinder parish residents’ access to key areas of Milton Keynes including MK1, Stadium MK and the wider countryside on foot or by bike.

Approach: Illustrated on Figure 4.6 Bridging the Gaps

- **2B.1 Collaborate with MKCC on an implementation programme for the establishment of a Primary Redway Network so that the parish has a comparable network to the rest of Milton Keynes.** The suggested routes shown in **Figure 4.6 Bridging the Gaps**. This prioritises the need to establish safe routes along the main roads and the need for better connections from West Bletchley to access facilities on the east side of the parish and beyond, particularly Bletchley Station, Bletchley Town, MK1, MK Stadium, MK College, and for children to be able to cycle to school. Access to schools is considered in a specific project **2C**, but to succeed fully in encouraging walking and cycling to school it will be necessary to go beyond the immediate school surrounds to establish routes across the parish.
- **2B.2 Further enhancements to the Redway and Walking Network:** Establishing new Redways will be a challenge but there are many opportunities to make smaller changes to routes and road safety to encourage walking and cycling around the parish. The network shown on **Figure 4.6** is indicative and will need refining but gives a concept of key areas where there is a need for route enhancements. In many instances, these also tie in with wildlife corridors enabling newly designed routes through the parish to make a real difference to people and for wildlife.
- **2B.3 Safe Crossing of Major Routes:** There are currently a limited number of small island crossings to aid movement around the parish including the major routes on Watling Street and Buckingham Road. Opportunities to enhance crossings on these routes should be explored and progressed where possible with all safe, alternative routes also being widely promoted.

- **2B.4 Blue Lagoon:** Is an important recreational site but although it extends into the parish, access can be onerous. The route from Water Eaton Road is on a narrow pavement adjacent to a busy road and then proceeds between high fences past Newfoundout fishing lake – the route is uninviting and intimidating. The route from Selbourne Avenue is not way-marked and there is no welcoming entrance to the LNR. These routes need to be improved if technically feasible.
- **2B.5 Enhanced Routes to Parks and Natural Open Space for Central Areas:** As part of the enhancement planned for the central area, consideration should be given to establish new routes that improve access to Parks and Natural Open Space for everyone, particularly for people with young children.

- 2B.1 Suggested Primary Redway Connections
- 2B.2 Suggested Other Improved Walking & Cycling Connections
- 2B.3 Suggested Watling Street Crossing Improvements
- 2B.4 Suggested Improved Walking & Cycling Access to Blue Lagoon
- 2.5 Suggested Buckingham Road Crossings to Enable Countryside Access
- 2.6 Suggested Buckingham Road Crossing to Improve Access to 8-Belles Park

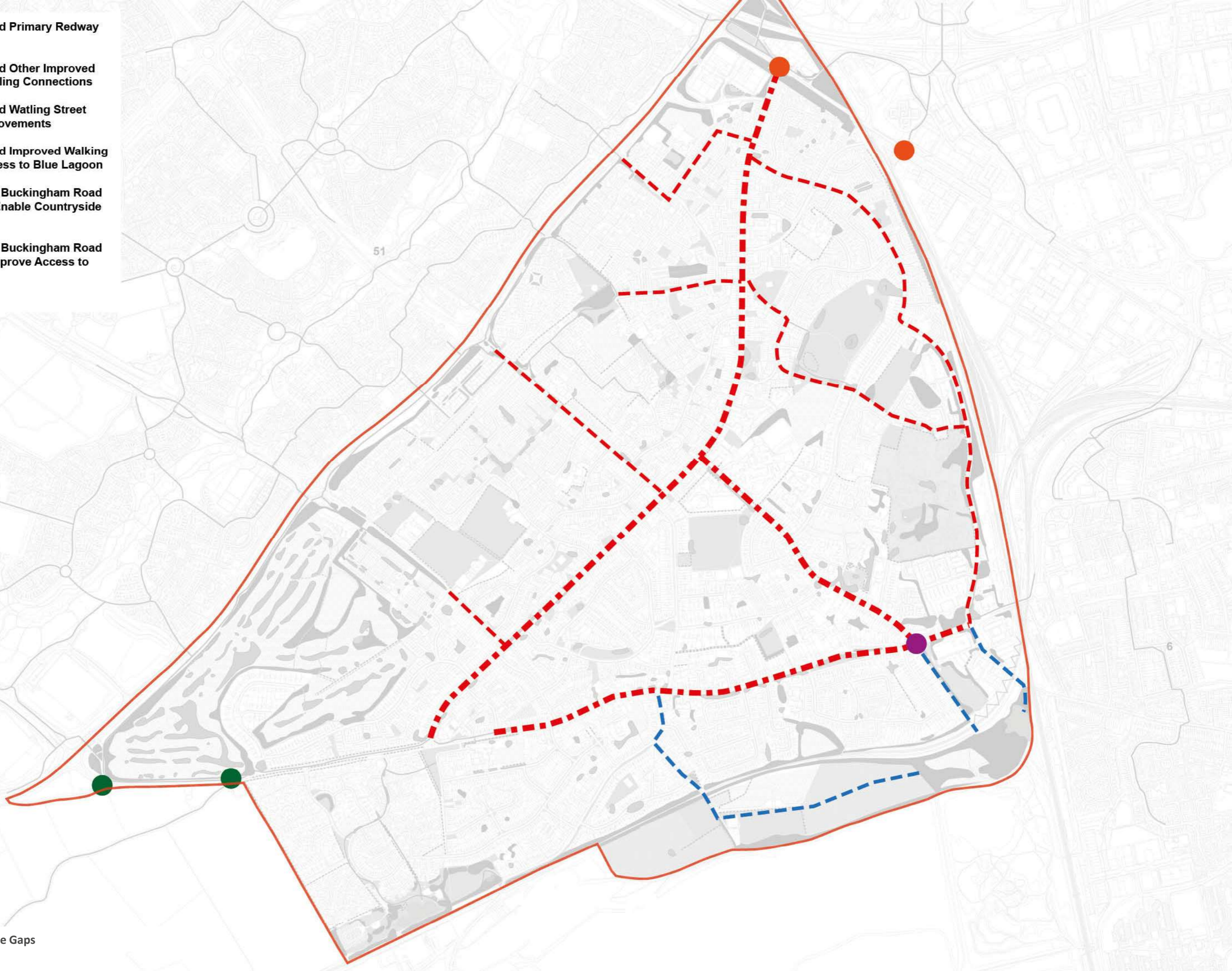


Figure 4.6: Bridging the Gaps

Project 2C: Establishing Safe Sustainable Routes to School

Objective: To support and promote initiatives to make walking and cycling to school a safer and more attractive option than travelling by car.

Context: West Bletchley has 15 school and college sites. This represents a greater density than any other parish in Milton Keynes. However, children attending school in West Bletchley have significantly less opportunities to walk and cycle to school in safe traffic-free environments as many streets are unsafe for cycling. **Figure 4.7 School Access** illustrates the 400m/ 5 Minute walking zones around schools in the parish. This highlights the extent to which the majority of the parish is within 5 minutes walking distance of a school and so enhanced walking and cycling provision is a key priority.

There is an urgent need to establish how access to all schools can be made more attractive. Recent Redway improvements have facilitated safe walking and cycling access to MK College from Bletchley Town Centre but there were no improvements made to create Redway connections further into the parish.

The primary and secondary schools do not generally have Redway access or if they do, it is only from one direction. Romans Field School has a Redway in the more recent housing to the north and east of it, but this fails to connect to the school entrance.

There is an urgent need to review access to each school and to support improved routes for walking and cycling to school. MKCC through the GetAroundMK website <https://getaroundmk.org.uk/school/help-for-schools> provides a variety of information and initiatives to support both schools and families to encourage more active access. This includes helping schools produce **Active Travel to School Maps**, as shown in the image alongside, **Illustrative Active Travel to School Map for Chestnuts Primary School**.

Approach:

- **Active Travel to School Maps:** to ensure that schools in the parish are prioritised for **Active Travel to School Maps**. The mapping should be used to identify missing links and enhancements that are needed to improve the walking and cycling environment. This will include considering the establishment of **School Streets** where needed (see next topic). To enhance safe access to schools the opportunities to enhance use of existing access points away from the main entrance should also be considered and may be safer. We have also identified a few locations on boundaries where there is no existing access but if it was created it could provide a new access point which would enable safer walking and cycling access to school. We have suggested these on **Figure 4.7 School Access**. The existing side access points are also highlighted as they might be promoted for walking and cycling to school. This might require adaptations to allow bike access and bike storage.

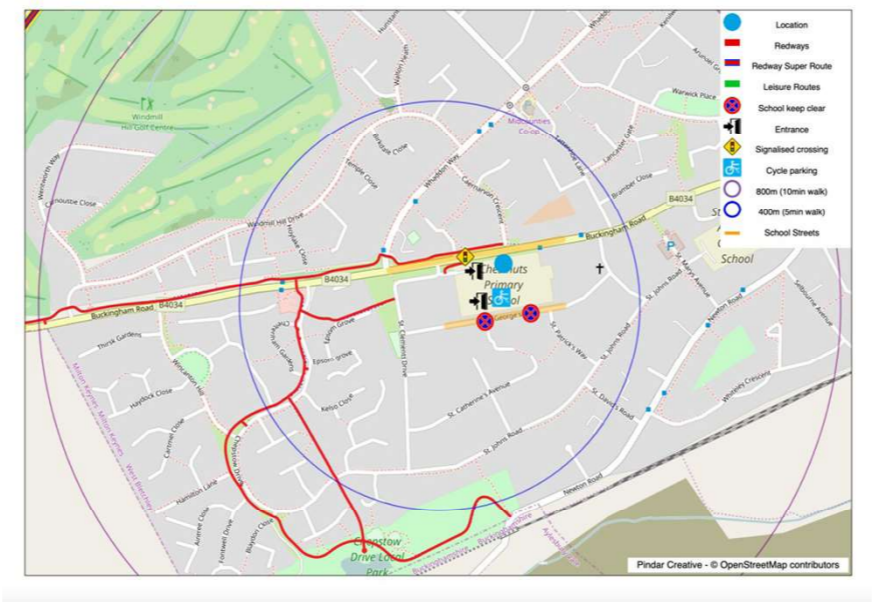


Figure 4.3 Illustrative Active Travel to School Map for Chestnuts Primary School

- To Encourage the Establishment of School Streets: the School Streets initiative <http://schoolstreets.org.uk/> encourages the establishment of temporary restrictions on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. The restriction applies to school traffic and through-traffic.

Local Authorities have powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to regulate traffic and restrict access. A Traffic Management Order is applied to a street around a school, temporarily restricting access to motorised vehicles. That street will, in effect, become a pedestrian and cycle only zone for a period. Times for the restrictions are determined in agreement with the school. These can be for between 30-45 minutes and only on weekdays and term times. The result is a safer, healthier, and more pleasant environment for everyone. School Streets started in Italy in 1989, the first in the UK was in Scotland in 2015, and the first in London in 2017.

The scheme enables local communities to tackle poor health, road danger and air pollution. A School Street scheme encourages a healthier lifestyle and active travel to school for families, and leads to a better environment for everyone. Establishing school streets should be considered to improve access to schools in the parish. On **Figure 4.7 School Access**, we have suggested key locations where School Streets should be considered.

- **Promoting and encouraging other initiatives which encourage walking and cycling to school:** These include:
Walking Buses: This is an initiative that encourages people to set up networks so that groups of children can walk to school with one or more adults. <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/>
Walk to School Weeks: This initiative is promoted by several organisations including Living Streets. <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/products-and-services/projects/walk-to-school-week>
- **Way-Marking with Walking Minutes to School:** Signs and pavement markers showing walking minutes to schools can help people realise it might be easier to walk to school than drive and struggle to park. It can also encourage parents determined to drive to park further away from the school rather than trying to drive as close as possible, as often that leads to congestion and safety issues.

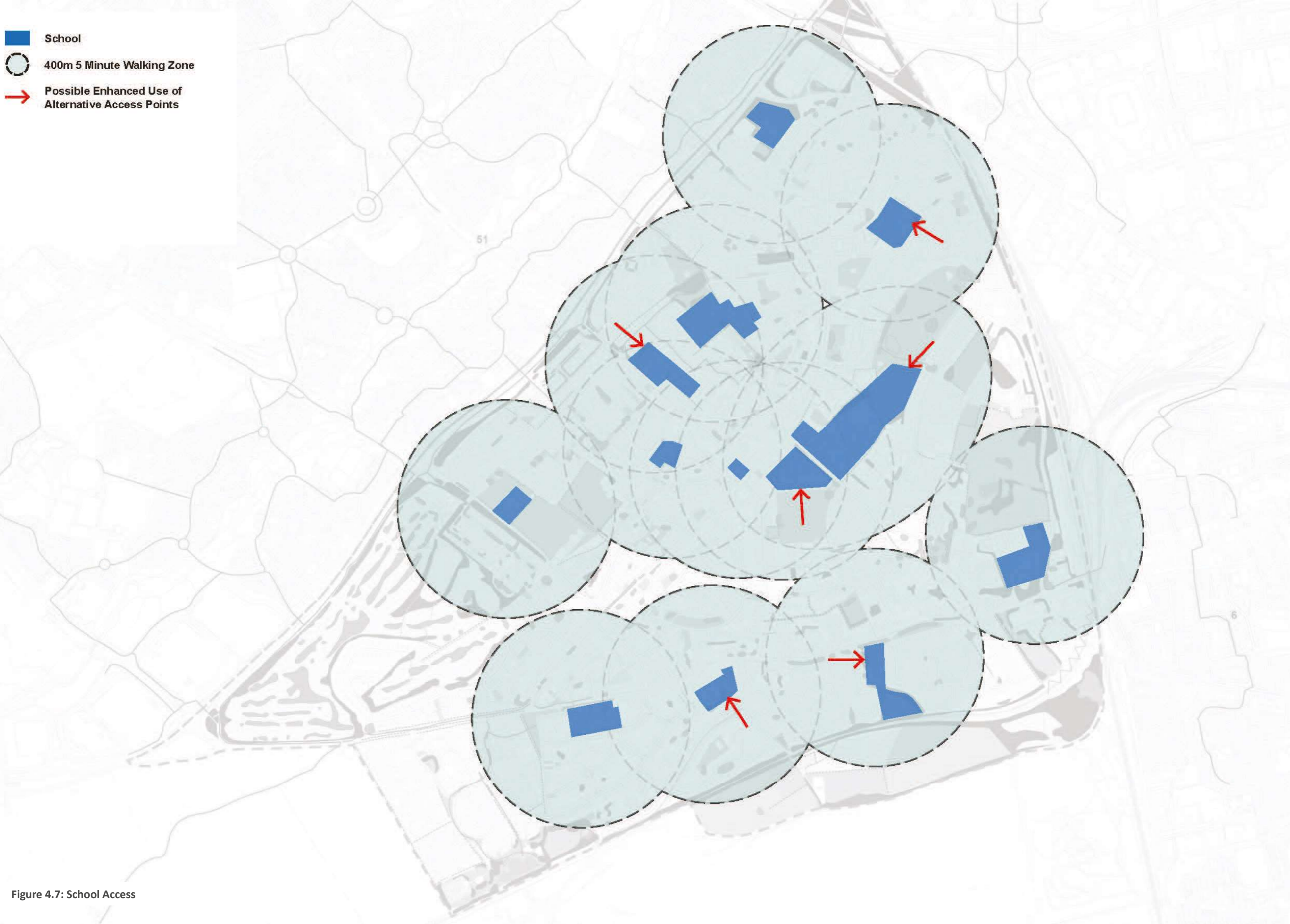
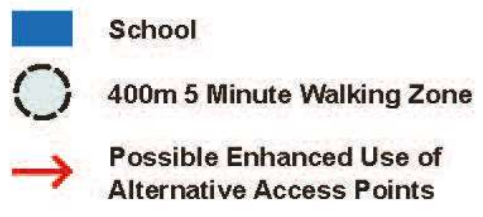


Figure 4.7: School Access

Project 2D: Promoting Parish Walks and Rides

Objective: To promote attractive walking and cycling routes that encourage people to be more active, engage with the natural environment and to understand and enjoy the area’s heritage. These routes are designed to improve access to attractive environments of wildlife and cultural interest within and immediately outside the parish.

Context: West Bletchley doesn’t have immediate access to the linear parks and large areas of natural green space that benefits the rest of Milton Keynes. There is therefore, a need to provide and promote recreational routes that people can enjoy from their doorstep to support their health and wellbeing, and help encourage reduced car use.

Approach: Illustrated in Figure 4.8 Parish Walks and Rides

- **2D.1 Parish Path - a 5-Mile Wellness Walk with 12 “Windows on Wildlife and the Past”** This is a key project to establish and promote an attractive walk around the parish. The walk has 12 stops to interpret areas of wildlife and historic interest. The route is designed to be 5-miles long and represents approximately 10,000 steps, an often recommended daily target walking distance. This would enable it to also be a measure of health and wellbeing activity. The route could be subdivided to create three shorter circular routes.
- **2D.2 Promoting the Use of the Parish Path for Health and Wellbeing:** the route is designed to navigate the most interesting areas, which have stories to tell about their biodiversity and history. To achieve the route and maximise its benefit to residents will require partnership working. It could also be promoted for use as part of social prescribing.
- **2D.3 Howe Park Wood and Tattenhoe Valley Circular Walks and Rides:** This aims to enhance access to larger areas of natural green space. The project enhances signage and promotes existing walking and cycling routes to encourage people to use the underpasses to cross the A421 to access Redways and valuable green space immediately to the north of the parish along Tattenhoe Valley and Howe Park Wood.

The key requirements would primarily be associated with promotional material and way-marking to promote the routes, with separate routes for cyclists and walkers. Howe Park Wood has a visitor’s centre and café and so provides good facilities that make it an attractive destination within easy reach.

- **2D.4 Circular Walk to Blue Lagoon LNR:** : Blue Lagoon LNR has great potential to be used for recreation, health and wellbeing benefits. Should improvements to access be carried out, a circular route could be established with the route being way-marked and publicised to encourage more people to walk and cycle to the LNR.
- **2D.5 Weasel Lane Countryside Access:** Weasel Lane provides a potentially important recreational access route for walking and cycling out into the north Buckinghamshire countryside. This lane provides important opportunities to create and promote traffic-free access to the countryside.
- **2D.6 Central West Bletchley to Parks and Natural Open Space:** This project would promote safe and enjoyable routes to parks and natural green space from the central parts of the parish, that currently have poor access. There is a particular need to investigate opportunities to promote and establish routes for people living in the multi-residential housing to parks and play areas. The routes shown on the plan are only indicative and will need to be refined further. The project could be combined with engagement activities in association with the drying courtyard improvements.

- 5 mile (10,000 step) Parish walk for health & well being interpreted with 12 'Windows on Our Wildlife & History'
- Sub-divisions to enable shorter routes
- Promoted walking & cycling routes to Howe Park Wood & Tattenhoe Valley
- Establish access to Blue Lagoon LNR in association with new entrances & management plan
- Promote recreational route using Weasel Lane

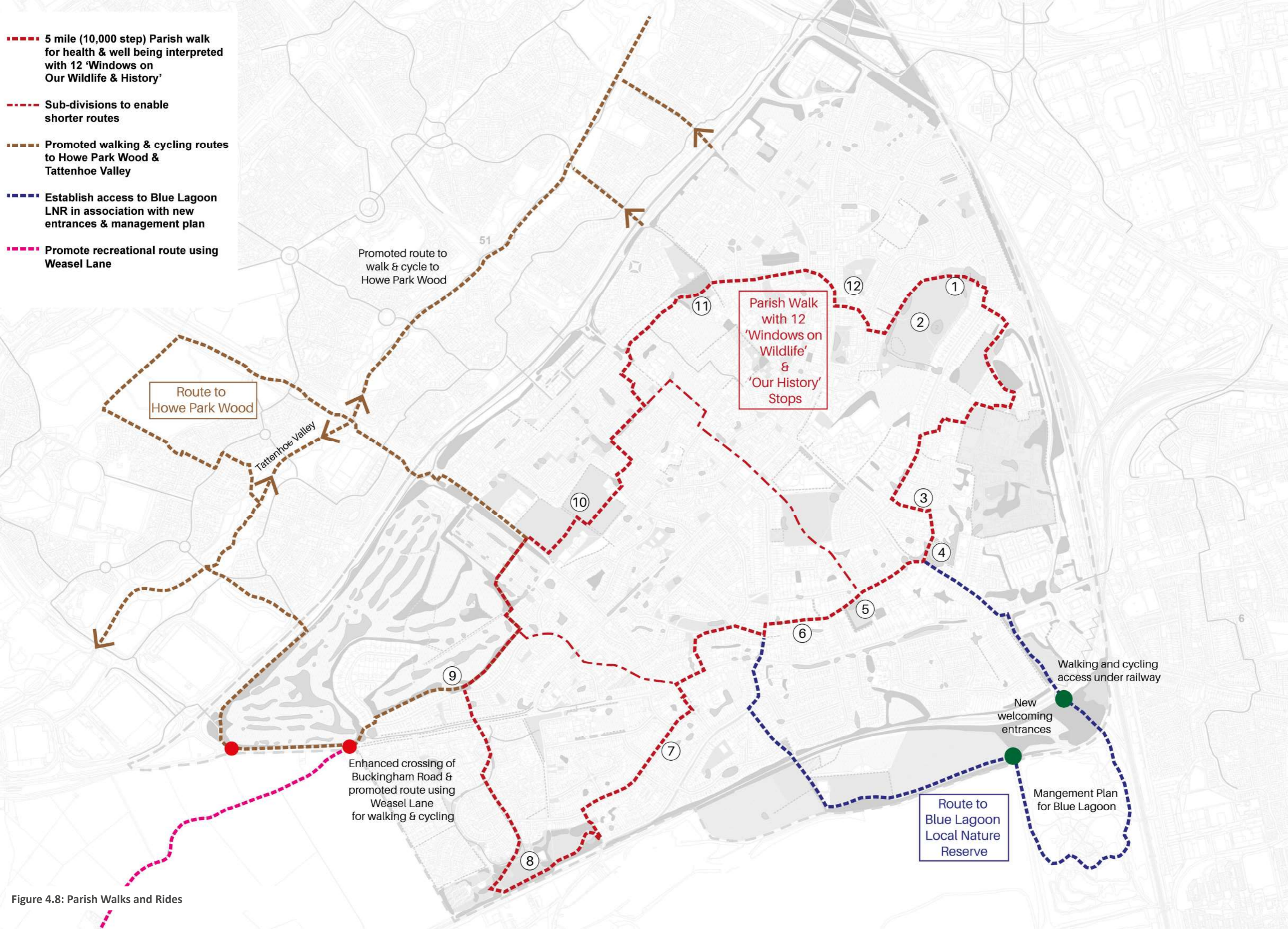


Figure 4.8: Parish Walks and Rides

4.4 Theme 3: Engaging Residents

The aim of this Theme is to engage residents with the objectives to improve biodiversity and implement the wider Green Infrastructure strategy.

Projects:

- 3A: Promoting Wildlife Gardening and 20%+ for Nature in Gardens
- 3B: Focus on Fronts
- 3C: People’s Patch Pledge
- 3D: Monitoring the Wildlife
- 3E: Supporting Allotment Holders

Project 3A: Promoting Wildlife Gardening and 20%+ for Nature in Gardens.

Objective: To encourage residents to support the Green Infrastructure Strategy objectives in the way they manage their own land.

Context: Residential gardens represent the largest land use in the parish. Therefore, how they are planted and managed will make a very significant difference to the biodiversity of the parish. People’s gardens are their habitat and important outside spaces to enjoy a wide variety of activities, including connecting to the natural environment. Most people are aware of the severe concern about biodiversity loss and climate change, and many would like to do more to help.

As with the parks and open spaces, promoting and supporting a vision to give 20%+ of our gardens to wildlife is a way to think differently about how our gardens are managed.

Our convenient green bins, which enable us to sweep up autumn leaves and dispose of branches very easily, may be having a negative impact on our wildlife. If instead of disposing of the leaves, we make a leaf pile this will encourage a diversity of worms and insects to move in to break down the leaves. These in turn attract frogs, toads, and hedgehogs. Hedgehogs and queen bumblebees can also use leaf piles as places to overwinter and raise their young. A leaf pile created in the corner of the garden or at the bottom of a hedge will break down in a couple of years and then a fine leaf mould is created which is suitable to put on the garden.

Log piles similarly provide a habitat for many fungi and insect species whose numbers have significantly declined. So, instead of putting the logs in the green bin, it is very beneficial to build a woodpile, ideally with a little hedgehog sized refuge at its centre.

‘Bug hotels’ are now widely available to buy and can also be easily created from found material. They can provide a new habitat and benefit to a whole variety of different insects. This includes many species whose numbers have dropped significantly and find it difficult to locate suitable habitats in our countryside. In Britain, there are more than 270 different species of bees consisting of solitary bees, bumble bees and honey bees. Solitary bee females nest alone rather than as part of a large colony. Many of these solitary bees look for the type of nesting spaces a bug hotel can provide.

Dedicating a percentage of your back garden to wildlife enables rough corners and patches of brambles and nettles to be valued as great mini habitats rather than be seen as a garden not being kept properly. Wildlife gardening is about simply leaving areas alone and a bit messy. The wildlife that benefits from these areas may go largely unseen, as much of our urban wildlife is nocturnal including hedgehogs, foxes, bats, and a multitude of moths. If we could see the benefit to wildlife the rough and unmanaged areas bring it would be astonishing.

Approach:

- Some of the simple but very positive things that people can do within their gardens that really make a real difference include:
 - Creating hedgehog holes in fences and enhancing garden connectivity.
 - Providing a dish of water for bathing birds, or a thirsty hedgehog or bee.
 - Considering creating a pond, even a very small container pond can bring an amazing diversity of wildlife to a garden.
 - Making space for log and leaf piles.
 - Creating a bug hotel.
 - Making and putting up bat and bird boxes.
 - Maintaining an area of long grass or even creating a wildflower meadow area.
 - Planting a tree and creating and maintaining boundary hedges for wildlife.
 - Avoiding herbicides and pesticides.
- The more people can see and appreciate the diversity of species their gardens can support, the more engaged and enthusiastic they are likely to become about gardening for wildlife and wildlife projects generally. Therefore, encouraging garden surveys and engaging with citizen science projects can be a great way of helping to enhance understanding and promote biodiversity.
- Residents can also be encouraged to create places in their gardens just to sit and observe the natural environment or to use a wildlife camera to see the wildlife enjoying their garden at night.
- An information leaflet or guide to measures residents could take is one way to communicate the potential. This might also be accompanied by workshops or presentations that might also demonstrate the potential.

Project 3B: Focus on Fronts

Objective: To enhance the design and management of front gardens to support biodiversity and wildlife corridors and help reduce flood risk issues

Context: Front gardens are a prominent feature of the townscape of the parish and how they are designed and used affects the character of the parish for people and for wildlife. The paving-over of front gardens with impermeable surfacing has a significant impact on the speed of runoff and can cause flooding.

A large proportion of front gardens in the parish are now paved over and parked on. This has been in direct response to increased car ownership and the desire to park cars on private drives rather than in garages, the courtyards or on the street. In some parts of the parish there is insufficient space on the streets to accommodate the level of car ownership.

In time, new sustainable forms of public transport such as demand responsive transport and encouraging people to walk and cycle more may help reduce the need to own a car.

As the whole front garden area is not generally required for manoeuvring vehicles, it would make a huge difference to retain some areas of attractive green space. That could be a wildflower boarder or a line of shrubs providing berries and refuge for a hedgehog moving around the streets. During the survey we found a lavender hedge along a front garden boundary that potentially provides nectar to over 50 bees, so small improvements can make a real impact.

Approach:

- Promote the 20%+ for nature approach for front gardens and particularly encourage people to always have some planting even if it is in containers.
- Promote the importance of front gardens for wildlife and encourage residents to manage them sustainably.
- Target areas with limited opportunities for street trees to encourage residents to plant trees, perhaps with an incentive scheme.
- Consider running a parish competition or award each year for the ‘Most Wildlife Friendly Front Garden’.

Project 3C: People’s Patch Pledge

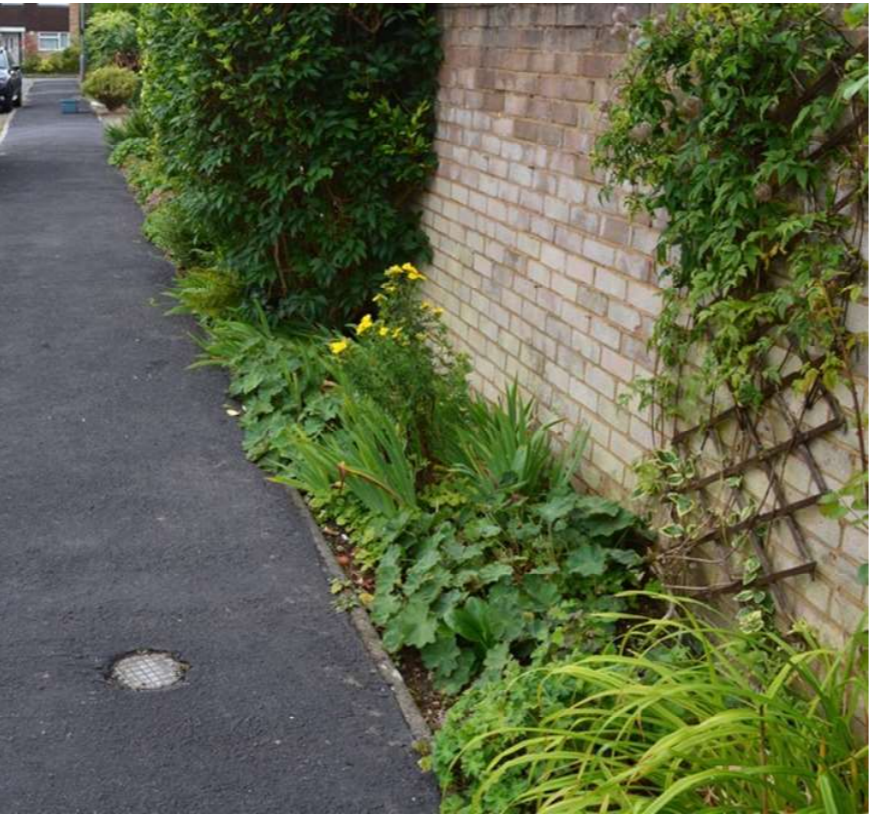
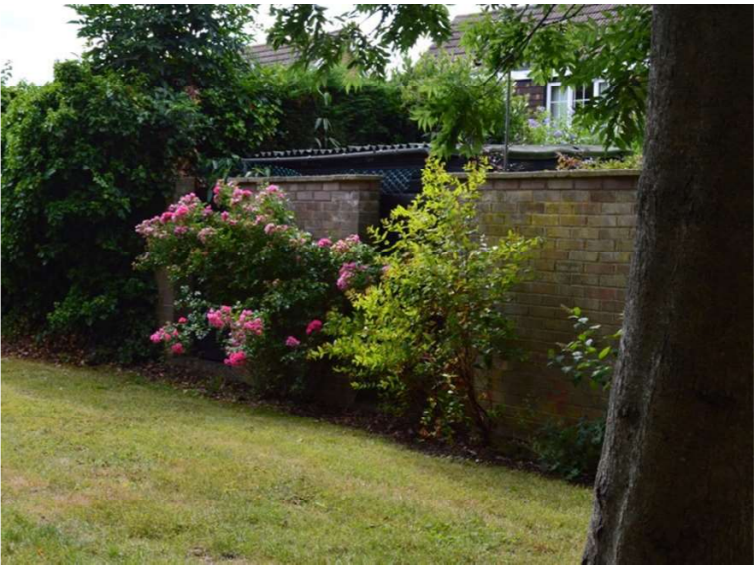
Objective: To encourage residents to help manage small areas of public open space which are important to them in a sustainable way, which enhances the spaces for people and wildlife.

Context: This is already happening on a small scale, and there is a great opportunity to support this in more areas throughout the parish.

Approach:

- Make residents aware that this is something the parish is encouraging.
- Provide the support to residents as required. There are a variety of options available for these areas, including:
 - o Wildflower Meadows
 - o Pollinator Pathways – creating new areas of herbaceous and shrub planting to provide wildlife and pollinator benefit.
 - o Ensuring existing hedgerows are protected and managed.
 - o Establishing small new orchards.
 - o Creating new small woodland areas.
 - o Planting and managing trees.

Some examples of where residents in West Bletchley have planted public-facing spaces are shown in the photos below.



Project 3D: Monitoring the Wildlife

Objective: To monitor species within the parish to build up our knowledge of the natural world, and to identify which species most urgently require conservation attention.

Context: Repositories of species data like Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC) are essential tools for planning and defending wildlife. Datasets like these can aid the identification of the most valuable sites for wildlife and be used to inform Nature Recovery Network maps.

By combining data across species, we can look at broader patterns in nature, such as shown by the State of Nature Reports https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf and in the UK Government’s biodiversity indicators. Trends in wildlife can tell us about the health of the environment more widely, and what impact human activities are having on it. The reporting of the UK’s progress in meeting international targets for biodiversity and sustainability relies heavily on volunteer-collected biodiversity data such as this.

Approach:

- To encourage and enable the surveying of wildlife in the parish to understand the local area and achieve conservation objectives. Milton Keynes Natural History Society website provides guidance on recording wildlife. <https://mknhs.org.uk/recording/>
- To encourage residents to record wildlife sightings using recognised recording methods i.e. IRecord, Hedgehog Street etc. and to share with the wider community as a way to engage others.

Project 3E: Supporting Allotment Holders

Objective: To encourage allotment holders to maximise the wildlife value of their land and to share their knowledge and expertise with others.

Context: Allotments are increasingly being recognised as important sites for wildlife. Many of the plants and animals that struggle to survive in intensively managed farmland can thrive on allotment sites and there are many small changes that can be made to support the diversity of species. Natural England have produced a useful leaflet which provides helpful information for allotment holders: <https://enablelc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/wildlifeonallotments.pdf>

Approach:

- To engage with allotment holders and provide support and information to help them manage their land to enhance its biodiversity, and look for opportunities to encourage them to share their knowledge with others including those interested in growing food as part of the **1D.1 Drying Courtyard Enhancements** or **3C. People’s Patch Pledge**.

4.5 Theme 4: Making and Strengthening Partnerships

The aim of this Theme is to make and strengthen partnerships with the owners and managers of land in the parish to deliver the Green Infrastructure Strategy projects. A large proportion of land in the parish is also owned and managed by other organisations. So achieving the Green Infrastructure Strategy objectives will rely on these organisations understanding and supporting the Strategy and working in partnership to enhance the parish for everyone. We have set out below projects to achieve partnership working to enable the Strategy.

- 4A: Forum with Milton Keynes City Council
- 4B: Landowners, Land Managers and Local Businesses Forum
- 4C: Encouraging Local Residents to Act
- 4D: Funding Strategy

Project 4A: Forum with Milton Keynes City Council

Objective: To establish a forum with Milton Keynes City Council to enable West Bletchley to achieve exemplar Green Infrastructure provision in line with that provided in the rest of the authority area.

Context: : Milton Keynes City Council is the unitary authority for the area and has a Green Infrastructure Strategy. This identifies a range of initiatives and objectives, which this Strategy aims to take forward. West Bletchley, and particularly the eastern side of the parish is identified within MKCC Green Infrastructure Strategy as an area for “Targeted Urban Greening” highlighting the need for habitat enhancement and biodiversity improvements in the parish.

Approach: Within the review section, we have identified the full extent of the potential and need to enhance Green Infrastructure in West Bletchley. Many of the projects identified will require partnership working with MKCC. We therefore suggest a forum or similar working group, should be set up to enable different departments within MKCC to coordinate a unified response and look creatively at funding opportunities. We have identified the scope of this partnership working under the following topics below:

- Biodiversity:** MKCC within their Strategy identified West Bletchley as an area for “Targetted Urban Greening”. The existing habitats are small and fragmented and the built-up nature of the parish presents limited opportunities to create robust wildlife corridors. So achieving biodiversity enhancements will require every open space to provide a wide range of Green Infrastructure resources. This will change the way land is used and managed as areas will not just be defined as having a single use, such as a golf course or playing fields. All open space will need to be designed and managed to provide enhanced habitats and improved biodiversity and also improve access.
- Access to Parks, Open Space, Access to Natural Green Space and Play:** The Review section of the WB Green Infrastructure Strategy has identified that:
 - Some residents do not have access to a local park.
 - The facilities within the parks are very variable with Rickley Park being notable as the Parish’s central park with great potential for community events, but it currently has no play area and very limited planting.
 - Most people don’t have access to an attractive Small Local Park with good habitats and facilities.
 - There are good large areas of Natural Green Space around the parish but there is a need to improve and promote access.

- Blue Lagoon LNR could be providing much greater benefit to the parish but access is very poor. This needs to be addressed within the proposed Management Plan.
- The lack of access to parks and Natural Green Space from the central and north-western parts of the parish could be addressed by improving access to **Tattenhoe Lane Playing Fields** and the edge of **Windmill Hill Golf Course**.
- Many residents have no access to well-equipped play facilities close by and lack the opportunity to play within a more natural environment.
- Many multi-residential housing blocks seemed to be occupied by parents with pre-school children with no community gardens or nearby safe play spaces.

To provide well-resourced Green Infrastructure for the parish will require reviewing all parks and open spaces (including playing fields and the golf course) to enable them to be designed and managed to achieve Green Infrastructure objectives.

- Walking and Cycling:** Milton Keynes City Council is responsible for the Redway network and highways in the parish. Many of the proposals to encourage sustainable travel and enable improved access to green space, local shops/facilities and schools rely on significant improvements to walking and cycling routes. To achieve the urgently needed improvements will need an implementation programme to be agreed. Within this programme consideration should be given to improving walking and cycling access to schools and achieving a safe crossing on Watling Street for pedestrians and cyclists.
- School Grounds** As West Bletchley is notable for the high number of schools within the area, encouraging improvements to both the access to schools and the habitats within their grounds can be an important part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Public Realm and Housing:** The public realm in older estates has suffered from a lack of investment for many years. This has resulted in some areas having a poor landscape quality, which has a negative impact on the perception of the parish. There is an opportunity to regenerate the landscape in these areas to provide better, more usable space for people and to provide new and improved habitats for wildlife.

The condition of the communal drying courtyards adjacent to the multi-residential housing areas doesn’t provide a welcoming environment or a safe play space for younger residents. Properly designed and managed, these areas could be both vibrant and valued community spaces and provide small habitats which can help wildlife connect across the parish.

- Development Sites: MKCC as planning authority has the ability to help ensure that planning proposals within and outside the parish help achieve the West Bletchley Green Infrastructure Strategy. It is therefore important to ensure the objectives of the strategy are integrated into the Local Plan and planning decisions help achieve the Strategy.

This should include ensuring that new development enhances habitats in the parish, improves access routes on foot and by bike and buildings are designed to maximise their potential benefits to wildlife such as requiring bat and bird boxes and solitary bee nesting sites.

Even though the risk from flooding is low in the area, schemes should provide sustainable drainage for surface water attenuation where they can, and only in exceptional circumstances should schemes simply pipe storm water away without attenuating on site. Policy already provides for this through the Flood and Water Management Act, and NPPF (Paragraph 161). Those provide the opportunity to create water features such as ponds and drainage swales and channels. Where soft edges are provided this is better to encourage wildlife.

Other measures such as tree planting and other landscaping, green roofs and green walls (with planting trained to grow vertically on facing walls) can also slow the rate of storm water run-off, reducing the need for other forms of attenuation and provide more opportunities for wildlife and generally help green the urban environment.

Where residential schemes are proposed then gardens should also be provided and apartments should include external space for growing even a limited amount of flowers and plants, such as on balconies and window boxes.

Where opportunities are limited due to the constraints of the site (and this should be exceptional), then contributions should be sought to ensure other open spaces and Green Infrastructure is improved or provided elsewhere. It is important that standards of provision are met and that there is not a diminution of provision as a result of new development.

Every development project in the parish should help deliver the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Project 4B: Landowners, Land Managers and Local Businesses Forum

Objective: To promote universal understanding and support for the West Bletchley Green Infrastructure Strategy to enable all organisations in the parish to engage with the Strategy and help deliver the outcomes.

Context: Promoting a wide understanding of the Strategy to the diverse range of businesses and other organisations has great potential to support achieving the Strategy objectives.

Approach: We suggest that a forum would be a good way to enable businesses and other organisations to understand what the West Bletchley Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to achieve and the benefits implementing the Strategy can have on the character of West Bletchley and its habitats, and enable their employees/visitors/pupils to enjoy the parish more and walk and cycle safely. The forum would also provide support to landowners and managers to review their land to support the objectives. Key partners for this working group we have identified as

- **School Grounds and Pupil Engagement:** School grounds represent a significant area of land in the parish so there are considerable opportunities for schools and colleges to support Green Infrastructure objectives with habitat enhancement projects.

The most significant opportunities appear to be associated with school boundaries as many school sites have small corners and irregular bits of land offering scope to link with curriculum objectives. As the parish has limited areas of semi-natural habitat, these could be valuable new habitat creation sites.

- **Bletchley Park Trust:** The restoration of the Park as a major visitor attraction has included management of the grounds and lake area. Partnership working would support achieving wider strategy objectives.
- **Doctors Surgeries and Care Providers:** The proposals aim to improve residents’ access to open space and support a healthy lifestyle and wellbeing objectives. Working in partnership with care providers in the parish would enable initiatives such as the “Parish Path” and community engagement activities to be integrated with social prescribing.
- **Bletchley Station:** The station is currently in a state of transition to enable it to accommodate the East-West rail line enhancements. The proposals, should where possible, support good green infrastructure and particularly aim to enhance walking and cycling access from within the parish, and protect existing habitats, create new habitats and SUDs drainage enhancements.

- **Network Rail:** are responsible for the management of the land associated with the rail lines on the parish’s eastern and southern boundaries. Along the south of the parish the East-West rail line between Cambridge and Oxford includes sections which have been closed for several years but are currently under construction for re-opening. Planning consent for these works has required ecological surveying of the route and identifying habitats, many of which will be lost. To compensate for this loss, it is our understanding that former arable land to the south of the railway line in the Brickworks (Area 16), will be used to create an Ecological Compensation Area, with a mix of scrub, grassland, and pond/wetland establishment (eastern field) and flood attenuation (western field) although detailed proposals have yet to be reviewed. Working in partnership has the potential to ensure these areas can be designed and managed to achieve improved access to Natural Green Space for parish residents and enable them to become involved with the management and monitoring.

- **St Mary’s Church:** The churchyard is a rich tapestry of different habitats providing refuge for a wide variety of species. Many of these, such as the lichen on headstones and other stonework have been established within the churchyard for hundreds of years and are very sensitive to how the area is managed. The importance of churchyards to local wildlife and particularly to wildlife within urban areas, is now widely recognised. A partnership project to understand the diversity of habitats in the churchyard and how they might be enhanced, could provide wide-ranging benefits, and improve our understanding of this rare and historic site.

- **Bletchley Landfill Site:** This occupies ground immediately to the south of the parish. When the landfill operations cease the intention is that the new landform will be restored to a mix of woodland, scrub, and grassland with public access across. This will benefit the parish and its habitats but an appeal to prevent the extension to tipping and a delay to the restoration has just been lost, so tipping will now continue until 2037. The eventual restoration of the site should provide habitat benefits and strengthen wildlife corridors along the southern boundary and provide a large new area with public access. The restoration of the site would support the Green Infrastructure Strategy for the parish.

- **Other Businesses and Premises:** These organisations manage land and work with and employ residents, so engaging with small businesses, landowners and churches would help them understand the objectives of the Strategy and how they could manage their land to support enhanced habitats.
- **The Parks Trust:** The Trust do not own and manage land within the parish, but they are responsible for the management of 6,000 acres including land immediately adjacent to the parish’s northern boundary.

Project 4C: Encouraging Local Residents to Act

Objective: To encourage and support residents to engage with the objectives and vision of the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Context: In **Theme 3**, we identified a range of practical projects to enable residents to help achieve the Green Infrastructure objectives for the parish. These projects will largely be focused on helping residents enhance the environment of their own gardens and their immediate local area. Within this strategy, the aim is to ensure suitable methods of engagement are employed to encourage all residents to become involved with the implementation of Green Infrastructure objectives within the parish and to help monitor and celebrate achievements.

Approach:

- To explore and employ differing methods of engagement so as to reach all residents, gaining their pledge for the *West Bletchley Green Infrastructure Strategy*.

Project 4D: Funding Strategy

Objective: To identify a variety of funding sources to implement the proposals.

Context: The proposals within the Strategy to enhance Green Infrastructure in the parish will have wide-ranging benefits and have the potential to improve the quality of life for some of the most disadvantaged residents. The Funding Strategy should therefore be far reaching and could potentially include Government Levelling-Up funding sources.

Approach:

- To develop a creative Funding Strategy to deliver the Green Infrastructure Strategy.