



## NOTICE OF MEETING

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date and Time:</b>	<b>Thursday 1 September 2022 7.00 pm</b>
<b>Place:</b>	<b>Council Chamber</b>
<b>Enquiries to:</b>	<b>Committee Services Committeeservices@hart.gov.uk</b>
<b>Members:</b>	<b>Neighbour (Leader), Radley (Deputy Leader), Bailey, Clarke, Cockarill, Collins, Oliver and Quarterman</b>

Joint Chief Executive

CIVIC OFFICES, HARLINGTON WAY  
FLEET, HAMPSHIRE GU51 4AE

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## AGENDA

**This Agenda and associated appendices are provided in electronic form only and are published on the Hart District Council website.**

**Please download all papers through the Modern.Gov app before the meeting.**

- **At the start of the meeting, the Lead Officer will confirm the Fire Evacuation Procedure.**
- **The Chairman will announce that this meeting will be recorded and that anyone remaining at the meeting had provided their consent to any such recording.**

**1 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 6 - 11**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 August 2022, together with separate Minutes of the Exempt Session, are attached for confirmation and signature as a current record.

**Exempt Minute 12**

**2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive any apologies for absence from Members\*.

*\*Note: Members are asked to email Committee services in advance of the meeting as soon as they become aware they will be absent.*

**3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To declare disposable pecuniary, and any other interests\*.

*\*Note: Members are asked to email Committee Services in advance of the meeting as soon as they become aware they may have an interest to declare.*

**4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)**

Anyone wishing to make a statement to the Committee should contact Committee Services at least two clear working days prior to the meeting. Further information can be found [online](#).

**6 SHAPLEY HEATH AUDIT REVIEW REPORT 13 - 51**

The purpose of this report is to receive the request from Audit Committee that Cabinet provide a response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report, and to review the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project and to provide a response to Audit Committee on lessons learnt.

**RECOMMENDATION**

A. That the Interim Section 151 Officer prepares an action plan to comprise the response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report: and

B. Cabinet to decide how it wishes to respond to the request from Audit Committee that Cabinet carries out a review of the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project.

## **7 ODIHAM COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN**

52 - 138

This report provides Cabinet with a proposed Management Plan for Odiham Common that, if approved will provide a strategy for its management for the next 10 years. The report also considers a strategy for the management of Ash Dieback on Odiham Common, which will be implemented until a district Tree Strategy is approved.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the draft Odiham Common Management Plan (attached at Appendix 1).
2. Approves and adopts a temporary Ash Dieback Strategy until a time where a more formal "Tree Strategy" will supplement this guidance.

## **8 GREEN GRID PILOT PROJECT – SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING**

139 - 184

To provide an update on the Green Grid Pilot Signage and Wayfinding Strategy and to seek Cabinet direction on the final design to allow the strategy to be completed.

To seek approval to proceed with the manufacture and installation of the signage and wayfinding along the pilot route between Fleet Railway Station and Hartland Village.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet:

1. Selects the final design for the Green Grid Pilot Signage and Wayfinding Strategy from the two shortlisted concept designs, details provided below and in Appendix 2;
2. Agrees that approval of any minor variations to the final design be delegated to the Leader

## **9 QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING**

185 - 205

To receive and note the Quarterly Budget Monitoring for Q1 2022/23

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet

1. Notes the Q1 revenue outturn position of an underspend of £126k
2. Notes the Q1 capital outturn position
3. Approves the transfer to reserves of £110k of costs received from health & safety court case

## 206 - 215

## RECOMMENDATION

- ## 11 5 COUNCILS GOVERNANCE

216 - 223

## RECOMMENDATION

- ## 12 MOVE TO A SINGLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

224 - 226

## RECOMMENDATION

- Page 4



create additional capacity in Tier 3 manager posts to increase operational capacity/Monitoring officer provision)

**13 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

227 - 234

To consider and amend the Cabinet Work Programme.

**Date of Publication: Tuesday, 23 August 2022**

## **CABINET**

**Date and Time:** Thursday 4 August 2022 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber

**Present:**

Neighbour (Leader), Bailey, Cockarill, Collins and Quarterman

**In attendance:** Axam, Farmer, Forster

**Officers:**

Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
Joane Rayne	Finance Manager
Mark Jaggard	Executive Director, Place
John Elson	Head of Technical and Environmental Services
Isabel Brittain	S151 Officer
Peter Summersell	Sustainability Officer
Adam Green	Countryside Manager
Daniel Hawes	Planning Policy and Economic Development Manager
Sharon Black	Committee Services Officer

## **23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of 7 July were confirmed subject to the amendment below

It was noted that following the suggestion that an anonymous reporting system be included within the Whistleblowing Policy, it had been confirmed this would be possible and an update to the Policy document would be produced in due course.

The minutes with the amendment were signed as a correct record.

## **24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Oliver and Radley.

## **25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Forster declared an interest in Agenda Item 9 – EV charging points as he worked for Osprey Charging Points who were involved in this area of work although they had not bid in the tender process.

Cllr Farmer declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 as voluntary Chairman of Hart Swimming Club.

## **26 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements.

## **27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)**

There were none.

## **28 REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF S106 FUNDING TOWARDS HOOK COMMUNITY CENTRE AND SPORTS PAVILION**

John Elson and Adam Green were welcomed for this item.

Cabinet considered the request made to release S106 funding towards the Hook Community Centre and Sports Pavilion, and discussed:

- How the funds would be utilised
- Funding already in place from other means
- That the process is that standard for release of Parish S106 funding

### **DECISION**

Cabinet:

1. Approved the immediate release of £455,369 held in Parish S106 reserves for Hook Parish Council 4.
2. That subject to the receipt of a successful planning application and the letting of an appropriate contract of works, Cabinet approves that delegated authority is given to the Head of Place (in consultation with Local Ward Members) to release £250,000 of earmarked S106 reserves to be used for the provision of the Sports Pavilion

## **29 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2021/22**

Isabel Brittain and Jo Rayne were welcomed for this item.

Cabinet considered the Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2021/22, and discussed:

- That the outturn to the end of the financial year will be audited throughout September by Ernst & Young
- Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny had been addressed in the updated report
- The inclusion of the Domestic Abuse Grant, which was passed through our accounts
- Costs for highways management against the additional income of £118k – JR would provide a full written answer to Cabinet on this
- The improvement in our financial position with a reduction in the year end draw down of reserves against budgeted draw down

Officers were praised for keeping expenditure as low as possible, particularly as the year in question was impacted by Covid restrictions.

## **DECISION**

Cabinet unanimously

1. Noted the provisional revenue outturn position of an underspend of £57k (shown in Table 3).
2. Noted the capital outturn position on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
3. Approved the unspent capital budget be carried forward into the Capital programme for 2022/2023.
4. Approved, following recommendation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the contributions to and from earmarked reserves detailed in Tables 6 and 7 of the paper

## **30 CYCLE & CAR PARKING IN NEW DEVELOPMENT TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE**

Mark Jaggard and Daniel Hawes were welcomed for this item.

Cabinet considered the proposed Technical Advice Note (TAN) for cycle and car parking in new developments, and discussed:

- That the TAN was an interim measure which updated the Council's current policy
- A full Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would be produced in due course
- The TAN would increase the number of car parking spaces per development and help provide cycle parking and safe storage for bicycles, especially electric bicycles
- That updated building regulations required electric vehicle charging points
- Whether the recommendations from the Climate Change Working Group and Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been taken into consideration, and if so, how
- Greater flexibility regarding on-street parking
- The requirement for motorcycle parking
- Concerns around over-long vehicles (ie vans)
- The percentage of bays allocated for disabled drivers
- Parking for mobility scooters

It was agreed that the last 3 points would be considered further and reviewed to see whether these should be added before the SPD is produced.

In summary, it was also noted that planning policy often was required to follow national policies and that this was an area that regularly changed.

## DECISION

Cabinet unanimously:

1. Endorsed the content of the Cycle and Car Parking in New Development Technical Advice Note (TAN);
2. Adopted the cycle and car parking standards set out at paragraphs 4.11 and 5.4 of the TAN as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications;
3. Revoked the [Parking Provision Interim Guidance](#) adopted in 2008; and
4. Authorised the Head of Place to make further edits and re-publish the TAN as and when required, except for the numerical cycle and car parking standards setting out quantum of parking to be provided with new development, which can only be amended with Cabinet approval

## 31 EV CHARGING POINTS TENDER PROCESS

John Elson and Peter Summersell were welcomed for this item.

Cabinet considered the report on the EV charging points tender process and discussed:

- The fact this was a “good news story” that would deliver a number of high specification charging points in Council car parks at no cost to the Council and which would generate a small income
- The list of car parks included as listed in section 9 of the report
- The fact that a full feasibility study would be undertaken by the preferred bidder before a final decision as to the numbers and types of EVCPs to be installed would be agreed
- What mitigation was in place to ensure that the preferred bidder did not decide to pull out of the process at any stage
- Whether there was a responsibility for the Council to provide EVCPs at Hart Leisure Centre, and whether any revenue would be passed to the Council
- The reasons as to why Church Road and Gurkha Square car parks were excluded
- The standard of chargers and whether these met current EV requirements
- Potential requirements for electricity sub-stations to run the charging points
- The cost per kW to residents – PS to provide a written response to Cabinet on this
- Emerging standards for disabled access

## DECISION

Cabinet agreed:

1. That the tender submitted by Bidder B for the installation of EVCPs in Hart car parks at locations detailed in section 3.2 of the report, should be accepted.

2. That £5k would be ring fenced in the 2022/23 climate change budget to provide a working fund for the installation of EVCPs

## **32 CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP**

Cabinet discussed various elements of the proposed draft budget, as outlined at Appendix A of the Climate Change Working Group minutes of 19 July 2022, including:

- The reason for including a £5k budget for EVCPs despite the previous report having said they would be at no charge
- The proposed budget for the Communications and Engagement Officer and any duplication with messages being sent out by national or other local organisations
- The budget allocation given to the cost of EVCP for Council owned vehicles and the cost of any feasibility study

## **DECISION**

Cabinet:

1. Noted the minutes of the meetings of the Climate Change Working Group held on 27 June 2022 and 19 July 2022
2. Approved the budget allocation as set out in Appendix A to the Working Group Minutes of 19 July 2022

## **33 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

Cabinet considered and agreed their Work Programme circulated with the Agenda Pack, and noted amendments as set out by the Joint Chief Executive. An updated copy would be circulated with the minutes.

Points noted included:

- 2 new reports in September and 1 in November
- Inclusion of all financial reports to Cabinet until end of Municipal Year 2022/23
- Odiham Common Management Plan to now go to September 2022 meeting

## **Appendix A - Cabinet Work Programme Updated August 2022**

## **34 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Members discussed whether the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **DECISION**

Cabinet agreed that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

### **35 PROVISION OF CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE**

Discussion was held on the future provision of the Corporate Health and Safety Service (see Part II Exempt Minutes).

#### **DECISION:**

Cabinet unanimously agreed to:

1. Issue Notice to Terminate the provision of the Shared Corporate Health & Safety Service to Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council to terminate on the 31 December 2022;
2. Authorise the Head of Place to procure an alternative Corporate Health & Safety service for Hart District Council for an initial period of 18 months commencing 1 January 2023; and
3. Acknowledge the potential redundancy costs associated with the change, as detailed in the report

#### **Exempt Minutes**

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Exempt from Publication



## CABINET

**DATE OF MEETING: 1 SEPTEMBER 2022**

## **TITLE OF REPORT: SHAPLEY HEATH AUDIT REVIEW REPORT**

**Report of: Monitoring Officer**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Leader**

**Key Decision: No**

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to receive the request from Audit Committee that Cabinet provide a response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report, and to review the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project and to provide a response to Audit Committee on lessons learnt.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- A. That the Interim Section 151 Officer prepares an action plan to comprise the response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report: and
- B. Cabinet to decide how it wishes to respond to the request from Audit Committee that Cabinet carries out a review of the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project.

## **BACKGROUND**

2. On the 6th July 2022 the Council received the final independent tiao review of the [Shapley Heath Garden Community Project](#) (Appendix A). A summary of the tiao key findings is attached at Appendix B.
3. The review was considered by the Audit Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022: [Agenda for Audit Committee on Tuesday, 26th July, 2022, 7.00 pm | Hart District Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#). The Decision of the Audit Committee was:
  - A. Cabinet be asked to provide a response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report, and to review the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project and to provide a response to Audit Committee on lessons learnt.
  - B. Staffing Committee be asked, for the period from March 2021 to the closure of the Shapley Heath project, to review the exercise of officer management oversight over the Shapley Heath project, including a review of officers' application of financial controls, risk management, monitoring, and reporting.
4. Staffing Committee is due to meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 to receive the Audit Committee's request to review the exercise of officer management oversight over the Shapley Heath project.

## **COMMENTARY**

Response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report

5. The interim Section 151 is well placed with the Audit team to prepare a response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report. It is anticipated that this could come to November's Cabinet.

Review the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project

6. Cabinet itself is best placed to decide how it wishes to respond to the request from Audit Committee. The suggested approach, however, is that this should be an independently facilitated reflection (perhaps supported by the LGA) that recognise both the positives as well as any short comings in the application of the governance arrangements associated with the project. Any lessons learnt should then be applied to all future projects. This review feedback should also be considered by Cabinet in November.
7. The role of officers is to be separately reviewed by Staffing Committee.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8. There are no reasonable alternative options.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. The funding of external facilitation support may result in a modest expense which can be met from existing budgets with further provision to be made.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

10. There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

## **EQUALITIES**

11. There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

12. There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

## **ACTION**

13. Subject to Cabinet's agreement, the interim Section 151 Officer will start work on preparing a response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report. Meanwhile, officers will reach out on behalf of Cabinet to the LGA to undertake a reflection on the application of project governance, and reporting for the Shapley Heath project. Cabinet can then review any findings and consider how any lessons learnt should be applied to future projects.

**Contact Details:** Daryl Phillips, Monitoring Officer [daryl.phillips@hart.gov.uk](mailto:daryl.phillips@hart.gov.uk)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A [Shapley Heath Garden Community Project July 2022](#)

Appendix B ttaa key findings.



## Hart District Council

Review of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Project

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2021/22

July 2022

# Review of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Project

## Introduction

1. An objection to the Council's 2020/21 accounts was received by a member of the public, which raised concerns about budgeting and budget monitoring of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Project. A member of the public asked the Chair of the Audit Committee to consider an Internal Audit of the project and this was considered and approved at the Audit Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 as an additional internal audit for 2021/22.

## Scope and Limitations of Review

2. At that meeting it was recommended that the scope of the review should address the following areas:
  - Assurance over the project management framework used.
  - Assurance over budgetary control and financial risks.
  - Assurance over the monitoring and reporting of financial information.
  - Assurance over compliance with contract procedure rules and contract management arrangements.
  - Assurance over the risk management framework including governance and transparency.
  - Assurance over information governance arrangements to include FOI, Transparency and GDPR.

TIAA were engaged to carry out this review in March and April 2021. Based on the work carried out an assessment of the controls in place for each of the risk areas outlined above is included in the relevant section of the report.

4. The responsibility for a sound system of internal controls rests with management and work performed by internal audit should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses that may exist. Neither should internal audit work be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud or irregularity, should there be any, although the audit procedures have been designed so that any material irregularity has a reasonable probability of discovery. Even sound systems of internal control may not be proof against collusive fraud.
5. For the purposes of this review reliance was placed on management to provide internal audit with full access to staff and to accounting records and transactions and to ensure the authenticity of these documents.

## Conclusion

6. The following table summarises the findings for each of the areas reviewed and provides recommendations to enhance the control framework:

Area	Findings	Recommendations
<b>Assurance over the risk management framework including governance and transparency.</b>	<p>10.28 The development and approval of the strategic governance arrangements for the project as initially set out were considered to be appropriate and adequate. It was acknowledged that the ability to implement the governance arrangements in practice was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and evidence was provided that governance arrangements were given due consideration during this time. However, as stated in 10.27, after taking into account the impact of the pandemic, the governance arrangements were not actioned as approved by Cabinet throughout the life of the project, specifically relating to (i) the lack of any update reports to Cabinet between March 2020 and November 2021, (ii) meetings not being held at the requisite frequency (post pandemic) and (iii) the lack of an annual review of the Board's Terms of Reference and to review and update the objectives and priorities (as required by the Board's Terms of Reference).</p> <p>10.35 Although at the time the PID was produced some generic risks were identified within the PID neither a Project Risk Register or Risk/Issues log was produced. It was noted, however, that internal audit had previously identified the lack of formal risk recording for the project in early 2021, following which a number of risks were incorporated into a service level risk register, although it was unclear how these risks were monitored or managed.</p> <p>10.36 There was no internal Project Board/Project Panel in place to review project risks/issues and there was little consideration or review of relevant risks by either the Corporate Project Board or the Opportunity Board. As a result, combined with a lack of internal project risk documentation, the oversight of Risk Management was considered to be insufficient throughout the project.</p>	<p>1. Governance arrangements to be reviewed and once established and approved to be followed at all times.</p> <p>2. In line with good practice and the expectations set out in the Council's template PID document, action should be taken to ensure that a project risk register is produced and agreed for all projects, which is a live document and regularly reviewed and updated by the Project team. Significant risks and any mitigating actions should be appropriately reported and reviewed at the Project Panel.</p> <p>3. All projects to have a clearly defined project board/panel which should meet on a regular basis to review risks and mitigations with minutes and actions recorded and retained for a minimum of six years.</p>
<b>Assurance over the project management framework used.</b>	<p>10.50 The management of the Shapley Heath project did not meet the Council's required standards. The project did not follow the Council's standardised project structure and as a result the standard internal reporting processes were not used. In addition, standardised project documentation in relation to risks, issues and budgeting were not used.</p> <p>10.51 While it was advised that weekly project update meetings took place between the Project Manager and the Project Sponsor, these were considered to be more informal and no formal records were maintained. It was also advised that the Project Sponsor was (i) holding regular meetings with the three key officers concerned, (ii) holding more infrequent updates with the Portfolio Holder, (iii) attending meetings with the Developer/Promoter periodically, and (iv) meeting on</p>	<p>4. A lessons learned report should be produced, along with a separate action plan to improve project management processes at the Council, including (but not limited to) the following considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training needs should be identified to ensure that standard project documentation is utilised effectively in all cases, with additional guidance notes created where appropriate, in particular around monitoring risks, issues and budgets.</li> <li>• Where the standard project structure is not utilised, the PID should clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of each individual/team. Similarly, reporting lines should be clearly set out to enable at least</li> </ul>

Area	Findings	Recommendations
	<p>normally a monthly basis with Homes England. However, no particular records of these meetings were maintained (it was advised that meeting notes were taken by hand) and relevant emails had since been deleted in accordance with the Council's email retention period of one year.</p> <p>10.52 The project reporting at Corporate Project Board and Opportunity Board was limited, both in terms of frequency and content, and did not meet the required expectations as per the Opportunity Board's Terms of Reference. This would indicate that there was very little project management oversight at Board level taking place.</p>	<p>the same level of review and scrutiny as there would be under the standard project structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of relevant project meetings should be formally recorded, and all relevant emails and other data should be maintained in project folders so that a full audit trail is maintained for a minimum six year period from when the project ends.</li> <li>The frequency, format and content of project reporting to the Corporate Project Board and to Members should be reviewed. Examples of good practice identified at other local authorities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardised monthly progress reports, with the level of details dependent on the complexity of the project.</li> <li>For more complex projects, this may include: Details of approved budget, committed budget and actual spend; RAG ratings for key elements of the project (Time, Quality, Budget, Risks &amp; Issues, Resources), along with an overview of the RAG status update; Activities completed within the last month, planned activities due for completion but not delivered, and activities scheduled for next month; An overview of the risks and issues, with the impact and mitigation measures; An outline of project milestones with target dates and actual completion dates.</li> <li>For less complex projects, this may include RAG ratings for Time, Quality, Budget, Risks &amp; Issues, and Resources, along with a general project progress update.</li> <li>Project portfolio reporting including an overview of the progress of all corporate projects provided monthly to the Chief Executive and quarterly to Committee.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Assurance over budgetary control and financial risks.</b>	<p>10.73 While all budget approvals and amendments were made in line with Council procedures, there was a distinct lack of clarity around the overall expected expenditure for the project.</p> <p>10.74 It was noted that, since 2018/19 in excess of £650,000 had been spent on the project up to March 2022; after taking into account grant monies and other costs recovered, this amounted to approximately £374,000 of Council funds. Taking into account the latest full year forecast for 2021/22 this may increase to in excess of £820,000 (£544,000 of Council funds). This is within the total approved expenditure for those years, although over 80% of total expenditure is attributable</p>	<p>5. Budgets to be clearly defined to include all income and expenditure (including any recharges).</p> <p>6. Budgets to be regularly monitored clearly showing actuals as the project progresses.</p> <p>In addition:</p> <p><i>See recommendation 4 in relation to reviewing the format and content of project reporting, including in relation to financial information.</i></p>

Area	Findings	Recommendations
	<p>to staff costs and recharges. It was noted that there were a number of tangible outputs achieved for this expenditure, however no key project milestones had yet been achieved at the time of concluding the project.</p> <p>10.75 It was acknowledged that the timeframe for the project coincided with the pandemic, necessitating some officer time being diverted to the Council's response. However, the report to the March 2021 Opportunity Board indicated that the timetable remained largely unchanged despite the pandemic, therefore the level of output for the expenditure incurred was not considered to be attributed to the impact of the pandemic.</p> <p>10.76 While it was confirmed that monthly budget monitoring was carried out in accordance with Council procedures, and quarterly budget monitoring reports were appropriately provided to Cabinet, errors were noted with respect to budget code allocations and calculations for transfers from reserves.</p> <p>10.77 A number of the formal budget monitoring reports presented to Cabinet throughout the life of the project made no reference to the Shapley Heath project due to the fact that no significant variances to budget were indicated at the time. While this is in line with normal budget monitoring practices, this should be viewed in conjunction with the lack of project reporting as highlighted in the section relating to the project management framework. As a result, throughout the life of the project there was very little meaningful financial monitoring data presented to Members, and some of the data that was presented was found to be inaccurate.</p>	
<b>Assurance over the monitoring and reporting of financial information.</b>	<p>10.84 While there were spreadsheets put in place for day to day financial monitoring, these did not follow the standard template documentation. They were also found to be significantly inaccurate in relation to recording actual expenditure (particularly relating to staff costs and recharges) and calculating available resources, and did not correlate with the project plan document. There has therefore been no evidence provided to support the project having been accurately and appropriately financially managed.</p> <p>10.85 There was a lack of substantial and regular financial reporting to either the Corporate Project Board or Opportunity Board. In addition, little mention is made of the potential cost of the recharges that at final outturn may represent some 40% of the total costs of the project.</p>	<p>7. Standard template documentation be used for the management and monitoring of all projects.</p> <p>In addition:</p> <p><i>See recommendation 4 in relation to (i) identifying training needs for the effective use of standard project budget monitoring documentation and (ii) reviewing the format and content of project reporting, including in relation to financial information.</i></p>



Area	Findings	Recommendations
<b>Assurance over compliance with contract procedure rules and contract management arrangements.</b>	10.96 While the advertising of opportunities and the evaluation process were considered to be fair and transparent overall, it was evident that procurement rules have not been fully followed as prescribed. The fact that multiple documents had not been signed; lack of an audit trail for panel evaluation; incorrect sending of a notification; and delay in publishing award results is unsatisfactory. Procurement should be seen to be working to the highest standards and in accord with the Council's procedures.	8. Procurement guidance and standard form evaluation documents should be reviewed to ensure that panel evaluation criteria are clearly set out and panel members are appropriately recorded.  9. Training needs for project managers/buying managers in relation to procurement processes should be identified, to ensure that standard procedures are followed in all cases and full audit trails are maintained.
<b>Assurance over information governance arrangements to include FOI, Transparency and GDPR.</b>	10.101 The responses to FOI requests pertaining to the Shapley Heath project were considered to be timely and adequate in the majority of cases. It was not possible to fully verify the timeliness of the response in one case, as the email response had been deleted in accordance with the Council's email retention period. In addition, in three cases contradictory information had been given to the requester, and in one of these cases the response had not fully dealt with all aspects of the request.  10.102 It was advised that there had been no subject access requests logged relating to the Shapley Heath project. There had been one data incident which had been appropriately identified and acted upon.  10.103 Appropriate data are maintained on the Council's website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code.	10. As emails are only retained for one year, FOI processes should be reviewed to ensure that relevant data is moved from email folders to Sharepoint folders so that a full audit trail of FOI requests and responses is maintained for a minimum six year period from when the project ends.  11. Training needs for project managers in relation to FOI responses should be identified, to ensure that full and accurate responses are provided in all cases.

## Management Response

### Isabel Brittain, Interim Head of Corporate Services

The audit report has highlighted a series of issues related to the work of this project. Whilst each issue should be addressed on its own merits, I have considered an overall management action plan that seeks to address all the concerns.

I acknowledge the issues that have arisen and whilst nothing can be done to change the outcome of this report for Shapley Heath, it is of utmost importance that all the issues are considered for all current and future projects at Hart DC.

The aim of this work is to ensure that all projects:

- have a clear and accountable governance framework of authority that it is accountable to the sponsoring body;
- are always open to wider scrutiny in accordance with the Council's Constitution;
- have clear budgetary controls that are regularly monitored and accurately reported to the sponsoring body to include the full identification of financial risks;
- ensure that all contract procedure rules, and contract management arrangements are followed; and
- give assurance over the risk management framework including governance and transparency.

The interim Head of Corporate Services will lead on the process detailed below, and will be able to draw on the expertise of the Internal Audit team and use their experience to ensure that all projects will adhere to a strict project management policy.

## Management Response

This timetable will be completed by 31st March 2023.

Once this process has been agreed it will be embedded in the annual audit plan and its practical and ongoing implementation will ultimately be monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that all projects are consistently managed under the same guidance and policy.

### Action Points timetable

Action	Date	By Whom
Audit Committee agreement	26/07/2022	All
Convert Project Policy Guidance into detailed checklist	31/08/2022	Head of Corporate Services
Identify all project leads and set out meetings to consider delivery against checklist	31/08/2022	Head of Corporate Services
Clarify checklist items as agreed against documents provided	By 31/10/2022	Head of Corporate Services
Provide feedback to project board with recommendations and relevant gap analysis	December 2022	Head of Corporate Services
Potential feedback and consideration of policy and guidance and whether it needs updating	By 31/01/2023	Head of Corporate Services
Rectify any gaps and deliver training	By 28/02/2023	Head of Corporate Services
Implement ongoing audit plan requirements for future year audits on projects	By 31/03/2023	Head of Corporate Services
Feedback to Audit Committee	28/03/2023	Head of Corporate Services

## Disclaimer

- The matters raised in this report are only those that came to the attention of the auditor during the course of the internal audit review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all the improvements that might be made. This report has been prepared solely for management's use and must not be recited or referred to in whole or in part to third parties without our prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared, and is not intended, for any other purpose. TIAA neither owes nor accepts any duty of care to any other party who may receive this report and specifically disclaims any liability for loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature, which is caused by their reliance on our report.

## Acknowledgement

8. We would like to thank staff for their co-operation and assistance during the course of our work.

## Release of Report

9. The table below sets out the history of this report.

<b>Date draft report issued:</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
<b>Date management responses rec'd:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>Date final report issued:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2022

## Detailed Findings

10. The following matters were identified in reviewing the key risk areas:

### Assurance over the risk management framework including governance and transparency

#### Background

- 10.1 In 2018, the Hart Local Plan (as originally drafted) included a New Settlement area of search and associated Policy (SS3). The Local Plan identified that the proposal for a new settlement would be taken forward through the preparation of a New Settlement Development Plan Document (DPD).
- 10.2 In September 2018, as part of the government's drive to increase house building, MHCLG announced a new opportunity to join the Garden Communities Programme. At Full Council in the same month, the Portfolio Holder for Planning announced that the Council was in the process of putting in a bid for the government's garden community programme. Whilst the Local Plan was still to be formally examined, the complexity of the new settlement project led the Council to undertake some of the preparatory and background work to the project.
- 10.3 A report outlining the anticipated governance arrangements for this project was considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2018 and approved at Cabinet in November 2018. The report set out, among other things, an outline governance proposal for a new settlement project, predicated on a review of examples of governance arrangements for other similar projects. The proposed arrangements included a specific Member New Settlement Working Group, and the creation of a Delivery Board, Project team, forums and more topic specific working groups. The report also set out a draft list of key stakeholders.
- 10.4 The Garden Community bid was submitted on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and included the governance arrangements as approved by Cabinet.
- 10.5 In February 2019, following the Local Plan Examination in Public, the Local Plan Inspector recommended the deletion of Policy SS3. In March 2019 Cabinet considered the Inspector's recommendations and resolved to agree the removal of SS3.
- 10.6 In May 2019, the Council advised Homes England (who administer the Garden Communities Programme on behalf of MHCLG) of the proposal to delete policy SS3. Nevertheless, in June 2019, MHCLG announced that the Council had been successful in being selected to join the Garden Communities Programme, and provided an initial £150,000 of capacity funding to support the Council in 2019/2020.

#### Development and authorisation of the strategic governance arrangements

- 10.7 Following the successful bid to join the Garden Communities Programme a report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and subsequently to Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The report stated that it did not seek to pre-determine the planning position with regard to a potential new settlement in Hart as a future growth option. However, it did seek to put in place potential governance arrangements for the opportunity of a new garden community to be explored at 'Shapley Heath' as part of the MHCLG Garden Community Programme.

- 10.8 It was reported that 18 other locations were also selected to join the Garden Communities Programme. The planning policy position of each of the other successful Local Authorities Garden Communities varied, but including Hart District Council, 15 of the 19 Garden Communities selected did not have site allocations within an adopted Local Plan. The approach to exploring the option of delivering a Garden Community was therefore not considered to be exceptional. It was also reported that acceptance on to the Garden Communities Programme committed the Council to explore the opportunity to create a new Garden Community; it did not commit the Council to deliver a Garden Community. The selection of the Council to join the Garden Communities Programme was not conditional upon the Garden Community being advanced as a policy or proposal in the emerging local plan, or for alternatives to have been considered through the plan making process; it had been awarded on its own merits under the Garden Communities Programme. The proposal was therefore considered to have a legitimate life of its own which at that stage lay outside of the Local Plan until such time as the Council itself may decide if it is a suitable long-term growth option. It would then need to be fully considered and evidenced in a future (potentially early) review of the Plan or a subsequent Development Planning Document (DPD).
- 10.9 The governance arrangements proposed in 2018 related to a project where a new settlement would be taken forward through the preparation of a New Settlement Development Plan Document (DPD). As this was no longer the case, revised governance arrangements for the project were proposed to Cabinet in November 2019, including the creation of a Garden Community Board, which would steer the Garden Community project. It was suggested that feeding into the Garden Community Board could be a Community Forum and a Landowners Forum. The governance document outlined the proposed roles and membership of the Garden Community Board, the land owners' forum, community forum and a dedicated Garden Community project team. A Terms of Reference for the Garden Community Board was also presented.
- 10.10 Decisions made by Cabinet included:
- *Approval be given to the exploration of the opportunity to deliver a garden community through a place making/place shaping approach.*
  - *The proposed Governance approach be approved in principle, but a small working group, comprising of the three Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder for Place, be tasked to look again at the proposed governance structure and the work streams over the next 12 months, and be asked to report back to Cabinet, at the latest by February, with any appropriate refinements to the proposed Governance structure or project plan.*
- 10.11 In accordance with the above resolution, the Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder for Place met to consider and amend the Garden Community Governance arrangements. An update report on the governance arrangements for the Garden Community was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019, and subsequently by Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2020.
- 10.12 The report set out the Garden Community governance as agreed by each of the Political Group Leaders and the Portfolio Holder for Place. The governance approach was outlined in the report and recognised the fact that clear governance arrangements were necessary, in particular due to the fact that that Council is also the local planning authority:
- As well as the Council's interest in representing local people and as a custodian of the economic, environmental and social well-being of the District, it is also the local planning authority. As the decision-maker for applications for the development of the Garden Community, the Council must ensure that applications are considered in accordance with statutory requirements and its own rigorous ethical standards. Therefore, the governance arrangements set out in this document, for investigating the vision and then exploring the opportunity for a Garden Community is not and cannot be part of any decision making process on matters associated with the Councils role as a Local Planning Authority. The formal arrangements in this document are necessary to demonstrate a separation in the roles the Council performs. A Shapley Heath Opportunity Board will be established to ensure the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in evaluating the opportunity for a Garden Community in accordance with the principles that have been adopted by the Council.*

- 10.13 The governance arrangements set out that a newly formed Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board (the Board) would lead the evaluation of the project, reporting to the Council's Cabinet. The Board would:
- Be accountable for the project's expenditure and the overall work of the project
  - Develop a project plan to evaluate the opportunity with clearly defined milestones and outcomes
  - Bring together the evidence, expertise and views of all work streams to provide a holistic view of the Garden Community and the opportunities it may bring whilst also recognising potential constraints – providing guidance, support and finding solutions where obstacles occur.
  - Encourage and strengthen links between the evaluation project and other relevant communities and stakeholders.
- 10.14 Alongside the Board, it was proposed to establish two engagement forums – a Landowner/ Developer Forum and a Stakeholder Forum to enable the circulation and discussion of information and views amongst all of the key stakeholders. The terms of reference for each Forum would be agreed by the Board at its first meeting and would thereafter be annually kept under review by the Board.
- 10.15 Membership of the Land Owners' Forum would include significant landowners or their representatives, within the area of the proposed Shapley Heath opportunity.
- 10.16 Membership of the Stakeholder Forum would include:
- Parish Council representatives from the following Parishes; Winchfield, Hook, Hartley Wintney, Dogmersfield, Odiham
  - Community Stakeholder Organisation representatives e.g. the Diocese
  - Business sector representatives
  - Third sector (voluntary sector) representatives e.g. Hart Voluntary Action
  - Public sector representatives (e.g. health, education, highways)
  - Support from the Council's Shapley Heath Garden Community team
  - Housing association representatives
- 10.17 There would also be a small Project Team led by the Joint Chief Executive focusing on the day-to-day management and needs of the project, and management and implementation of the project plan. It would identify and oversee any project Working Groups and would report directly to the Board.
- 10.18 The Landowners' Forum, Stakeholder Forum and the Shapley Heath Project Team would all report to the Board. The Board itself would be accountable, and regularly report, to Cabinet.
- 10.19 The report also included the proposed terms of reference for the Board, upon which its inception would be based.
- 10.20 Cabinet approved the recommended governance approach to take the project forward, including the establishment of the Board as well as a Landowner Forum and a Stakeholder Forum.
- 10.21 The first meeting of the Board took place in February 2020 and the intention was to commence the Landowners and Stakeholders Forums quickly, however this coincided with the first lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic which meant that these could not take place.

10.22 It was confirmed that the Terms of Reference and Membership for the Board (as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020) was set out for adoption at the first meeting of the Board in February 2020, along with draft Terms of Reference and Membership for the Shapley Heath Garden Community Landowners and Stakeholders Forum.

10.23 Each of the Terms of Reference set out:

- Purpose;
- Core Functions;
- Membership;
- Roles and responsibilities of Members;
- Chairmanship;
- Meetings;
- Decision making and reporting lines (Board only);
- Review Dates.

10.24 Particular items to note from the Board's Terms of Reference include:

*"CORE FUNCTIONS*

- 1. To lead the Garden Community project against the Garden Community principles and **report to the Council's Cabinet** (and other respective corporate bodies as appropriate) and elected members to ensure corporate support and buy-in.*
- 2. Be accountable for the project's expenditure and the overall work of the project to include setting the overall direction of the project/programme, its objectives and priorities; to monitor overall progress; and to review and update the objectives and priorities at least annually*
- 3. Develop a project plan to evaluate the opportunity with **clearly defined milestones and outcomes***

*MEETINGS*

***A minimum of one meeting per quarter will be held throughout the year, with additional meetings to be scheduled as and when required.***

*DECISION MAKING AND REPORTING LINES*

*The operational decisions of the Board are likely to fall within the following types of activity for the Project:*

- *Reviewing and agreeing the Project in terms of the:*
  - *Annual milestones and key activities for the next financial year*
  - *Detailed milestones and activities for the 3 months following the Board meeting*
  - *The risk assessment and proposed mitigation for the activities and milestones*
  - *Competitive bidding processes and allocation/prioritisation of funding for that financial year.*

- *Reviewing and agreeing the Engagement Strategy in terms of non-statutory stand-alone consultation exercises related to the Garden Community.*
- *Reviewing and agreeing further procurement related to reports, studies, expertise and services related to progressing the project.*
- *Be accountable for the project's expenditure and the overall work of the project*

#### REVIEW DATES

*These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually from the point of their first approval, or as required."*

10.25 Similarly, the Terms of Reference for both of the Forums would be reviewed annually from the point of their first approval by the Board, or as required.

#### Conclusion

10.26 **No particular issues were noted in relation to the development and approval of the strategic governance arrangements for the project.**

#### Governance arrangements in practice

10.27 In order to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the strategic governance arrangements in practice, a review was carried out of the Board and Cabinet meetings which took place between February 2020 and November 2021, when Cabinet approved a recommendation that the Shapley Heath Garden Community Project be concluded with immediate effect. The following items were noted:

- As part of the governance arrangements agreed by Cabinet, the Board would be accountable, and regularly report, to Cabinet. This was also reiterated in the Terms of Reference for the Board. The Board met for the first time on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020, and the minutes of that meeting were reported to the Cabinet meeting which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Other than high level corporate budget monitoring reports (which often made no reference to the Shapley Heath project due to there being no significant variances to budget at that time), there were no update reports to Cabinet until the decision was taken to conclude the project. In particular, there was a further meeting of the Board in March 2021, but the minutes were not presented to Cabinet.
- The Board's Terms of Reference refers to a minimum of one meeting per quarter being held. After the initial meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that Council resources were redeployed to manage the response and recovery. The planned Board meetings for 2020 were cancelled; evidence was provided of various communications during 2020/21 between the Joint Chief Executive and key Members which demonstrated that governance arrangements were considered and discussed, with virtual meetings put in place when it was considered appropriate to do so. An inception meeting with all stakeholders took place on 14 January 2021, followed by a series of Community Stakeholder thematic meetings and separate Landowners Forum. This was followed by the second Board meeting that took place on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- The Council subsequently moved out of 'Major Incident' status on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. It was noted that, following the Board meeting in March 2021, there were no further meetings held before the project was concluded in November 2021. Therefore, even taking the pandemic into account, meetings were not held at the requisite frequency as per the Terms of Reference.
- The Board Terms of Reference refers to an annual review of the Terms of Reference and to review and update the objectives and priorities at least annually. It was not evident that any such reviews took place.



## Conclusion

- 10.28 The development and approval of the strategic governance arrangements for the project as initially set out were considered to be appropriate and adequate. It was acknowledged that the ability to implement the governance arrangements in practice was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and evidence was provided that governance arrangements were given due consideration during this time. However, as stated in 10.27 above, after taking into account the impact of the pandemic, the governance arrangements were not actioned as approved by Cabinet throughout the life of the project, specifically relating to (i) the lack of any update reports to Cabinet between March 2020 and November 2021, (ii) meetings not being held at the requisite frequency (post pandemic) and (iii) the lack of an annual review of the Board's Terms of Reference and to review and update the objectives and priorities (as required by the Board's Terms of Reference).

## Risk Management Framework

- 10.29 It was noted that standard form project documents/templates were in place including a Project Initiation Document (PID), Risk Register template, and Issues Log template.
- 10.30 The template PID included the following in relation to risk management: 'A project risk register will be produced and agreed. This will be a live document which is regularly reviewed and updated by the Project team. Significant risks and any mitigation actions will be reported and reviewed at the Project Panel'. It was noted that the Shapley Heath PID included an initial set of risks and mitigation measures, but there was no reference to an ongoing project risk register and it did not outline how risks were to be identified, managed and reported on throughout the life of the project.
- 10.31 It was further advised that there was no specific project risk register produced and a separate issues log was not produced for this project.
- 10.32 It was noted that the detailed project plan set out a progress update (including any issues/risks) and a RAG rating for each workstream. However, there was no internal Project Board/Project Panel in place as would be the case on other projects. As a result, the standardised reporting processes for updates on project risks/issues were not used.
- 10.33 With respect to oversight of risk management by the Corporate Project Board, it was noted that a monthly summary is prepared which outlines the key achievements and planned actions, along with any particular new risks identified and an overall RAG rating for the project, based on delivery timeframes. This was considered to be a very high level summary, and it was noted that the summary does not include any reference to how existing risks were being managed/mitigated.
- 10.34 With respect to oversight of risk management by the Opportunity Board, its Terms of Reference refers to operational decisions of the Board being likely to fall within a number of types of activity for the Project, including reviewing and agreeing the Project in terms of the risk assessment and proposed mitigation for the activities and milestones. It was noted that there were no details of a risk assessment presented at either of the two Opportunity Board meetings.

*(Also see Project Management section below for further details in relation to oversight of the project more generally)*

## Conclusion

- 10.35 Although at the time the PID was produced some generic risks were identified within the PID neither a Project Risk Register or Risk/Issues log was produced. It was noted, however, that internal audit had previously identified the lack of formal risk recording for the project in early 2021, following which a number of risks were incorporated into a service level risk register, although it was unclear how these risks were monitored or managed.
- 10.36 There was no internal Project Board/Project Panel in place to review project risks/issues and there was little consideration or review of relevant risks by either the Corporate Project Board or the Opportunity Board. As a result, combined with a lack of internal project risk documentation, the oversight of Risk Management was considered to be insufficient throughout the project.

## Assurance over the project management framework used

10.37 For day to day project management processes, the following documents were reviewed:

- The Corporate Project Management Framework to be followed for all projects as at the inception of the Shapley Heath project (2017 version);
- Standard form documents/templates including Business Plan, Project Initiation Document (PID), Project Plan template, Cost Estimate template, Risk Register template, Issues Log template, Project Board and Panel report template;
- The PID for the Shapley Heath project;
- Various high level, mid-level and detailed Project Plans;
- 2021 Corporate Project Board summary of monthly key achievements and planned actions; and
- Agendas and minutes of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board (the Opportunity Board) meetings.

10.38 It was confirmed that a PID for the Shapley Heath project was produced in November 2019, and updated in December 2019 following comments from the Corporate Project Board. The PID included details in relation to expected areas such as Aims and Objectives (including key deliverables), Scope and Exclusions, Assumptions, Risks, Resources, Project Governance and Organisation, Communication, Project Plan, Project Controls, and Project Closure. It was noted, however, that the PID did not follow the format of the template documentation provided, in particular in relation to the following:

- It was noted that there were no references to a specific business case for the project.
- The template PID included details as to the responsibilities of each role within the project, including reporting lines. Due to the small size of the Shapley Heath project team, there was no internal Project Board/Project Panel in place as would be the case on other projects using the standardised project structure. The Shapley Heath PID outlined project roles, giving the titles and the individuals involved. It did not, however, outline the responsibilities or accountability involved with those roles or any details as to the process, timings and governance for internal project communication or how the project plan would be monitored (for example the frequency of monitoring meetings of the Project Team to review the project plan). This would have been particularly relevant in this case considering the project did not follow the standard governance structure.
- As noted under the Risk Management section above, the PID template included the following in relation to risk management: *'A project risk register will be produced and agreed. This will be a live document which is regularly reviewed and updated by the Project team. Significant risks and any mitigation actions will be reported and reviewed at the Project Panel'*. It was noted that the Shapley Heath PID included an initial set of risks and mitigation measures, but there was no reference to an ongoing project risk register and it did not outline how risks were to be identified, managed and reported on throughout the life of the project. It was advised that there was no specific project risk register produced.
- Regarding the budget, the PID template included the requirement for a detailed budget breakdown. The Shapley Heath PID referred to the fact that Homes England had made a provision of £150,000 as part of the inclusion of Hart District Council in the Garden Communities Programme. Further Homes England funding would be subject to a competitive process. It also referenced that Cabinet had made a recommendation to Council regarding provision of a multi-year project fund of £500,000 which would be considered as part of the 2020/2021 budget setting process. The PID did not, however, include any clear references as to the overall project budget, or any budget breakdown, instead simply referring to the fact that a detailed project budget was being prepared alongside the project plan. There were also no references as to how the budget would be monitored on a day to day basis; a separate reference was made to the Council's financial reporting requirements which would be used to ensure appropriate controls on cost, however this did not relate to the day to day management of the project. *(see Budgetary Control sections for further comments)*

- 10.39 With respect to the other standard form project documentation/templates, it was noted that a separate issues log was not produced for this project. In addition, the Cost Estimate template was not used. (*see Budgetary Control sections for further comments*)
- 10.40 It was confirmed that a number of different Project Plans were produced:
- A high level project plan, showing the key milestones for Phase One (Concept) and Phase Two (Design) of the project, with associated timelines.
  - A mid-level project plan, containing the key activities to be carried out month by month.
  - A detailed project plan, incorporating key priorities/workstreams. For each workstream, specific milestones were set out, along with key actions and deadlines, the responsible party, progress update (including any issues/risks) and a RAG rating. To assist with funding applications and ongoing review by Homes England, the workstreams were set out thematically in line with the key Garden Communities principles/qualities as set out by MHCLG as part of the Garden Communities application process.
- 10.41 While the content of the detailed project plan was considered to be thorough, it was not evident how frequently this was being reviewed and reported on, or how any risks or issues were escalated. In terms of project oversight and scrutiny, as noted above there was no internal Project Board/Project Panel in place as would be the case on other projects. As a result, the standardised reporting processes for updates on delivery timeframes, project budget and project risks/issues were not used.
- 10.42 It was advised that weekly project update meetings took place between the Project Manager and the Project Sponsor, however these were considered to be more informal and no formal records were maintained. It was also advised that the Project Sponsor was (i) holding regular meetings with the three key officers concerned, (ii) holding more infrequent updates with the Portfolio Holder, (iii) attending meetings with the Developer/Promoter periodically, and (iv) meeting on normally a monthly basis with Homes England. However, no particular records of these meetings were maintained (it was advised that meeting notes were taken by hand) and relevant emails had since been deleted in accordance with the Council's email retention period of one year.
- 10.43 The elements of project oversight and scrutiny referred to in the PID included (i) internal oversight by the Corporate Project Board, and (ii) internal and external oversight by the Opportunity Board.
- 10.44 With respect to oversight by the Corporate Project Board, it was advised that this board meets monthly to consider progress with all corporately strategic projects, and the membership includes:
- Joint Chief Executive;
  - Head of Corporate Services;
  - Head of Place;
  - Head of Community;
  - Head of Technical and Environmental Services;
  - Programme Chair;
  - Programme Team.
- 10.45 The PID for the Shapley Heath project referred to the intention for the Corporate Project Board to review and oversee all project management documentation prior to being considered by the Opportunity Board. It was advised that the Corporate Project Board did not meet between March 2020 and July 2021 due to the pandemic, as a Recovery Board had been put in place instead. As a result, there was no formal internal oversight of project management documentation prior to the meetings of the Opportunity Board.

- 10.46 A summary spreadsheet was provided for the Corporate Project Board for 2021. For key strategic projects (including Shapley Heath) this outlines the monthly key achievements and planned actions, along with any particular new risks identified and an overall RAG rating for the project, based on delivery timeframes. This was considered to be a very high level summary, and it was advised that there are no standardised project reports that are submitted to the Board to support this. As such, it was noted that the summary does not include any reference to progress against budget, or consideration of how existing risks were being managed/mitigated. The minutes of the July 2021 meeting were provided; there was no evidence in the minutes of any discussion related to the Shapley Heath project, despite the fact that this was the first progress update meeting in over a year.
- 10.47 With respect to oversight by the Opportunity Board, its Terms of Reference refers to operational decisions of the Board being likely to fall within a number of types of activity for the Project, including:
- Reviewing and agreeing the Project in terms of the:
    - Annual milestones and key activities for the next financial year.
    - Detailed milestones and activities for the 3 months following the Board meeting.
    - The risk assessment and proposed mitigation for the activities and milestones.
  - Be accountable for the project's expenditure and the overall work of the project.
- 10.48 At the first meeting of the Opportunity Board (17<sup>th</sup> February 2020) it was confirmed that a high level project plan was reported, showing the key milestones for Phase One and Phase Two of the project, with timelines from January 2020 – February 2023. A high level cost plan was also presented, with a high level breakdown of how the initial £150,000 of Garden Community Funding would be used, as well as the £500,000 that the Council had allocated from its reserves. There were no details of a risk assessment presented at this meeting.
- 10.49 At the second meeting of the Opportunity Board (8<sup>th</sup> March 2021) an updated high level project plan was reported, showing the key milestones for Phase One and Phase Two of the project, taking into account the impact of the Covid pandemic. Timelines were revised, with estimated dates between January 2021 and June 2023. A mid-level project plan was also reported, containing the key activities to be carried out month by month between January 2021 and February 2022. No details were provided in relation to the spend plan and there was no reference to a risk assessment at this meeting.

### Conclusion

- 10.50 The management of the Shapley Heath project did not meet the Council's required standards. The project did not follow the Council's standardised project structure and as a result the standard internal reporting processes were not used. In addition, standardised project documentation in relation to risks, issues and budgeting were not used.
- 10.51 While it was advised that weekly project update meetings took place between the Project Manager and the Project Sponsor, these were considered to be more informal and no formal records were maintained. It was also advised that the Project Sponsor was (i) holding regular meetings with the three key officers concerned, (ii) holding more infrequent updates with the Portfolio Holder, (iii) attending meetings with the Developer/Promoter periodically, and (iv) meeting on normally a monthly basis with Homes England. However, no particular records of these meetings were maintained (it was advised that meeting notes were taken by hand) and relevant emails had since been deleted in accordance with the Council's email retention period of one year.
- 10.52 The project reporting at Corporate Project Board and Opportunity Board was limited, both in terms of frequency and content, and did not meet the required expectations as per the Opportunity Board's Terms of Reference. This would indicate that there was very little project management oversight at Board level taking place.

## Assurance over budgetary control and financial risks

- 10.53 A review was carried out in relation to the corporate budget setting/approval processes for the years 2018/19 – 2021/22, along with the formal budget monitoring processes, and findings for each year are set out below based on:
- Income and expenditure data for the New Settlement budget code.
  - Monthly budget monitoring data for the financial years 2018/19 – 2021/22 for the New Settlement budget code.
  - Agendas and minutes of Cabinet and Council meetings for the financial years 18/19 – 21/22 where budget setting and budget monitoring reports were presented.
- 10.54 The day to day monitoring and reporting of the project budget from a project management and project governance perspective has been addressed separately in this report in the section relating to “**Project/Financial Monitoring**”.
- 10.55 Total costs for the Shapley Heath project are shown in the table below.

### Summary of amounts posted up to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Category	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Grand Total
Staff Costs	74,837	77,238	115,618	105,150	372,844
Professional Services	13,464	13,237	72,102	20,434	119,237
Overheads	307	138	379	2,481	3,305
Recharges	1,437	31,406	135,526		168,369
Recovery of Costs		-2,380	-7,500		-9,880
Grants		-150,000	-130,000		-280,000
Grand Total	90,045	-30,361	186,126	128,065	£373,874

- 10.56 It was confirmed that formal budget monitoring for the project was undertaken on a monthly basis in line with the Council’s internal finance procedures. In addition, it was confirmed that periodic budget monitoring reports were presented to Cabinet in line with the Council’s procedures.
- 10.57 The following items were noted from a review of the budget setting and monitoring reports during the life of the project:

## 2018/19

- 10.58 There were two distinct periods in relation to budget setting for the Shapley Heath project, being before and after joining the Garden Communities Programme in mid-2019. In February 2018, Council approved the draft budget for 2018/19, which at that point did not include a specific budget allocation for the new settlement project. However, there was a further discussion at that meeting in relation to the proposed use of potential budget surplus, and it was agreed that a total of £50,000 of any budget surplus should be used to provide (i) a dedicated resource to commence a long term project to put in place a Development Plan Document to deliver a new settlement, and (ii) regeneration initiatives. A separate New Settlement, Development and Regeneration budget code was subsequently set up with a budget of £50,000.
- 10.59 At the Cabinet meeting in November 2018 a report was presented which set out some of the possible first stages in delivering a new settlement in the District. This included proposals for additional resources to take the project forward, as well as a draft summary of resources likely to be required for the project for the years 2018/19 – 2020/21. A £20,000 transfer from reserves was agreed for additional temporary resource during 2018/19, effectively creating a budget of £70,000.
- 10.60 The Cabinet meeting in March 2019 included the 2018/19 Q3 budget monitoring report. This reported against the original full year budget of £50,000, with year to date actuals reported as £51,494, and Full Year forecast outturn as £67,419 (an adverse variance of £17,419 in line with the additional agreed resourcing costs to be funded from reserves).
- 10.61 It was noted that actual net expenditure allocated to the New Settlement budget code amounted to £90,045 for 2018/19. It has not been established as to why the budget had increased to some £90k.

## 2019/20

- 10.62 In November 2018, Cabinet considered the likely financial resources needed to fund a new settlement (under a Development Planning Document approach) which was then approved as part of the Council's budgeting process by Full Council in February 2019. A total budget of £785,990 (excluding recharges) was approved for 2019/20. Once Support Services recharge costs of £31,070 were added, this gave a total budget of £817,060 as published in the Council's budget book for 2019/20.
- 10.63 Following the successful bid to join the Garden Communities Programme, an initial £150,000 of capacity funding was provided by MHCLG to support the Council in 2019/2020. At its November 2019 meeting, Cabinet agreed an indicative spend plan for 2019/20 for utilising the initial £150,000 secured from MHCLG. It was further agreed that the £785,990 previously allocated for the new settlement in the budget for 2019/2020 should be returned to reserves as this funding was predicated on an alternative approach, which was now no longer being carried forward. This effectively created a budget of zero for the year.
- 10.64 Actual net expenditure allocated to the New Settlement budget code amounted to -£30,361 for 2019/20 (the surplus income relating to the unused portion of the initial £150,000 funding).
- 10.65 With respect to formal budget monitoring for 2019/20, it was confirmed that Cabinet received budget monitoring reports as follows:
- The Cabinet meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 included 2019/20 budget monitoring to end of June 2019. No variances were reported for the New Settlement cost centre.
  - The Cabinet meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 included budget monitoring to end of September 2019. No variances were reported for the New Settlement cost centre.
  - The Cabinet meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 included budget monitoring to end of December 2019. It was confirmed that this reported the variance in relation to the original budget being returned to reserves.
  - The Cabinet meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 included a report on the final 2019/20 outturn position. It referred to a significant underspend of £847,000 against budget on garden communities due to a delay in the project (the original £817k budget, plus the actual £30k credit, gives the overall underspend).

## 2020/21

- 10.66 At the November 2019 Cabinet meeting, a fund of £500,000 was recommended to be allocated to the Joint Chief Executive from a bespoke earmarked reserve to be utilised for the procurement of appropriate expertise and resources to help the Council make informed choices associated with the Garden Community. This funding would not be allocated to a specific year, rather to the long-term length of the project over three years. Cabinet agreed to make such a recommendation to Council for a total budget of £500,000, and that any budget spend would be reported to and monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet as part of the normal budget monitoring process. **It was noted, however, that there were no details of the overall expected expenditure for the project, and there was no breakdown of expenditure across the three year period or any indication of the items that would be covered by such expenditure.** The £500,000 budget was subsequently incorporated into the 2020/21 budget setting process, being approved by both Cabinet and Full Council in February 2020.
- 10.67 The 2020/21 net expenditure budget as per the Council's budget book was set at zero due to the fact that any expenditure was expected to be offset by income received from the Garden Communities funding and/or from transfers at year end from the earmarked reserve. It was noted that the budget figures included income of £68,062 which had been allocated to a 'Consultants' cost code; it was advised that this had been incorrectly coded and should have been allocated to a ledger code relating to 'transfers from earmarked reserves'.
- 10.68 Actual net expenditure allocated to the New Settlement budget code amounted to £186,126 for 2020/21. In July 2021 Cabinet agreed a transfer of £283,000 from the Corporate Reserve to fund the 2020/21 work on the new settlement at Shapley Heath. Discussions with officers indicated that the £283,000 transfer from reserves was made using information available at the time, which was in fact a mis-calculation. The required transfer from reserves was £186,000 in order to fund the actual net expenditure.

## 2021/22

- 10.69 The 2021/22 budget approved by Council in February 2021 included a budget of £279,167 for the new settlement budget code.
- 10.70 The final 2021/22 budget book on the Council's website shows a budget of £149,167 as the second round of Garden Communities funding received (£130,000) was initially allocated to 2021/22 before being recorded on the budget code as 2020/21 income.
- 10.71 The budget code monitoring data provided showed a full year budget of £183,370, the main difference being an approximate £32,000 increase in the value of the recharges subsequent to the approved budget. Removing the £130,000 grant income figure gives a more accurate overall budgeted expenditure figure of £313,370.
- 10.72 Actual net expenditure allocated to the New Settlement budget code amounted to £128,065 for 2021/22, up to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The latest full year forecast was £298,615, with the difference mainly relating to expected recharge costs in excess of £150,000.

## Conclusion

- 10.73 While all budget approvals and amendments were made in line with Council procedures, there was a distinct lack of clarity around the overall expected expenditure for the project.
- 10.74 It was noted that, since 2018/19 in excess of £650,000 had been spent on the project up to March 2022; after taking into account grant monies and other costs recovered, this amounted to approximately £374,000 of Council funds. Taking into account the latest full year forecast for 2021/22 this may increase to in excess of £820,000 (£544,000 of Council funds). This is within the total approved expenditure for those years, although over 80% of total expenditure is attributable to staff costs and recharges. It was noted that there were a number of tangible outputs achieved for this expenditure, however no key project milestones had yet been achieved at the time of concluding the project.



- 10.75 It was acknowledged that the timeframe for the project coincided with the pandemic, necessitating some officer time being diverted to the Council's response. However, the report to the March 2021 Opportunity Board indicated that the timetable remained largely unchanged despite the pandemic, therefore the level of output for the expenditure incurred was not considered to be attributed to the impact of the pandemic.
- 10.76 While it was confirmed that monthly budget monitoring was carried out in accordance with Council procedures, and quarterly budget monitoring reports were appropriately provided to Cabinet, errors were noted with respect to budget code allocations and calculations for transfers from reserves.
- 10.77 A number of the formal budget monitoring reports presented to Cabinet throughout the life of the project made no reference to the Shapley Heath project due to the fact that no significant variances to budget were indicated at the time. While this is in line with normal budget monitoring practices, this should be viewed in conjunction with the lack of project reporting as highlighted in the section above relating to the project management framework. As a result, throughout the life of the project there was very little meaningful financial monitoring data presented to Members, and some of the data that was presented was found to be inaccurate.

### Assurance over the monitoring and reporting of financial information

#### Project/Financial Monitoring

- 10.78 The following documents were considered in relation to the project monitoring of financial spend:
- Garden Community Budget tracker spreadsheet. This incorporated elements of estimates, committed spend (where Purchase Orders had been raised) and actual spend, in order to determine the remaining level of available resources. The document provided contained details of Purchase Orders which had been raised up to June 2021.
  - Purchase Orders tracker spreadsheet, detailing Purchase Orders raised during 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 (up to June 2021).
  - 2021 Corporate Project Board summary of monthly key achievements and planned actions.
  - Agendas and minutes of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board (the Opportunity Board) meetings.
- 10.79 As noted previously in this report, the standard project documentation provided included a Cost Estimate template, which required the input of estimated costs for all aspects of the project (including contingency costs) and compared this with the actual costs to determine the variance and the budget remaining. **This template was not used for the Shapley Heath project.**
- 10.80 While the Budget tracker spreadsheet incorporated elements of estimates, committed spend and actual spend, these were not clearly differentiated to give an accurate position. It was also noted that elements of expenditure included within the Budget tracker spreadsheet did not appear as workstream items on the detailed project plan, therefore the two documents did not fully tie up.
- 10.81 The two main areas of expenditure for the project were staff costs and recharges. It was noted that the values on the Budget tracker spreadsheet for staff costs were considerably different to those actually recorded on the budget code, and there were no recharges costs taken into account on the Budget tracker. In addition, while there were details included for the value of Purchase Orders raised, there were very little details as to the actual amounts invoiced/paid. Furthermore, some values were expressed as excluding VAT, and some were expressed as the VAT inclusive cost. As a result of these items combined, the value being calculated as the available resource was therefore significantly inaccurate.



- 10.82 A review of the Corporate Project Board summary indicated that an overall RAG rating was applied to the project. It was advised that this was based on the delivery timeframe alone. There was no evidence provided that budgetary/financial information for the project was presented to or discussed by the Corporate Project Board.
- 10.83 As noted previously, at the first meeting of the Opportunity Board (17<sup>th</sup> February 2020), a high level cost plan was presented, with a high level breakdown of how the initial £150,000 of Garden Community Funding would be used, as well as the £500,000 that the Council had allocated from its reserves. The minutes from this meeting indicated a specific action point for a more detailed cost plan to be presented to the next Opportunity Board. At the second meeting of the Opportunity Board (8<sup>th</sup> March 2021) no details were provided in relation to the spend plan.

### Conclusion

- 10.84 While there were spreadsheets put in place for day to day financial monitoring, these did not follow the standard template documentation. They were also found to be significantly inaccurate in relation to recording actual expenditure (particularly relating to staff costs and recharges) and calculating available resources, and did not correlate with the project plan document. There has therefore been no evidence provided to support the project having been accurately and appropriately financially managed.
- 10.85 There was a lack of substantial and regular financial reporting to either the Corporate Project Board or Opportunity Board. In addition, little mention is made of the potential cost of the recharges that at final outturn may represent some 40% of the total costs of the project.

### Assurance over compliance with contract procedure rules and contract management arrangements

- 10.86 The general approach to procurement for the project was considered and agreed at the first meeting of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board in February 2020. It was reported that the promoters/developers with significant land interest (Lightwood and L&Q Estates) would procure and fund all of the baseline surveys. The Council would provide detailed briefs for each of the surveys and the appointed consultants would be required to liaise with the Council to ensure that the requirements and standards stated in the briefs were fulfilled.
- 10.87 Council funds and any MHCLG Garden Community Funding would be used to fund the strategy reports, a number of which would benefit from resource support from key stakeholders such as Hampshire County Council and the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 10.88 A Collaboration Agreement was subsequently entered into in February 2021 between the Council and the developers/promoters. This set out that L&Q and Lightwood would procure and fund all of the baseline surveys (which would record the existing conditions), as detailed below:
- Topographical Survey and Ground Survey;
  - Transport;
  - Landscape;
  - Agricultural Land Classification;
  - Heritage;
  - Flooding;
  - Drainage;
  - Water Cycle/Management;
  - Utilities ;
  - Air Quality;
  - Noise;
  - Contamination;
  - Ecology/Biodiversity;
  - Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows.

10.89 During the audit it was confirmed that, while the Council gave input into the required scope of the baseline surveys, it did not contribute financially towards the cost of any of the surveys and the financial risk lay with the developers. The procurement process for any such surveys was therefore considered to be outside the scope of this review.

10.90 The Council would be responsible for procuring any Strategy reports (which would consider and recommend options), including:

- Homes;
- Economy and employment;
- Retail;
- Education;
- Green Infrastructure (including Community Facilities/Sports/Leisure/Play Space);
- Health Needs;
- Health Impact;
- Active Lifestyles;
- Climate Change Mitigation;
- Renewable Energy;
- Innovation/Future Proofing – Transport;
- Innovation/Future Proofing – Technology and Lifestyle;
- Urban Design;
- Place Stories and Branding.

10.91 Only one of these strategy reports had been procured prior to the project being paused (Place Stories and Branding). A review of the Council's expenditure data for the Shapley Heath project identified four main contracts which had been procured by the Council:

- Chelgate Limited –Communication and Engagement –
  - (i) Undertaking a Place Survey
  - (ii) Creating a comprehensive Communication and Engagement Strategy,
  - (iii) Setting up the Garden Community Forum,
  - (iv) Providing a Garden Community Website Strategy, and
  - (v) Providing specialist engagement and communications advice to the Council.
- DigitalDinos Limited – Communication and Engagement - Creation and development of a new website for the Garden Community.
- Premm Design Limited – Branding – Branding and Place Story for the Garden Community.
- RegenCo – Viability – Strategic Economic Outline Appraisal.

10.92 The Council's Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) are incorporated within its Constitution (available on the Council's website) and govern the procurement of goods and services. The CSOs set out the Quotation and Tender Procedures, which will vary according to the value of the contract, with more rigorous procedures for higher value transactions. For medium value contracts (between £5,000 and £75,000), the CSOs state that:

- (i) an established framework agreement may be used
- (ii) an agreed procurement service with Capita (no longer in place) could be used, or

- (iii) a procurement process could be run in-house. A pre-defined template is available for this, and any contracts worth over £10,000 should be advertised on Contracts Finder. The Contracts and Procurement Officer would manage this process.

10.93 Other relevant items in the CSOs relate to the acceptance of Quotations and Tenders:

- The results of the tender/quotation award process must be recorded. A contract may only be awarded by a Head of Service or other nominated Officer(s), as authorised under the scheme of delegation. As set out in the CSOs, Budget Managers have an authorisation value of up to £20,000.
- Following completion of the tender award process, all tenderers must be notified in writing of the results. This should include:
  - Where based on price alone, unsuccessful tenderers should be informed of the winning price; or
  - Where based on the “value for money criteria”, tenderers should be given sufficient information to explain how the Council applied its selection and how the final award decision was made.
- Once a contract has been awarded the Corporate Contract Register must be updated.

10.94 A review of the guidance notes in place to support the CSOs, along with discussions with the Contracts and Procurement Manager, identified additional relevant items as follows:

- There are standard form documents/templates in place for a Request for Quotation, an evaluation spreadsheet, and a Contract Award letter.
- There is an expectation that three written quotations will be obtained wherever possible.
- There is an expectation that evaluations of bids received will be carried out by a panel of three officers, although it was noted that this is not explicitly recorded within the procurement guidance.

10.95 A review was carried out of the supporting documentation available for the four main procurement exercises, with the following items noted:

- In all four cases the value of the contract exceeded £10,000. It was confirmed that three of the four procurement exercises had been managed through the central Procurement team and had been advertised on Contracts Finder, however one of the procurement exercises was managed solely by the project team and was not advertised on Contracts Finder. While it is not a requirement to do so under relevant Regulations, it is specifically referred to as part of the procurement process in the CSOs. In this case, it was confirmed that six companies had been approached for quotes instead, with two subsequently submitting bids.
- A standard form Request for Quote (RFQ) had been used in all cases, which incorporated the Council’s standard terms and conditions. It was confirmed for all cases that the RFQ also appropriately set out the specification, expected timeframes, and the evaluation criteria/weighting.
- In all cases the standard form evaluation spreadsheet had been used to score the bidders in accordance with the evaluation criteria set out in the RFQ document. It was advised that there were three members forming the evaluation panel in each case, although this was not recorded on the evaluation documentation.
- In all cases the contract had been awarded to the bidder with the highest overall score.

- In all cases the outcome of the award process had been notified to all bidders, with details of the individual scores obtained versus the winning bidder's scores. It was noted that in one case the notifications were sent purely by email rather than using the standardised letter generator, which increases the risk that the notification would not include all of the information required. In this case it was noted that the initial email to the unsuccessful party did not include any information as to the scoring breakdown or comparison with the successful party. This was only subsequently provided once the unsuccessful party replied to request it.
- In three of the four cases, the formal agreement was entered into by way of the standard form Contract Award letter, which incorporates the agreed terms as set out in the winning bidder's submission. The contract values in these cases were all between £10,000 and £20,000 and the award letter in each case had been issued by the Budget Manager in accordance with delegated authority limits. In one case, however, it was advised that a fully signed version of the Contract Award letter could not be located.
- In one case, due to the complexity of the arrangement, a separate formal contract was prepared by the Council's legal team. However, a fully signed version of the final contract could not be located.
- In all cases the Contract Register had been appropriately updated.
- For the cases advertised on Contracts Finder, it was confirmed that an Award Notice had been published in each case. However, these had been published at least a year after the contracts had been awarded, rather than within the expected 90 calendar days.

### Conclusion

- 10.96 While the advertising of opportunities and the evaluation process were considered to be fair and transparent overall, it was evident that procurement rules have not been fully followed as prescribed. The fact that multiple documents had not been signed; lack of an audit trail for panel evaluation; incorrect sending of a notification; and delay in publishing award results is unsatisfactory. Procurement should be seen to be working to the highest standards and in accord with the Council's procedures.

### Assurance over information governance arrangements to include FOI, Transparency and GDPR

- 10.97 A listing was provided of all the Freedom of Information requests received by the Council relating to the Shapley Heath project since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. The following items were noted from a review of the supporting evidence:
- It was advised in all cases that a response had been provided within the statutory timeframe of 20 working days, and this was verified in all but one case. It was not possible to fully verify the remaining case as the FOI email response had been deleted in accordance with the Council's email retention period (12 months).
  - In three cases the cover email to the requester stated that the Council did not hold the requested information. However, a detailed response was attached to the email in each case, which outlined that the Council did hold the information but that the request was refused due to legislative exceptions. Contradictory information was therefore provided to the requester in these cases. Furthermore, in one of these cases the response only dealt with one aspect of the request and did not include any details in relation to the second aspect of the request.
  - In a number of cases the request was refused; in these cases an appropriately detailed response had been provided as to the reasoning behind this.
  - Where subsequent internal reviews of the original response were requested, it was confirmed that appropriate review responses had been issued.

- It was advised that there had been no notice of a complaint or appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office received to date.

10.98 It was advised that there had been no subject access requests logged relating to the Shapley Heath project.

10.99 It was advised that there had been one data incident involving the Opportunity Board logged in the Incident Register. The incident was known on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and involved a breach of confidentiality. It is recorded that a signed contract document was accidentally sent to all members of the Opportunity Board when it should have been sent to just some. Four people's data was breached, the personal data disclosed being their signatures. It was not considered that this personal data breach posed a high risk to the rights and freedoms of the individuals. As a result, a Security Incident Form was not completed, the individuals were not contacted, and the incident was not reported to the ICO. A Data Breach Risk Assessment was completed for the incident. To remedy the breach, a privacy notice for the Garden Community Opportunity Board, to be appended to the Terms of Reference, was drafted.

10.100 In line with the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), it was confirmed that the Council publishes a series of data sets on its website. Of particular relevance to the Shapley Heath project, this includes:

- Expenditure exceeding £500 (since 2019/20 the Council have published expenditure over £250 in line with best practice).
- Contracts Register detailing all contracts over £5,000.
- The Council's Constitution (incorporating Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders).

#### Conclusion

10.101 The responses to FOI requests pertaining to the Shapley Heath project were considered to be timely and adequate in the majority of cases. It was not possible to fully verify the timeliness of the response in one case, as the email response had been deleted in accordance with the Council's email retention period. In addition, in three cases contradictory information had been given to the requester, and in one of these cases the response had not fully dealt with all aspects of the request.

10.102 It was advised that there had been no subject access requests logged relating to the Shapley Heath project. There had been one data incident which had been appropriately identified and acted upon.

10.103 Appropriate data are maintained on the Council's website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code.

**CABINET**

**DATE OF MEETING:** 2 JANUARY 2020

**TITLE OF REPORT:** GARDEN COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

**Report of:** Joint Chief Executive

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Graham Cockarill, Place

**I PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the governance arrangements for the Garden Community. This report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 17 December 2019.

**2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the Governance approach as set out in Appendix I.

**3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members will recall that in September, Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report regarding the Garden Community. This report contained a series of recommendations, including consideration of a draft governance structure and Overview and Scrutiny were, subject to any comments, asked to recommend the document to Cabinet.
- 3.2 In consideration of the governance structure, Overview and Scrutiny resolved to  
“Accepted [the Garden Community Governance] with modifications: Councillor Farmer to work with JCX to reword the Governance Approach to be amended with references to the: ‘evaluation phase’ rather than delivery. The Terms of Reference will also be reviewed.
- 3.3 The Joint Chief Executive and Cllr Farmer met and worked on the governance, and the amended version formed an appendix to the published Cabinet papers to October Cabinet.
- 3.4 The report was deferred and later considered at November Cabinet. At that meeting Cabinet resolved  
“The proposed Governance approach be approved in principle, but a small working group, comprising of the three 3 Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder for Place, be tasked to look again at the proposed governance structure and the work streams over the next 12 months, and be asked to report back to Cabinet, at the latest by February, with any appropriate refinements to the proposed Governance structure or project plan.”

- 3.5 As part of a very wide debate around partnership of forums and board and details of representatives and responsibilities, Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the governance approach at their meeting on 17 December 2019.

## **4 CONSIDERATION**

- 4.1 The governance arrangements need to provide everyone interested in the Garden Community with a clear understanding of how they can take part in the project and how their views will shape the broader picture. To do this we need to establish a clear and accountable structure of how information will be gathered and will flow through the project and how decisions will be made.
- 4.2 In accordance with the resolution of Cabinet in November, the Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder for Place, met to consider and amend the Garden Community Governance arrangements on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Further refinements have occurred through online collaboration between all respective parties.
- 4.3 Appendix I sets out the Garden Community governance as now agreed by each of the Political Group Leaders and the Portfolio Holder for Place. It recognises the key strategic roles to be undertaken during this first phase of exploration of the opportunity for a Garden Community.
- 4.4 It has also provided some greater level of clarity around key stakeholders, providing examples, which will help support the creation of the Garden Community Opportunity Board as well as Stakeholder and Land Owners Forums.
- 4.5 It is key to note that the governance arrangement as set out, may need to develop and evolve as the project progresses through its various stages, to involve different people, groups and organisations and as the groups develop, make changes to terms of reference

## **5 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

No equality issues are identified for this report at this stage. An early scoping of stakeholders will need to consider the engagement of representatives from protected groups that the project has the potential to impact upon.

## **6 ACTION**

Subject to Cabinet approval, next steps will be to set up the Garden Community Opportunity Board meeting, with respective key stakeholders

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix I Shapley Heath Garden Community

# THE SHAPLEY HEATH GARDEN COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY : BUILDING A COMMUNITY APPROACH

Hart District Council (“the Council”) recognises the significance of a potential Garden Community at Shapley Heath. Shapley Heath is the working title on a site at the very heart of the district.

The Council wants to ensure:

- The best possible communication between the community and all the organisations in the locality that may have a role to play in this project or be affected by it.
- Accurate information is available, any concerns can be raised, and solutions discussed.

## **KEY considerations:**

As well as the Council’s interest in representing local people and as a custodian of the economic, environmental and social well-being of the District, it is also the local planning authority.

As the decision-maker for applications for the development of the Garden Community, the Council must ensure that applications are considered in accordance with statutory requirements and its own rigorous ethical standards.

Therefore, the governance arrangements set out in this document, for investigating the vision and then exploring the opportunity for a Garden Community is not and cannot be part of any decision making process on matters associated with the Councils role as a Local Planning Authority.

The formal arrangements in this document are necessary to demonstrate a separation in the roles the Council performs.

A Shapley Heath Opportunity Board will be established to ensure the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in evaluating the opportunity for a Garden Community in accordance with the principles that have been adopted by the Council

## THE SHAPLEY HEATH GARDEN COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY BOARD

The Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board (the Board) will lead the evaluation of the Garden Community Opportunity. Reporting to the Council’s Cabinet, it will

- Be accountable for the project’s expenditure and the overall work of the project
- Develop a project plan to evaluate the opportunity with clearly defined milestones and outcomes
- Bring together the evidence, expertise and views of all work streams to provide a holistic view of the Garden Community and the opportunities it may bring whilst also recognising potential constraints – providing guidance, support and finding solutions where obstacles occur.
- Encourage and strengthen links between the evaluation project and other relevant communities and stakeholders,



## FORUMS

Alongside the Board, it is proposed to establish two engagement forums – a landowner/ developer forum and a Stakeholder forum to enable the circulation and discussion of information and views amongst all of the key stakeholders. The terms of reference for each Forum will be agreed by the Board at its first meeting and will thereafter be annually kept under review by the Board.

### THE STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The Stakeholder Forum will champion community and organisational engagement throughout the investigation of the vision that will underpin the evaluation of the Shapley Heath opportunity including the possibilities for community ownership (i.e. longer-term stewardship of assets).

As part of this, the Stakeholder forum will ensure engagement with the key community stakeholders, including business sector, public sector and third sector organisations.

It will also oversee community wide engagement; ensuring innovative approaches to reach unheard voices and as such, will offer local insight to the Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board.

Membership of the Stakeholder Forum will include

- Parish Council representatives from the following Parishes; Winchfield, Hook, Hartley Wintney, Dogmersfield, Odiham
- Community Stakeholder Organisation representatives e.g. the Diocese
- Business sector representatives
- Third sector (voluntary sector) representatives e.g. Hart Voluntary Action
- Public sector representatives (e.g. health, education, highways)
- Support from the Council's Shapley Heath Garden Community team
- Housing association representatives

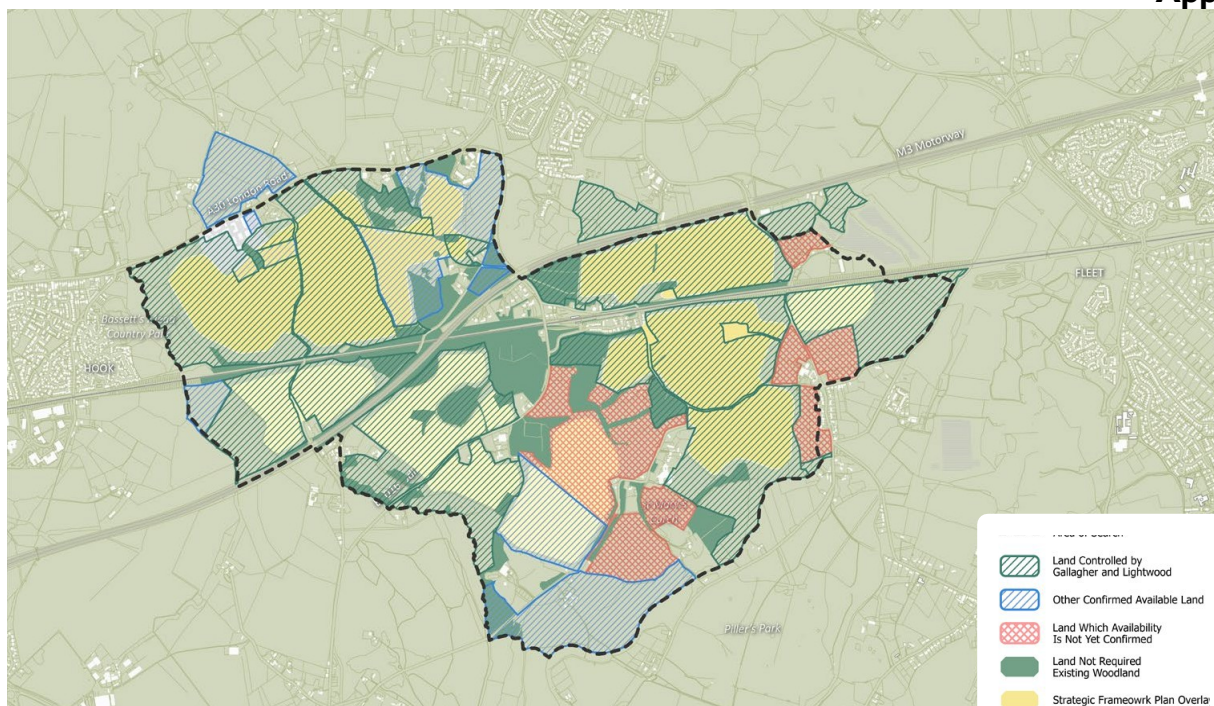
### THE LAND OWNERS' FORUM

The Land Owners' Forum will provide a sounding board for those with significant land ownership (or their nominated representatives) within the area of the proposed Shapley Heath opportunity, whether seeking to take part in the project or not, as any future community will have broader impacts.

This Forum too will look at the future vision for a Shapley Heath Opportunity and how a characterful and distinctive community could be achieved that meets the guiding principles of the project.

It will also be a forum to seek to resolve though consensus landowner project related issues, finding solutions and ensuring an effective exchange of views and information.

Membership will include significant landowners or their representatives, within the area outlined below



## THE DEDICATED SHAPLEY HEATH PROJECT TEAM

A small but dedicated team of professionals will be on hand to support the project; from inception to closure will be known as the Shapley Heath Project Team (the Project Team). Recognising the size of the ambition and the district wide opportunity, the team will be led by the Joint Chief Executive assisted by a small team of committed professionals.

The Project Team will focus on the day-to-day management and needs of the project and will manage and implement the project plan. It will identify and oversee any project Working Groups. It will report directly to the Board. The team's role will evolve as the project develops but will include a range of tasks such as

- Managing and controlling progress against the project plan, including key tasks and milestones.
- Identifying risks, benefits, and issues and reporting these to the Board, Stakeholder Forum or Land Owners Forum as appropriate
- Tracking and supporting all work streams, seeking technical research to enable evidence based decision making
- Analysing feedback from broad community engagement and providing this to all groups for consideration on next steps.
- Liaison, coordination and management of all groups and forums.
- Monitoring and reporting spend against budgets, identifying and applying for funding opportunities
- Appointing/commissioning organisations to deliver outcomes e.g. consultants, advisors etc.

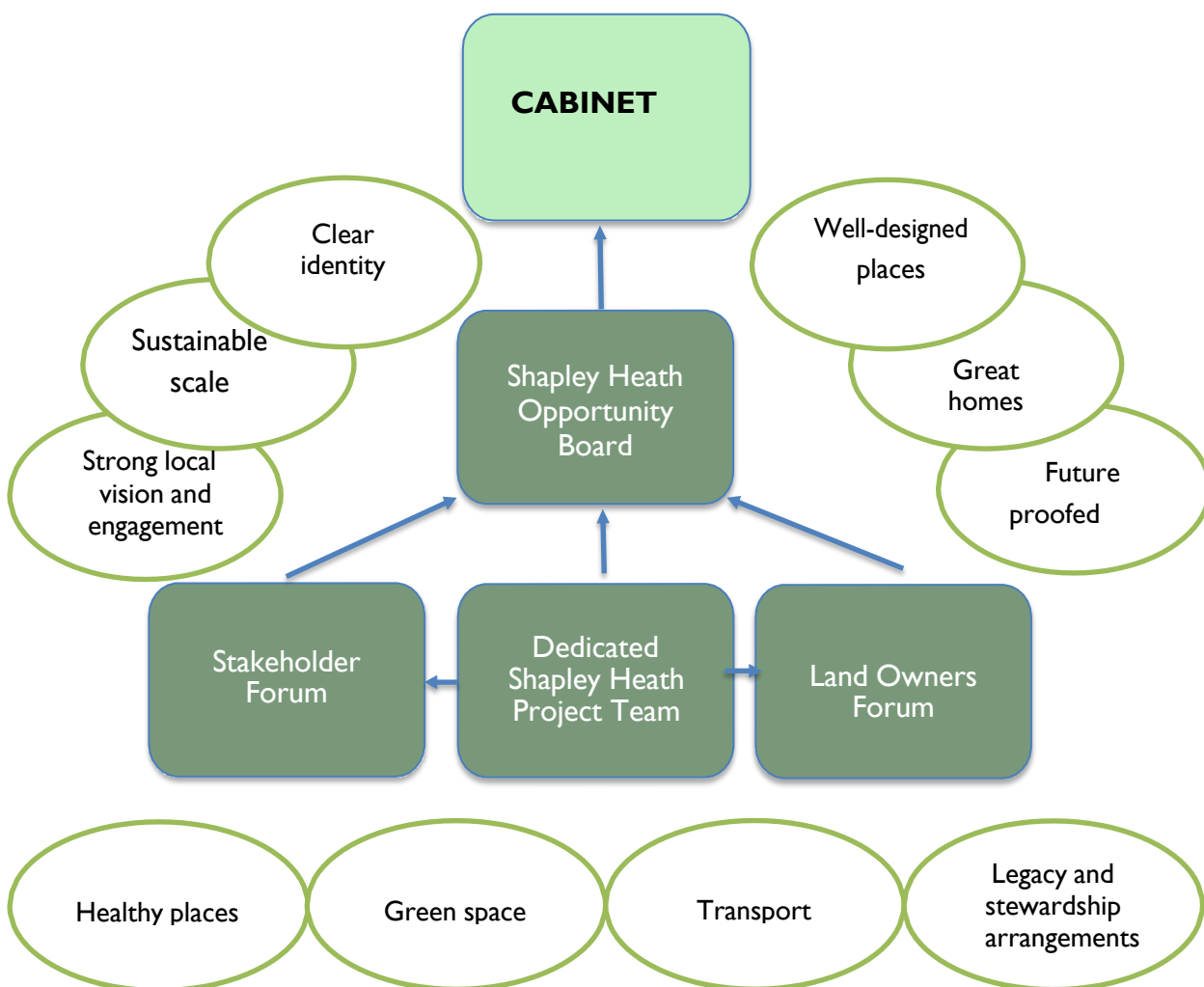
# HOW THE BIGGER PICTURE IS CREATED

Flow of knowledge, expertise and evidence and realistic timescales is fundamental to a successful project.

To achieve this, a transparent and accountable structure which people can understand is required. Visually this can be represented below.

The Landowners' Forum, Stakeholder Forum and the Shapley Heath Project Team will all report to the Board albeit the terms of reference for each group will evolve. The Board itself is accountable to Cabinet who it will regularly report to.

The Board and the Forums will each be established under the provisions of Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as advisory boards. As Advisory Boards, the Forum and Boards do not have to comply with the political balance rules in Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.



# THE DETAILS

The Board and each Forum will develop its own role, as the project progresses. However, below are the proposed Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board's terms of reference upon which its inception will be based.

## Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board —

### Terms of Reference to be adopted at the first meeting

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## Purpose of the Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board

- The Shapley Heath Garden Community Opportunity Board (the Board) will have overall responsibility for steering the evaluation of the Shapley Heath Garden Community opportunity (the Opportunity); the project is to establish a vision for a Garden Community and evidence whether such a vision is both viable and deliverable. In due course, the overarching description of the project will be further defined through an agreed Vision and set of place shaping outputs.
- The Board will be accountable for the success of the project in meeting its objectives and programme.
- The Board will lead the evaluation of the Opportunity and will be a key forum to manage overall engagement, issues resolution and progress of the viability of the project.

## Core Functions

1. To lead the Garden Community project against the Garden Community principles and report to the Council's Cabinet (and other respective corporate bodies as appropriate) and elected members to ensure corporate support and buy-in.
2. Be accountable for the project's expenditure and the overall work of the project to include setting the overall direction of the project/programme, its objectives and priorities; to monitor overall progress; and to review and update the objectives and priorities at least annually
3. Develop a project plan to evaluate the opportunity with clearly defined milestones and outcomes
4. Bring together the evidence, expertise and views of all work streams to provide a holistic view of the Opportunity and the opportunities it may bring whilst also recognising potential constraints
5. Encourage and strengthen links between the evaluation project and other relevant communities and stakeholders,
6. Oversee all work streams, providing guidance, support and find solutions where obstacles occur
7. Monitor and ensure implementation of the project engagement and consultation strategy.
8. To ensure that appropriate resources are in place to deliver against the agreed project plan and programme and to coordinate the public-sector contribution to the delivery of key elements of

the project in its earlier stages, including the use of available Garden Community capacity funding secured from Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG).

9. To make decisions on strategic issues and seek to resolve any 'showstoppers'
10. To provide a coordinated position/response to consultations and policy announcements that impact or effect the evaluation of the Garden Community project and to co-ordinate and ensure 'upwards' high level liaison into existing and/or emerging sub-regional forums.

## Membership of the Board

Membership will be:

- Cabinet Member for Place (Chairman) – HDC
- Cabinet Member for Housing - HDC
- Group Leaders - HDC
- Strategic Lead for Hampshire County Council - HCC
- A Ward Councillor representing
  - Hartley Wintney
  - Hook
- M3 Local Enterprise Partnership representative
- Homes England representative
- 2 representatives from the Landowner Forum
- 2 representatives from the Stakeholder Forum

The Board will be supported by the Shapley Heath Project Team

## Roles and Responsibilities of Members

Board members should be able to:

- Implement the Core Functions of the Board;
- Have the responsibility to represent their organisation and to feedback information to other relevant individuals and parties within that organisation;
- Make recommendations on the prioritisation of activities, projects and resources;
- Make every effort to prioritise attendance at scheduled meetings but to ensure that a suitably senior substitute is nominated from the same organisation.

## Chairmanship

The Chairman will be the Cabinet Member for Place. In the absence of the Chairman at any meeting, the Board may elect a Vice-Chairman who will preside at that meeting.

## Meetings

A minimum of one meeting per quarter will be held throughout the year, with additional meetings to be scheduled as and when required.

Board meetings are constituted under Section 102(4) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. They are not public meetings but at the discretion of the Chairman, the intention is that in the interests of openness and transparency Board meetings should be held wherever possible in public so that the public can observe the meeting. There will however be instances when the Board may need to go into confidential sessions without the public present.

The Quorum for any meeting will be five members of the Board provided that at least three Members represent a different organization.

The agenda for each meeting will be prepared by the Shapley Heath Project Team and circulated to all Board members at least five working days in advance of the meeting. Draft minutes of the meeting will be circulated within two weeks of the meeting, with formal approval taking place at the next subsequent meeting.

## Decision making and reporting lines

Whilst the Board has overall responsibility for overseeing the evaluation of the Shapley Heath Opportunity, it has no statutory decision making powers. Formal decision making (for example on planning applications; statutory plan making; funding allocations) will continue to take place through the existing decision making routes and structures of the organisations represented on the Board but with the added benefit of clear reporting and recommendations from the Board.

Board Members will be empowered to make activity and operational decisions on behalf of their respective organisations, subject to each representative organisation's scheme of delegation and management arrangements. The operational decisions of the Board are likely to fall within the following types of activity for the Project:

- Reviewing and agreeing the Project in terms of the:
  - Annual milestones and key activities for the next financial year
  - Detailed milestones and activities for the 3 months following the Board meeting
  - The risk assessment and proposed mitigation for the activities and milestones
  - Competitive bidding processes and allocation/prioritisation of funding for that financial year.
- Reviewing and agreeing the Engagement Strategy in terms of non-statutory stand-alone consultation exercises related to the Garden Community.
- Reviewing and agreeing further procurement related to reports, studies, expertise and services related to progressing the project.
- Be accountable for the project's expenditure and the overall work of the project

The Board will seek to make decisions and agree actions on a consensus basis. Where consensus is not achieved, the outcome will be noted and a report provided to Cabinet for decision.

In exceptional circumstances where an urgent decision, response or recommendation is required and it is not possible to convene a Board meeting in time, the Chairman may, in consultation with all other Board members (subject to quoracy requirements outlined above), make all such decisions, responses and recommendations as appear reasonable and necessary in the circumstances, having proper regard to any previous discussions of the Board. Consultation can take the form of virtual meetings, conference calls and email exchanges. All such decisions, responses or representations shall be reported to the next meeting of the Board in accordance with such requirements as the Board may determine.

The Board will receive reports and progress updates from the Project Team which will be focusing on the day to day management and needs of the project. The Board will also work closely with the Stakeholder Forum and Landowner Forum and will draw information from and feed this into their decision-making processes.



## Review Dates

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually from the point of their first approval, or as required.

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## **Cabinet**

**DATE OF MEETING: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022**

**TITLE OF REPORT: ODIHAM COMMON MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2032**

**Report of: Head of Environment and Technical Services**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Strategic Direction and Partnerships**

**Key Decision: No**

**Confidentiality: Non-Exempt**

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides Cabinet with a proposed Management Plan for Odiham Common that, if approved will provide a strategy for its management for the next 10 years. The report also considers a strategy for the management of Ash Dieback on Odiham Common, which will be implemented until a district Tree Strategy is approved.

The report includes details of a consultation process that was undertaken with the Key Stakeholders identified in the former 2010 2020 Management Plan.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the draft Odiham Common Management Plan (attached at Appendix 1).
2. Approves and adopts a temporary Ash Dieback Strategy until a time where a more formal "Tree Strategy" will supplement this guidance.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. As Odiham Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Natural England require Hart District Council to produce a Management Plan to show it is reaching "Favourable Condition" and is meeting its legal duty as a Section 28 (g) Authority. (See section 14 for more detail).
4. A previous site management plan was developed in 2010 as a 10-year plan with the objective to restore the common to "Favourable Condition" from its current level of "Unfavourable Condition". As there was a high level of restoration required, Consultative Committee was set up with Key Stakeholders to
  1. Obtain perspective about what they value about the Common
  2. Examine the range of management options and
  3. Select the most appropriate options for delivery

The management plan ended in 2020 having achieved "Favourable Condition" but due to the Covid Pandemic, the new plan was not started until now.

5. A consultation process was carried out with key stakeholders and the draft plan was largely supported by the majority of the group. Subsequently, the plan has been subject to a petition and comments from the neighbouring residents. This has been considered with the other stakeholder responses within Appendix 2. A list of the consultees is held in Appendix 2 and section 2.9.1 of the proposed Management Plan.



6. Hart has signed an agreement with Natural England (NE) for a 10-year delivery funded plan (which forms the basis of the draft Management Plan). Any amendments to the plan that effects the agreement will need to get consent from Natural England.
7. This report was considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2022. The committee unanimously agreed that Cabinet.
  1. Should not approve the draft Odiham Common Management Plan in its current form and ask it to take note of the issues and discussions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
  2. Approves and adopts a temporary Ash Dieback Strategy until a time where a more formal "Tree Strategy" will supplement this guidance.
8. The key issues discussed at Overview and Scrutiny were
  1. The cost of the Plan and balancing its requirements and resident's expectations.
  2. Making additional links, 'a contact group' between residents and Parish Councils regarding the Common.
  3. Balancing biodiversity and moderate access to this Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
  4. The current standard of the existing pathways and whether additional work is needed to make them more accessible.
  5. The possibility of applying for additional Government funding schemes appropriate to local groups for climate change activities
9. Officers' response to the points raised at Overview and Scrutiny Committee are provided in Appendix 4.

## **MAIN ISSUES**

10. As Odiham Common is a SSSI there is a need to conserve the biodiversity of the site as a priority over its public use. However, we do hope that the proposed plan will build on the successes of the past and has struck a good compromise between biodiversity and the impacts of disturbance from recreational activities.
11. Biodiversity is a metric used to measure the variety of life in an ecosystem; the unit of biodiversity is the species. Greater biodiversity supports more resilient ecosystems, and careful management can be required to restore ecosystems to being healthy, functional, and resilient.
12. The UK is now in a biodiversity crisis with one if four species at risk in the UK we are in the 10% bottom performing countries in the world and last in the G7 group of nations. With half of our biodiversity left we are far below our "safe limit" of 90% decline and tipping into a "ecological meltdown". This plan will help build on the successes of its predecessor and provide a "haven" for biodiversity's continuing future in Hart.
13. The draft Management Plan includes a recommendation for Ash Dieback Management (see Appendix 3). Ash Dieback is a chronic fungal infection that is affecting ash populations across Europe and the UK. The pathogen attacks the internal capillary system that transports water and nutrients within the tree. This leads to loss of leaves, wilting, lesions in the bark and sometimes death.

14. The plan identifies and grades risk resulting from ash dieback. This considers the merits of retaining trees as a biodiversity resource where this risk is minimal. It is not designed to be a replacement for good woodland management.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

14. Alternative funding streams were considered as part of the development of this Plan. There is an alternative available (the Forestry Commissions woodland Grant Scheme) that offered more funding, but this option would have required more staffing resources and (to qualify) it recommended an elevated level of tree clearance that is unnecessary at this time to maintain the required “Favourable Condition” status and would have caused significant local disruption.

### **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or The Hart Vision 2040**

15. Approval of the Management Plan will contribute to the Harts Corporate Plan priority of “A Clean, Green and Safe Environment.” Specifically, by the commitment to “protect and enhance biodiversity” where this explicitly commits to the positive management of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Fleet Pond, Hazeley Heath and Odiham Common).

#### **Service Plan**

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? No
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?

Yes

#### **Legal and Constitutional Issues**

16. As a Section 28g Authority, Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty to conserve biodiversity. It requires local authorities and government departments to “have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their normal function.” The recent Environment Act (2021) updates the NERC duty on all public authorities to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity it also requires Local Authorities to produce a biodiversity report every 5 years (which will include reporting on their ‘biodiversity actions’).
17. Odiham Common falls within the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981, as amended) protects the interest features of the SSSIs from development, from other damage, and from neglect by ensuring that the SSSI interests are considered properly against other factors and requires the owners/occupiers to obtain consent for any operations likely to damage the SSSI interest. Local authorities must take reasonable steps to conserve and enhance the special features of SSSIs when carrying out statutory duties and giving others permission for works
18. See section 2.6 of the Management Plan for details of all legal issues.

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

19. The Countryside Service has successfully applied for Countryside Stewardship funding to help deliver the plan. This amounts to a one-off capital payment of £6,384 and an annual average payment of £5,800 (varied dependant on amount of works particularly to veteran trees undertaken each year). This will help supplement the delivery of the Plan over a ten-year period.
20. Odiham Common has an approved revenue budget for 2022/23 which includes salary provision for a dedicated ranger. Any additional funding required to meet the recommendations of the draft Odiham Common Management Plan will be met from the Countryside Stewardship agreement which is funded by NE.

### **Risk Management**

21. The current ranger post is vacant, whilst this is to be recruited to there is a risk that we will not be able to recruit to this post.
22. The Countryside Stewardship agreement (which has been used to inform the draft management plan) is a ten-year agreement (with review in year 5) that has been signed with NE and confirms the conservation management objectives and funding for the duration of the agreement. To draw down the funding Hart must annually provide NE with evidence of works and compliance with the agreement's objectives. Failure to meet the objectives will result in Hart losing future years funding and could require the council to repay monies received to date.
23. If the Council does not have a Management Plan and funding in place for the site longer term the council could face legal action from Natural England for failing to maintain and improve an SSSI. Natural England could force the council to undertake appropriate works on site and / or carry out works itself and bill the council for them.

### **EQUALITIES**

24. We have conducted an initial equality pre-assessment, and this does not require us to undertake a full equality impact assessment.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

25. Management objective 9 relates to HDC's sustainability goals; specifically, the baseline for the site's habitat carbon sequestration will be established and options to increase sequestration will be considered. If any resulting options result in significant amendments to the planned management of the site, a revised management plan will be produced for consideration.

### **ACTION**

26. The agreed comments of the Committee will be reported to Cabinet for its consideration.

**Contact Details:** Adam Green Countryside Manager / Email:

adam.green@hart.gov.uk

### **Appendices**

**Appendix 1 - Odiham Common Management Plan 2022-2032 (final Draft for approval)**

**Appendix 2 - Summary of feedback from consultation**

**Appendix 3 - Ash Dieback Plan for Odiham Common**

**Appendix 4 – Response to Questions raised at Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee Aug 22**

**Background Papers:** [Devon Ash Dieback Advice Note](#)



# **MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2032**

# Odiham Common

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**March 2022**

# Version control

\* Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission,  
Planning Permission

	Name	Position	Date
Author	Liz Vango-Smith	Senior Ranger	12.05.2022
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Authorised	Steve Lyons	Operations Manager	"Enter text"
	Nicky Williamson	Ecology Officer	"Enter text"
	Leigh Wallace	Visitor Services Manager	"Enter text"
	Adam Green	Countryside Manager	"Enter text"
Cabinet or Portfolio Holder approval	David Neighbour	Leader of the Council	"Enter text"
Permissions needed*	Yes (Countryside Stewardship 2022-2023 approved by Natural England) (Woodland Plan 2022-2031 approved by Forestry Commission)	Ref: No	Obtain from NE July 2022

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# 1. Priorities

## 1.1 Corporate Priorities

This management plan has been written in accordance with Hart District Council's (HDC's) corporate priorities, which have been identified in the Corporate and Service Plans. This includes, but is not limited to, the following priority areas: -

Hart 2040 Vision and Corporate Plans -  
<https://www.hart.gov.uk/our-vision-values>

Climate change emergency, carbon sequestration and Hart's Climate Change Action Plan - <https://www.hart.gov.uk/climate-change-0>

Any relevant environmental legislation and in line with Hart's Biodiversity Action Plan - <https://www.hart.gov.uk/local-countryside-projects>

As a Local Authority, we also have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under the NERC Act. The site will be managed accordingly and is subject to review at any time, in response to any amendments or additions to these priorities.

## 1.2 Vision

### 1.2.1. Countryside vision

A crucial part of the work of Hart Countryside Services is to make the experience of visiting the countryside come alive. There is a welcoming ranger team, lots of opportunities to join in guided activities, volunteer and to learn more about the natural world. A visit to a Hart Countryside site is a special experience. Providing an excellent service for our visitors is a core value for Hart Countryside Services. The Ranger team is committed to making this available to everyone, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief.

**1.2.2. Fundamentally, Hart Countryside services is managing these spaces for the benefit and enjoyment of the local community with the core aim of improving health and wellbeing, in line with the individual site needs for biodiversity, wildlife protection and enhancement and in line with HDC's Corporate Priorities. Site vision**

Odiham Common is a beautiful, tranquil space, rich in wildlife and steeped in cultural heritage. It is used by local people for quiet recreation and to connect with nature, contributing directly to their health, well-being and local sense of place. It continues to receive relatively low public use, compared to sites more suited to attracting high footfall, such as Sutable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). As a result, the disturbance to wildlife from people and dogs remains relatively low, promoting high wildlife value. All parts of the SSSI have achieved Favorable Condition Status.



The Common supports a mix of wood pasture, ancient woodland, and meadows - habitats rich in plant, animal and fungi species that have evolved through the interaction between people and their environment over centuries. These habitats are managed with a range of techniques to maintain and enhance the mixture of natural open space, woodland and ponds, and ensure the continuity of the site's precious veteran and mature trees. A network of naturally surfaced paths allows visitors to feel safe and secure while enjoying the site. Path surfacing and other site infrastructure are made of natural materials where possible, retaining a rural feel. Effective engagement with members of the public and other stakeholders means that the wildlife and historical interest of the site are understood, and that management is supported; site users appreciate Odiham Common both as a wild place and a cultural landscape.

### 1.2.3. Woodland Vision

Odiham Common is a vibrant and diverse wood pasture that directly contributes to local people's quality of life and community spirit; and where the diversity of landscape, habitats and cultural heritage are better understood so as to enhance public enjoyment and improve management of the Common. There is a varied age structure of open-crowned trees and a new generation of pollards and protected areas of rotational coppice connecting locals and visitors with place, nature and tradition. The shifting kaleidoscope of grassland and scrub species that form the understorey and carpet the glades, rides and open spaces are bursting with nectar sources and dotted with saplings rising through the natural protection of thorn and briar to become the veteran trees of the future, meanwhile maintaining the sense of 'discovery' so valued by users

of the Common. Light is dappled through the canopy with openings enough that the trees grow with an open crown to a respectable age, whilst still sustaining moisture and ambient temperatures to the benefit of lichens, liverworts, hornworts and mosses. Standing and fallen deadwood pervades the forest, supporting a wealth of plants, fungi and creatures that rely on deadwood for part, or all of their lifecycle, and complimenting the prevalent microhabitats of the ancient and veteran trees, which themselves support multiple species of bat, birds and other species. Wherever possible, products from management activities feed into the local economy or else benefit the site directly for biodiversity, or the enjoyment of visitors and the local community. Grazing animals may or may not be present, but in their absence are imitated by hand or mechanically to mimic the unique disturbance, varied sward and browsing action that maintains diversity in a natural ecosystem. A string of open ponds connects the fragile habitats of species such as the Great Crested Newt and through careful management are maintained for posterity as permanent aquatic habitat. There is strong agreement between all people (including local residents, those responsible for managing the Common, and other interested organisations) over what is special about the Common and why it needs to be protected, conserved and enhanced. The resources and services that the Common provides to the community are newly appreciated and made relevant to 21st century living, in line with national and local government policies.

## 2. General Information

### 2.1 Customer Care Standards

All site management and related activities will be carried out with a commitment to excellent customer care standards, in line with Hart's core values. Further details of Hart's Customer Care Standards can be found on our website, here:  
<https://www.hart.gov.uk/customer-care-standards-0>

### 2.2 Location and status

<b>Grid Reference</b>	SU753528 (central point).
<b>Site Name</b>	Odiham Common
<b>Location</b>	Just to the northeast of Odiham (from which it is separated by the Basingstone Canal) and south of Winchfield in north Hampshire
<b>Site Status</b>	Countryside Site
<b>SSSI Name (if applicable)</b>	Part of Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI
<b>Date Notified</b>	7 February 1992
<b>Date Renotified</b>	N/A
<b>District</b>	Hart
<b>County</b>	Hampshire

<b>Local Planning Authority</b>	Hart District Council
<b>Total Area</b>	115ha
<b>Legal Right of Access</b>	Open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Dedication of the Common under Section 193 (2) of the Law of Property Act (1925) coupled with the High Court judgement R v SoS Environment ex parte Billson 1998, gives horse riders a general right of access for air and exercise. A Public Right of Way (PROW) footpath crosses the site from the B3106 in the north west to the footbridge over the Basingstoke Canal on the southern boundary, where two shorter PROW footpaths also enter the site.
<b>Byelaws</b>	There are byelaws to prevent nuisance and preserve order on the Common (see Appendix 1)

### 2.3 Site Map

See Map 1

### 2.4 Land Tenure

All tenure documents are held by the Legal Unit of Hart District Council at the Civic Offices.

<b>Ownership</b>	Hart District Council
<b>Type of holding</b>	Freehold
<b>Date of acquisition</b>	1945

*This is not a legal document. Please refer to the original tenure documents before taking any decision or action which may have legal implications.*

## 2.5 Access and Structures

### 2.5.1. Footpaths, Bridges and other Access Structures

A length of boardwalk runs through the woods adjacent to the meadows in the south-west corner of the site leading to a bridge over the stream. There are 5 low footbridges crossing ditches in the meadows. There are numerous paths through the site (see Map 2), including three ProW which all lead from Broad Oak footbridge over the Basingstoke Canal on the southern boundary. The Three Castles Way runs adjacent to the site along the Basingstoke Canal.

### 2.5.2. Green Corridor

Odiham Common provides a green corridor in an otherwise arable and urban landscape, linking Park Hall Copse/Forest Park and Broad Oak Common and other Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) to the south-east to the SSSI component sites Bagwell Green and Shaw to the east and providing a stepping stone to woodland parcels at Winchfield and Phoenix Green to the north some of which are also SINCs.

### 2.5.3. Furniture

Four notice boards are situated at the key entrance points to the site (see Map 2). There is a bench beneath the Jubilee Oak in the Southern Pastures (east).

### 2.5.4. Car Park and Access Track

Odiham Common can be accessed via the underpass at Colt Hill Lane from Basingstoke Canal Car Park. There are also two laybys with room for 2-3 cars on the B3016 (see Map 2).

### 2.5.5. Access Points and Restrictions

The site can be accessed from numerous points as it is largely unfenced. Key access points are from the car park and laybys and where public rights of way enter the site (see Map 2). Removable bollards restrict vehicular access at the northern layby.

### 2.5.6. Fencing

The site is largely unfenced, although there is partial fencing around the Southern Meadows along London Road and at the foot of the A287 embankment.

## 2.6 Legislation and other Requirements

**Law of Property Act (1925):** Odiham Common was dedicated under Section 193 (2) of the Law of Property Act (1925) in May 1938. This includes legislation affecting the extent of works permitted on common land - the statutory consents process previously applicable under this act has now been superseded by the Commons Act 2006

**Commons Registration Act (1965):** Odiham Common was registered as common land under the Commons Registration Act 1965 which required local authorities to establish registers of common land within their areas. A list of registered commoners is held by Hart District Council (Hart DC); rights include grazing livestock and undertaking other specific activities.

**Commons Act (2006):** This act supersedes/builds upon the 1925 Law of Property Act and is now the main legislative reference point regarding the protection and management of common land. The Act enables commons to be managed more sustainably by commoners and landowners working together through commons councils, with powers to regulate grazing and other agricultural activities. It also provides for better protection for common land and greens by streamlining the consents system for works and fencing on commons and ensuring that existing statutory protections are applied consistently. It recognises that the protection of common land has to be proportionate to the harm caused and provides that some specified works can be carried out without the need for consent. The Act prohibits the severance of common rights, preventing commoners from selling, leasing or letting their rights away from the property to which rights are attached.

**Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:** Due to its common land status, the Common is mapped as having open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

**Wildlife Countryside Act, 1981:** Odiham Common falls within the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which was notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife Countryside Act (1981) in 1992 on account of the many examples of rare flora and fauna. This protects the interest features

of the SSSIs from development, from other damage, and from neglect by ensuring that the SSSI interests are considered properly against other factors and requires the owners/occupiers to obtain consent for any operations likely to damage the SSSI interest. Local authorities must take reasonable steps to conserve and enhance the special features of SSSIs when carrying out statutory duties and giving others permission for works

**Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006:** Much of Odiham Common is Woodpasture and Parkland and Deciduous Woodland in addition there are areas of Good quality semi-improved grassland and Lowland Meadows, which are habitats listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as being of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity in England. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers, including local authorities, when in implementing their duty to have regard to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity when carrying out their normal functions.

**Environment Act 2021:** This updates the NERC Act's duty on all public authorities to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving **and enhancing** biodiversity.

### **Climate Emergency Declaration**

Hart District Council has declared a climate emergency and set a target for the district to be net zero carbon by 2040 (*Climate Emergency Declaration & 2040 Net Zero Target*: <https://hart.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g162/Public%20minutes%2029th-Apr-2021%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=11>). Science based target defines Net Zero as “at least 90% emissions reductions”, with the remaining 10% neutralised i.e., “the permanent removal and

storage of carbon from the atmosphere”, for example through nature-based activities within Hart District.

The sites Hart currently manages can play a part in meeting the 2040 Net Zero target through nature-based carbon reduction. However, we need to understand how we can improve carbon sequestration while also insuring we improving biodiversity. The management plan will need to take into account future biodiversity and carbon offsetting delivery strategy (due 2022/23), which will seek to baseline the current carbon sequestration and biodiversity on sites Hart currently manages and will sets out projects that could improve both.

## 2.7 Health, Safety and Security

All work undertaken is in line with our Corporate Health and Safety Policy and our departmental Health and Safety documents.

An independent Health and Safety audit of the Countryside Service was last carried out by QLM (Quality Leisure Management) in 2014 and scored highly. QLM deliver industry best practice health and safety consultancy, supporting leisure facilities (including open spaces) with practical and cost-effective health and safety solutions. They work with industry lead bodies and have been instrumental in the development of industry standards and guidance publications. They are also available for specialist advice.

### 2.7.1. Emergency Planning

An Emergency Plan was produced in partnership with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service. This identifies special danger areas, danger periods, fire prevention methods, organisation and an incident procedure. A copy of this plan can be found in the

Countryside Workshop and electronically on the Hart District Council system.

### 2.7.2. Site Safety

Hazard trees in high and medium risk areas are surveyed annually in line with our corporate Tree Safety Policy by the Hart District Council Tree Officer. Trees in low-risk areas that do not receive a high level of footfall are checked ad hoc by the site ranger whilst undertaking normal day to day duties.

Where appropriate, vegetation from path edges is cut back to provide good sight lines and visibility to make users of the site feel safe and secure. Structures such as bridges and boardwalks are either covered in a non-slip mesh or non-slip inserts to help reduce the risk of trips and slips.

The site ranger surveys all site structures annually for safety issues and any damage or repairs needed. Records of these surveys are kept electronically on the Hart District Council system.

### 2.7.3. Enforcement

All of Hart's land is under an Open Space Protection Order, which makes it an offence to not pick up after your dog or to not be carrying the means to pick up after your dog, under the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Part 4, Section 59. To help enforce this we have dedicated enforcement officers, who are able to give on the spot fines of for dog fouling or littering. This is provided through a contract with East Hampshire District Council. If there is a problem area, we can ask the enforcement officers to target this area until the issue has been resolved. In addition, the public are able to inform us of an area through our 'report a litter hot spot' function on our website (<https://www.hart.gov.uk/report-litter-hotspot>) or through the 'fix my street' function (<https://hart.fixmystreet.com/>).

If we have identified a particular hotspot then we will liaise with East Hampshire District Council. For specific problems with dogs or fouling at a site, we are able to run a 'pop up' stall in conjunction with the dog warden to educate members of the public and utilise social media campaigns if required.

A water safety risk assessment was last carried out on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and is reviewed annually.

### 2.7.4. Contractor expectations

Hart DC Countryside Team work with reputable contractors and ensure they have valid insurance and appropriate qualifications to carry out training and work operations. In addition, we expect contractors to adhere to best practice, including consideration of current sustainability and climate change issues and initiatives.

## 2.8 Historical and social context

### 2.8.1. Past management for nature conservation

Odiham Common is managed and maintained by Hart DC. A timeline showing main events since Hart DC took ownership of the site in 1978 is provided in Appendix 1.

Since designation as an SSSI in 1992, a range of management activities have been carried out on Odiham Common with the aim of restoring its ancient character and retaining and improving its habitat value and visitor access. Management has included:

- Scrub treatment/clearance within the Southern Meadows
- Bracken and Rhododendron control;
- Tree felling and removal to enlarge rides;
- Rotational coppicing in defined coupes;
- Mowing, temporary fencing and grazing;
- Pond restoration; and
- Monitoring of flora and fauna.

In addition, Hart DC Rangers carry out routine maintenance tasks including:

- Maintaining the network of paths/rides by clearing obstructions, cutting back vegetation where necessary and mowing;
- Litter picking on paths, roadside edges, pull-ins, parking areas and the whole of the Common;



- Maintaining drainage channels to serviceable condition, cutting back encroaching vegetation and removing all debris and blockages;
- Carrying out annual hazard tree surveys, completing works as necessary or arrange for specialist works to be completed; and
- Checking safety condition of all footbridges, signs, drop bollards, dragons teeth, fencing, safety rails etc.

Statutory undertakers carry out maintenance works as required to maintain wayleaves for utilities/ services which run under and over the Common. Works proposed are reviewed, approved and monitored by Hart DC Senior Ranger.

## 2.8.2. Past status of the site

A Scheme of Regulation and Management (approved in 1949 under the authority of the Commons Act (1899) sets out what the Council may do to protect and improve the Common and sets parameters for its access and use, stating that ‘the inhabitants of the district and neighbourhood shall have a right of free access to every part of the commons and a privilege of playing games and of enjoying other species of recreation thereon subject to any byelaws made by the Council under this scheme.’ Management of the Common has as a result been statutorily controlled and guided by the Scheme in conjunction with the relevant legislation.

Management has also been controlled through the designation of the site under the Wildlife Countryside Act (1981) in 1992 which ensures that the SSSI interest features are properly considered.

## 2.9 People

### 2.9.1. Local communities, partnerships and stakeholders

Hart DC has worked with a broad partnership on the management of Odiham Common. The Odiham Consultative Group was specifically formed to help inform development of the previous 2009-2019 management plan, in line with the ‘Common Purpose’ process. The committee consisted of representatives from the following groups and organisations:

- Hampshire CC
- Hart DC Councillor, Hartley Wintney Ward
- National Trust
- Natural England
- Odiham Biodiversity Group
- Odiham Parish Council
- Odiham Society
- Open Spaces Society
- Potbridge Residents Association

There are also good links established with Basingstoke Canal Authority Rangers (who manage and maintain the canal), Hampshire County Council (public rights of way officers) and other local landowners/managers.

The above management plan has now been completed and future communications will be directly through the Parish Councils as the local ward and subject to future corporate and service communication strategies.

The core mechanisms for future engagement will consist of the following methods, in line with Countryside's emerging Engagement Plan: -

- Future communications on general site management will delivered by direct liaisons with Parish Councils, as well as via social media and website updates.
- Hart DC will continue to uphold any legal requirements in terms of engaging with other organisations on management of the site.
- Future projects will be subject to the identification and liaison with key stakeholders that may be impacted by the results of the project being implemented on site. This engagement will be based on the needs of such projects in line with the 'Common Purpose'. Where appropriate, engagement will be constitutionalised with clearly defined engagement periods that are project-specific.

### 2.9.2. Volunteers

There are currently limited opportunities for volunteers to participate in the management of Odiham Common, in part due to the isolated nature of the site and lack of parking. Future volunteer involvement will be through working parties arranged by the Hart DC Ranger Service

### 2.9.3. Access and tourism

Odiham Common has been freely accessible to the public for 'air and exercise' since 1936 and is valued for its landscape, history, wildlife and amenity. It is predominantly used by local people for informal recreation, including walking, dog walking and horse-riding. The site is also in close proximity to the Basingstoke canal, as well as the Hunting Lodge at Wilk's Water, which is owned and managed by the National Trust.

### 2.9.4. Past and current provision

As described in sections 1.5.1, 1.5.3-5 above, provision is for general public access and includes information panels, small footbridges, and a short length of boardwalk. There are numerous informal paths criss-crossing the site.

### 2.9.5. Past and current use

There is currently little information available about the past and current use of Odiham Common. The 2008 consultation included a questionnaire, which was completed by a subset of users, and indicated that the site is mainly used by local people for quiet recreation including walking, dog walking and horse riding. Due to the limited availability of parking, most users are likely to access the site on foot or on horseback.



## 2.9.6. Educational use

There is currently no formal educational use made of the site. However, there are low levels of educational use on site from local groups. Infrastructural constraints (the lack of parking and the unmade nature of the paths) mean that, with the exception of very local use, it is not general suitable for regular use by groups.

## 2.10 Site description

### 2.10.1.1. Physical

Odiham Common lies to the south of the M3 and is separated from Odiham village by the Basingstoke Canal and the A287. The site is dissected by Odiham Road (B3016), Bagwell Lane and Potbridge Road. A significant pylon wayleave crosses the east of the site with a smaller wayleave across the north of the site. There are a number of properties located within the common (outside of the SSSI boundary and Hart DC ownership).

### 2.10.1.2. Climate

The annual mean temperature for North East Hampshire is around 10°C, or slightly above this where urban heating effects are a factor. Summer temperatures are high, the region being one of the warmest in Britain. The mean daily maximum temperature in July is about 21.5°C. The 25-year average is of 91 days per year when the afternoon maximum exceeds 20°C.

The mean daily temperature in January is about 4°C, but the mean minimum for the month is 1.2°C. These figures may be lower in a low-lying, wet site. The average number of nights with air frost per year is 53, but ground frosts may double this total and occur in every month except July. The air frost-free period is late May until late September.

The average annual total of bright sunshine at Farnborough is 1510 hours: the monthly average varies from 206 hours (June) to 42 hours (December).

Rainfall is extremely variable, between a low of 3.1 mm (February 1993) to a high of 181.7 mm (November 1974). The mean annual average at Farnborough is 670 mm.

### 2.10.1.3. Hydrology

Odiham Common lies between the River Whitewater to the west and an un-named seasonal tributary to the north and east. In the southwest of the site there are a number of ditches, while small streams rise from springs to the north west and drain westwards towards the River Whitewater. The site becomes very wet in winter.

### 2.10.1.4. Geology

The Common lies at the junction of the London Clay, Plateau Gravel and Lower Bagshot Beds, with most of the site dominated by London Clay.

### 2.10.1.5. Geomorphology

Odiham Common forms a dome with the highest point at Cherry Hill (88m), from which the land slopes away to 68m at the lowest point. The landform is fairly consistent, although a large clay pit occurs between Cherry Hill and Hazel Cottage with smaller extraction pits scattered throughout the Odiham Common, particularly to the northeast.

### 2.10.1.6. Soils

Flinty, sandy and loamy soils occur over most of the site and are seasonally waterlogged in the surface layers. Lower land around the edges of the site have more protracted seasonal waterlogging due to the underlying London Clay. The soil pH varies across the site (and is reflected in the vegetation). Moderately acidic soils dominate the centre of the site with neutral to slightly acidic soils occurring to the south.

## 2.10.2. Cultural

### 2.10.2.1. Archaeology and Past Land Use

The history of Odiham Common is described in *Odiham Common – a report on common rights, historic use and encroachments on the Common by Mary Bennett* (Appendix 5 of the 2010-2020 management plan). This provides an account of how the Common was used on the past for grazing cattle and sheep, for timber, brushwood and underwood (coppice), and for sand, gravel and clay extraction. There was also a limited amount of turf cutting.

There were a number of encroachments on the common, some of which are now listed buildings (see Map 4).

A number of listed buildings lie within or on the edge of Odiham Common, including The Hunting Lodge (Site UID 4249) a late 18th century ‘folly’, Wilks Water (Site UID 4250) a two storey house dates from the 18th century and late 19th century, a 19th century Milestone (Site UID 4404) on the London Road south of the Junction with Bagwell Lane, Garden Cottage (Site UID 4434), part of which is 17th century and timber framed, Potbridge Farmhouse (Site UID 4435) a 17th century, early 18th century two storey timber framed farmhouse, Woodside and Gregor Gates (Site UID 4436 & 4437) a 18th/19th century irregular two storey timber framed block, now two cottages

There are a number of other buildings and archaeological sites which are included on the Hampshire County Council Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record including Green Hill (Site UID 55455) the only structure remaining on the site of the brickworks, Broad Oak Bridge (Site UID 54206) the canal bridge built in 1792 which links the southern part of Odiham Common with Broak Oak Common, Potbridge Farm (Site UID 38306), Site of Toll House and Toll Gate (Site UID 58580), Site of Odiham Brickworks (Site UID 55454) 19th Century, Section of Pale of Odiham Deer Park (Site UID 28838) (the boundary of the original deer park is marked by a continuous line of hedgerows and field boundaries). Site of Roman Tile Kiln (Site UID 28836)

### 2.10.3. Present Conservation Status

Odiham Common falls within the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI (see Map 3) which was notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife Countryside Act, 1981 in 1992 (See Map 3).

A small area of Odiham Common (in the southeast corner around Wilks Water) is not SSSI but is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and is protected in relation to development by Policy NBE 4 Biodiversity of the Hart Local Plan.

A smaller area of woodland between Trotters Lane and Potbridge Road in the north of the site has no nature designation but is Woodpasture and Parkland Habitat of Principal Importance.

### 2.10.4. Surrounding Landscape

Odiham Common falls within the area covered by Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2032. It is noted that the Local Plan makes provision for 111 houses as set out in the Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan.

The landscape surrounding the site is described as follows:

#### Northern boundary:

The northern boundary of Odiham Common lies within a few hundred metres of the M3. The Common is bordered by the hamlet of Potbridge and an area of rush pasture, also part of the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI; this compartment is currently in unfavorable condition. Beyond the M3 are the semi-rural villages of Phoenix Green and Hartley Wintney.

#### Western boundary:

Odiham Common bordered by agricultural land to the west, with North Warnborough 1km to the south west, beyond which are two small SSSIs (Warnborough Green and Greywell Fen) SSSIs. About 2km further west lie two larger SSSIs, Butter Wood, and Hook Common and Hartley Heath, with the town of Hook to the north.

#### Southern boundary:

The southern boundary is delineated by the A287 and Basingstoke Canal (SSSI), south of which is Odiham village and Broad Oak Common. Nearby Dogmersfield Park to the southeast of the Common is included as Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and includes Dogmersfield Water, part of the Basingstoke Canal SSSI.

#### Eastern boundary:

Bagwell Green and Bagwell Shaw, component woodland sites of the Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI are adjacent to the east, together with agricultural land including some permanent pasture and a livery yard. Agricultural land extends for some 4km, beyond which is Fleet, the major town of Hart District.

### 2.10.5. Ecological

#### 2.10.5.1. Surveys

A range of ecological baseline data is available for the site, with subsequent information collated from the following sources:

- Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI citation document<sup>1</sup> and associated SSSI Condition Assessment<sup>2</sup>;
- Odiham Common/Wood SSSI – Phase II (vegetation) survey (2018);
- Survey of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates of Odiham Common, Hampshire (2018).
- Odiham Common fungi survey (2011);
- A Management Plan for Odiham Common (2010) - the site's previous management plan;
- Odiham Common SSSI Bird Survey (2010);
- Odiham Common – Understanding the Place (2009);
- Entomological survey and assessment of Odiham Common (2009);
- Odiham Common felled area, grassland areas, and wayleaves - Phase II (vegetation) survey (2009);
- Odiham Common Woodland Management Plan (2010-2020);
- Odiham Common moth survey (2002);
- List of birds found on Odiham Common in the spring and summer of 1986, 1995, and 2002; and,
- A map of Priority Ponds (including those supporting Great Crested Newt) supplied by Natural England.

<sup>1</sup><https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1002756.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportUnitCondition.aspx?SiteCode=S1002756&ReportTitle=Odiham%20Common%20with%20Bagwell%20Green%20and%20Shaw%20SSSI>

Summary descriptions of the contents of each of the targeted survey reports listed are provided in Appendix 2.

Additional records of relevant taxa may also be held for the site by Hampshire Biodiversity Information Center (HBiC), Hampshire and Isle of Wight Amphibian and Reptile Group and the British Trust for Ornithology amongst other local natural history groups.

Odiham Common has been subject to surveys for a range of habitats and taxa, with particular historical emphasis upon its important plant and invertebrate communities (for which recent, detailed, survey information is available). The potential presence of additional protected/noteworthy species, including bats and reptile species, are however detailed in some of the non-survey specific data sources highlighted previously (e.g. the Odiham Common Woodland Management Plan).

Specific future surveys for the site have been identified (see Section 4).

#### 2.10.5.2. Habitats and communities

Odiham Common consists of an extensive mosaic of wood pasture, meadows and rush pasture with smaller areas of mire and swamp communities. It formerly supported large areas of wood pasture, but this habitat became threatened by the cessation of traditional grazing activities. Nevertheless, an important array of acid grassland species still typifies the woodland ground flora, and an impressive number of ancient woodland indicator species have been recorded from the site. Drainage within the woodland, and other areas of the site, is facilitated by a network of ditches, although several of these are currently close-ended.

The majority of the woodland consists of oak, with holly, birch, or Hazel as the dominant shrub layer species (W10, W10c). Areas of Ash woodland (W8, W8a, W8d), supporting a good ancient woodland flora, are also found on site, with stands of wet woodland (W1, W4, W6a) also present. Coppicing continues in isolated areas and the central area of woodland is identified on the Ancient Woodland Inventory as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland. Active management of the site over the last 15 years has opened up several of the rides and glades within the woodland areas, and wood pasture habitat has been restored by felling and subsequent management. Rush pasture is also locally found within areas of structured wood pasture, with remnants of former wood pasture found in association with old/veteran oaks present within the site.

The wayleaves and rides across the site, as well as the southern meadows, comprise more established open areas. These support neutral grassland (MG1, MG1c, MG1e, MG5a, MG5c, MG6b) and acid grassland (MG25, M25a, U1e) communities, in addition to rush pasture, mire and swamp (M23, M23a, M23b, MG10, MG10a, MG27c, M30, S7) and areas of bracken and scrub (W24, W25). Several ponds are also found across the site, with the largest supporting significant aquatic vegetation.

### 2.10.6. Ecological Assessment of Significance

Odiham Common forms a core component of the nationally designated Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI. A small section of the site (in the southeast corner, around Wilk's Water), beyond the SSSI boundary, is designated as a SINC (i.e. a Local Wildlife Site). The site also supports several important habitat types. These comprise:

- Ancient and semi-natural woodland;
- Wood pasture;
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland;
- Wet woodland;
- Lowland dry acid grassland (including remnant/recovering wood pasture);
- Lowland meadow;
- Good quality semi-improved grassland;
- Purple Moor-grass and rush pasture; and,
- Ponds.

Within these broader habitat types a range of important features are also located. These include:

- Boundary banks;
- Fallen and standing deadwood;
- Glades and open rides; and,
- Veteran/notable trees.

The habitats and features identified support a range of important flora and fauna, including:

- A single nationally Vulnerable plant species (Lesser Spearwort), and 11 nationally Near Threatened species (namely: Heather, Cross-leaved Heath, Wild Strawberry, Marsh Pennywort, Field Scabious, Wood Sorrel, Tormetil, Sanicle, Devil's-bit Scabious, Heath Speedwell, and Marsh Speedwell);

- The nationally Near Threatened Petty Whin was also known historically from the site, although it may have been lost due to the cessation of grazing;
- 2 plant species/genera listed on Annex 5 of the EU Habitats Directive (Butcher's-broom and *Sphagnum*);
- A single plant species identified as Scarce in North Hampshire (Floating Club-rush);
- 53 Ancient Woodland Indicator plant species;
- An important invertebrate assemblage associated with woodland, grassland, and wetland habitats. Surveys carried out in 2017 identified 1,097 invertebrate species on site including 26 Nationally Rare or Scarce, and 24 Nationally Notable, in addition to 4 Red Data Book and 3 S41 Priority Species. The site's saproxylic invertebrate community, and population of the Forester Moth, are both assessed as being of County importance. The site has historically been particularly noted for flies, and many of the rarer species are associated with dead or dying trees within its woodland areas.

- An array of bird species (45 recorded within the boundary, of which 34 species are breeding), including 6 Red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern<sup>3</sup> (Woodcock, Cuckoo, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Mistle Thrush, Marsh Tit, and Greenfinch), and a further 13 Amber-listed species, during the most recent targeted survey. Nevertheless, a small number of former specialist breeding species (including Wood Warbler and Nightingale) have been lost in recent decades, against a backdrop of more widespread national declines. There are historic records of a single breeding bird species (Firecrest) listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Two reptile species (Common Lizard and Grass Snake) listed on *Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Have recently been recorded from the site, alongside historic records of Adder;
- Great Crested Newts, comprising a European Protected Species and listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Odiham Common also has potential to support Otter, Dormouse, and several bat species, all of which would comprise European Protected Species and be listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These have been recorded from localities within proximity to Odiham Common, but their presence on site has not yet been confirmed via targeted survey work. The habitats present suggest that all may however potentially be present, or at least occasionally use habitats within, the site boundary.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/publications/bocc-5-a5-4pp-single-pages.pdf>



### 2.10.6.1. Rarity of Features

The areas of Ancient Woodland (including associated remnant/recovering wood pasture) and lowland meadows on site comprise nationally important habitat types. The former is still abundant within the county of Hampshire, due to the presence of the New Forest, but constitutes an important national resource where found. Wood pasture has been lost from many areas due to changes in land management, and particularly as a result of changes in grazing. The woodland on site incorporates a number of veteran trees, as well as standing and fallen deadwood, which are likely to be localised in the landscape.

The extent of sympathetically managed lowland meadows has declined dramatically on a national level over the last century, largely due to changes in farming practices and land management, with those remaining areas comprising important biodiversity features. Ponds have also suffered a national historic decline in abundance and quality, with those still present subject to pressure from pollutants, drainage, and development.

Large-scale mosaics of semi-natural habitat, as found in the SSSI, are also declining, and risk isolation within agricultural or urban matrices.

Please refer to Section 1.10.6 for details on the rarity of notable plant and animal species found (or potentially found) on site.

### 2.10.6.2. Fragility of Features

The veteran trees on site are susceptible to trampling impacts and associated soil compaction, which may be exacerbated if future ditch improvements (and associated drainage) make veterans in wetter areas more accessible. Any impact upon veteran trees could also impact species or species groups dependent upon them (e.g. cavity nesting bird species or roosting bats). Reduced recruitment is also considered to increase the fragility of the site's woodland areas (on a multidecadal scale).

Veteran trees, and standing deadwood, are also susceptible to climatic effects (including storms and drought), and any major or sustained removal/moving of fallen deadwood from the forest floor (via management or access activities (e.g. den building)) has the potential to damage, or cause changes, to associated micro-habitats important for invertebrate and fungal species.

The areas of wood pasture on site require active management and, in the absence of grazing, newly opened glades and rides will require regular cutting to avoid scrubbing up. This includes cutting recently established open space where scrub encroachment is already apparent. Similarly, the lowland meadows on site need active management. In the absence of grazing, cuttings must be removed from meadow areas to avoid nutrient build up. Both habitats are susceptible to the effects of pollution and scrubbing up.

Several of the ponds on site are in recovery following management intervention. Ephemeral bankside habitats will change as succession occurs, and loss of existing open/bare areas will lead to the loss of invertebrate specialists associated with open habitat/exposed mineral substrates, in the absence of targeted management. Any increase in shading over time of newly “opened up” ponds will also comprise a longer-term issue for their aquatic plant and invertebrate communities. All wetland habitats on site are also particularly at risk from pollutants.

The continued presence of rare or notable plant and invertebrate species on site is dependent upon the continued availability of their specific habitats. If individual species on site occupy only a small area (e.g. species found only in ponds, relict populations of Heather, etc) then they will also be more susceptible to stochastic processes.

The breeding bird assemblage on site is has potential to be diminished by the loss of rarer species, as has happened historically with, for example, Wood Warbler, which may be on the edge of range or subject to ongoing national declines. The core assemblage of commoner species is however likely to be robust to anything but major changes in habitat quality or extent.

The reptile and amphibian species found on site will be susceptible to disturbance and potential killing or injury through specific access (e.g., dogs) or management actions. Great Crested Newts are also at risk from any activity negatively impacting their breeding ponds, or terrestrial activities which may hamper movement between ponds/metapopulations.

### 2.10.6.3. Typicalness

Odiham Common represents an impressive remnant of former common land, with the areas of woodland on site subject to recent positive management and supporting an exceptional number of Ancient Woodland indicator plant species. The presence of a saproxylic invertebrate community of County importance is also noteworthy. As such, parts of the site are typical (or even exemplary) of recovering wood pasture systems in the UK.

The areas of lowland meadow present on site are atypical in terms of their management (i.e., lack of grazing). Although areas of rank grassland are present alongside areas exhibiting a shorter, more species-rich, sward, a suite of typical grassland flora is nevertheless present.

A breeding bird assemblage typical of lowland English woodland and grassland mosaics is also present, alongside the more notable species identified in Section 1.10.6.

### 2.10.6.4. Potential for improvement/restoration

There is potential to close any gaps in Ancient Woodland/veteran tree age structure, resulting from reduced recruitment, through veteranisation of existing standards. This could potentially increase the number of features associated with veteran trees within the site, and consequently benefit associated flora and fauna. The continued haloing of secondary woodland surrounding existing veterans could also increase the biodiversity value of these features.



The ongoing management of glades and the linking of open rides across the site, should be focused upon areas supporting mature trees, which should lead to an increase in invertebrate species richness. Any fallen deadwood within these areas should be left *in situ* where possible, and the provision of boxes for cavity-nesting birds and roosting bats considered.

Shading of many of the site's woodland ponds under closed canopies has led to an impoverished invertebrate fauna within them. There is therefore scope to open up the canopy above a selection of such waterbodies and increase invertebrate species richness within them. Care should still be taken however to maintain some areas of shaded/wet woodland however to benefit associated invertebrate specialists. Rewetting of the quarry pits would also benefit wetland flora and fauna, and potentially increase breeding opportunity for the Great Crested Newt metapopulation.

Areas of rank lowland meadow on site may potentially lose important plant and invertebrate species in the absence of changes in current management practices. Currently, undesirables such as hemlock water dropwort are beginning to dominate areas of lowland meadow and have the potential to contaminate hay cuts. This is particularly apparent near roadsides and where water overflows from ditches in the meadow areas; active management of the ditches could help alleviate this issue. Early cuts and removal of material should be considered to promote removal of undesirable species before they set seed, without compromising floristic or invertebrate diversity. Grazing would be the preferred management technique to increase structural diversity and reduce the proportion of rank grassland species present. In its absence, the continued operation of hay cutting is essential. Nevertheless, traditional summer cutting is generally a suboptimal management technique for promoting invertebrate diversity in the long run, as many species will be negatively impacted by hay removal in the summer months. Therefore, areas should be left uncut each year on rotation, to create a more diverse mosaic habitat.

The reintroduction of grazing would also benefit grassland and scrub habitats within the main wayleave, as scrubbing up there has led to this particular area being considered in an unfavourable condition. Grazing would here, as in the lowland meadows, increase habitat structure and diversity, although rotational cutting would have a similar effect. The use of the latter, in the absence of grazing, would also be more beneficial to the invertebrate community than an "all in one" cut, allowing an array of microhabitats to develop.

## 2.10.7. Factors affecting the management of Ecological features

### 2.10.7.1. On site natural factors

#### **Negative trends**

Numerical trends are not generally available. It is known that a small number of breeding bird species (e.g. Wood Warbler and Nightingale) have been lost from the site subsequent to the designation of the SSSI. These losses are a symptom of larger scale reductions in their national populations and range, driven by a range of factors thought to be largely external to individual site management.

The arrival of Ash Dieback disease on site, subsequent to its arrival in the UK in 2012, has already led to declines in Ash tree health. Its presence in Ash standards on site, and the potential risk posed to site users by disease-mediated treefall as a result, will necessitate the planned and well-considered removal of infected trees from localities used for access for the foreseeable. This will be addressed through Hart DC's development of a wider tree strategy, in collaboration with partnerships at County level.

Although data is not currently available, it is also considered probable that global climate change is already negatively impacting some of the site's important ecological features. Increased drought or storm frequency, in particular, has the potential to directly impact the site's veteran trees and wetland habitats.

#### **Positive trends**

Numerical trends are again unavailable, but the most recent invertebrate survey of the site identified the presence of a small number of adventive or recently colonising UK species.

Colonisation by continental species may therefore continue to increase invertebrate species richness in the future.

### 2.10.7.2. On site human-induced factors

#### **Negative trends**

Numerical trends are not available, but there are indications that significant scrub encroachment within the main wayleave has led to a decrease in habitat and structural diversity. Changes in habitat structure, linked to an absence of grazing (or active management in its absence), has also potentially led to the loss of some rarer plant species from the site (e.g. Petty Whin).

Recent botanical surveys have also identified that the current grassland management regime is not optimum, with indications that the grasslands present are becoming rougher and more dominated by ranker species, such as False Oat-grass, with Bracken also spreading. Aftermath grazing, or a second cut (with arisings removed), may be required to mitigate the situation.

Trampling and damage to paths, with associated soil compaction, has been identified as a concern by site users, particularly in wetter areas. This is largely due to the nature of the site and ground conditions. Whilst horse riding has been identified as having a contributory impact, as a Commons site with rights to access, this factor is difficult to manage directly. Necessary access for site maintenance, including for statutory maintenance duties (e.g. for National Grid works), is a further contributing factor to route conditions. Some control is possible through appropriate communications and timings of work to be carried out, e.g. during drier ground conditions and with remedial works.

Intermittent fly-tipping has also been identified as having negative impacts upon habitats on site.

### **Positive trends**

The number of Ancient Woodland Indicator Plant Species found on site has increased from 48 in 2004 to 53 in 2017 due to improvements in forestry and coppice management. Areas of rush pasture and restored wood pasture (with scrubby components) have increased in the same period, increasing structural diversity.

Only a single notable plant species was identified on site during NVC surveys carried out in 2009, whilst 12 notable species were identified in 2017. It is not clear how directly this change is linked to changes in site management.

The creation of open areas and glades, and the reinstatement of coppicing, between 2009 and 2018 has led to a more open woodland/parkland habitat with a developed acid field-layer community and structurally complex scrub components.

Invertebrate species richness within the lowland meadows also increased within this period (from 315 species to 472 species) as a result of changes in management. A large increase was also observed in woodland areas (155 species to 597 species), although it was difficult to identify whether this was entirely due to changes in management or to greater survey effort/targeting of cryptic species.

Clearance and partial opening up of the pond in the northeast corner of the Common is likely to have improved conditions significantly for a range of aquatic and wetland invertebrates.

### **2.10.7.3. External factors**

Surface runoff from adjacent roads has the potential to pollute adjacent areas of terrestrial and aquatic habitat and/or other areas of habitat linked to the site's ditch network.

There is also potential for aerial eutrophication as a result of vehicle emissions on adjacent roads to impacts on habitats across the site (although perhaps most relevant to the areas of lowland meadow and acid grassland).

Drift of chemical pesticides and fertilisers from nearby areas of farmland and adjacent properties is considered a negligible risk. Care should however be taken to monitor on site for the presence of invasive/alien plant species potentially present in nearby gardens.

### **2.10.7.4. Opportunities**

There is the opportunity to enhance the wildlife interest at Odiham Common through:

- Ongoing veteran tree management, including the creation of future ancient trees through veteranisation and haloing of younger trees;
- Potentially expanding the area of ancient woodland under coppice management to benefit the ground flora and increase structural diversity (e.g. for breeding birds, Dormouse);
- Enhancing the deadwood resource;
- Preventing existing open areas from scrubbing up (such as the wayleave);
- Improving the diversity of the meadows through traditional meadow management include grazing or an improved cutting regime;
- Undertaking sensitive pond restoration;
- Potentially re-wetting quarry pits using the existing ditch system;
- Managing ditches where lack of management has a detrimental impact on surrounding flora

There have been previous challenges to reinstatement of grazing in the past, but there are opportunities to work with the local community, including through walks, talks, volunteer events and improved communications to seek mutually acceptable outcomes. Recent use of no-fence grazing on other Hart DC managed land is proving effective and this is a potential option that could be explored further.

Opportunities for funding through nearby development may be limited and there are no real commercial opportunities (although timber produced from Odiham Common could be used on site and on other Hart DC properties); however, a new Countryside Stewardship agreement began in 2021 and will provide funding for a variety of woodland, wood pasture, meadow and pond management.

Odiham Common is found within a landscape of isolated patches of semi-natural habitat. Opportunities should be sought to connect Odiham to nearby sites – there may be potential through the Landscape Recovery agri-environment scheme.

## 3. Site assessment, and objectives

### 3.1.1. Assessment and analysis

#### *Strengths:*

**Biodiversity** – semi natural ancient woodland, wood pasture, semi-natural broad-leaved woodland, semi-natural grassland, lowland meadows and ponds are all of great importance for biodiversity, with veteran trees in particular providing unique habitats for rare and specialised species, particularly lichens, fungi and invertebrates associated with wood decay..

**Carbon** - native broadleaved woodlands are reliable carbon sinks that continue to take up carbon over centuries with benefits for biodiversity and other ecosystem services<sup>4</sup>. Although sequestration rates decline over time, old woodlands are substantial and important carbon stores, with carbon both in above ground biomass, below ground biomass, dead wood, litter and within the soil. Wood pasture can play a greater role than closed canopy ancient semi-natural woodland by increasing carbon sequestration through allowing natural regeneration – trees growing in an open location with more access to light can grow faster compared to those in a closed canopy woodland. Large old trees in particular, store a large amount of carbon for the long-term. Undisturbed wood pasture soils may also be a valuable carbon store. Semi-natural grasslands are also important, storing carbon in the undisturbed soil, and store and sequester more carbon than modern agricultural landscapes.

**Climate** - lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wood pasture both have a lower climate change sensitivity than some other lowland woodland types e.g. Beech woodland, wet woodland<sup>5</sup>.

**Health and well-being** – low-key access contributes to the health and wellbeing of the local community.

#### *Weaknesses:*

<sup>4</sup> R Gregg, J. L. Elias, I Alonso, I.E. Crosher and P Muto and M.D. Morecroft (2021) Carbon storage and sequestration by habitat: a review of the evidence (second edition) Natural England Research Report NERR094. Natural England, York.

<sup>5</sup> Climate Change Adaptation Manual NE751 - <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5679197848862720>

**The historic cessation of traditional management** - resulting in the loss of open spaces around veteran trees (although this is being addressed), scrub encroachment (e.g. under the wayleave) and the gradual deterioration of the meadows.

**Fragmentation** – major roads including the M3, A287, B3016, Bagwell Lane and Potbridge Road create barriers to wildlife and are likely to be impacting on the conservation interest of the site. In addition, smaller, isolated land parcels are more challenging to manage.

**Ride condition** - the naturally wet nature of the site means that ride conditions can deteriorate during the winter, potentially leading to a conflict of interest between different user groups and ride-widening as people seek to avoid churned up areas.

**Infrastructure** - Lack of car parking restricts events, including volunteer work parties. Water retention in winter months restricts access for some site users during this time, although this is largely due to the nature of this type of site and introducing properly surfaced paths across the site will likely have a negative impact on the site's significant wildlife value.

#### *Opportunities:*

**Habitat management** – ongoing reinstatement of management as wood pasture, with the potential for grazing in the longer term; potential to restore ponds across the site – in addition to biodiversity benefits (e.g. for Great Crested Newt), ponds, if well managed, could be carbon sinks (however, ponds prone to drying out can switch from carbon sinks to carbon sources)

**Engagement** - there is opportunity for wider engagement with the local community e.g. through liaison with Parish Councils and low-key on-site and off-site events such as guided walks, talks and volunteer work parties plus the use of social media platforms would help facilitate joint understanding about the value and management needs of the site. Three schools in Odiham are within walking distance of the Common - opportunities for real-world learning within Odiham Common would both enrich the educational experience of the students and enhance local community understanding about the site, where schools are open to engagement.

**Agri-environment support** – landscape scale agri-environment schemes could in the future facilitate more joined up management with adjacent and nearby semi-natural habitats, including commons and woodland.

#### *Threats:*

**Climate change** – an increase in drought conditions is likely to impact sensitive trees on clay soils, conversely, an increase in water-logging may constrain root growth and results in more wind-blow (as will an increased frequency of storms), with the potential loss of veteran trees.

**Biodiversity** - apparent loss (as with other lowland woodlands) of characteristic species (e.g. Nightingale and Wood Warbler).

**Lack of grazing** – grazing is the optimal management for woodpasture and grasslands. Cutting is a partial substitute for grazing, but the current cutting regime is resulting in the slow deterioration of the meadow flora, invertebrate fauna and increased scrub encroachment in the wayleave.

**Engagement** - lack of meaningful engagement with the local community could result in the lack of dialogue about stakeholders' values and aspirations for the site and jeopardise future management. To ensure clear continued communications, future engagement will be carried out as set out in Section 2.9 People.

**Drainage** - Inappropriate drainage could contribute to the release of carbon through oxidation.

**Ash Dieback disease** – loss of Ash through Ash Dieback *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* and related tree safety issues (Ash is not an abundant species but is present in Potbridge East and West, the South East Woods and the Southern Pastures East and West, and Ash Dieback is already present in the Southern Pastures).

**Housing within Neighbourhood Plan** - an increase in housing within the neighbourhood that is not within easy walking distance of Odiham Common could lead to issues surrounding over-use of laybys for parking (e.g. anti-social parking, damage to vegetation).

### 3.1.2. Environmental Relationships and Implications for Management

Odiham Common supports a mosaic of wood pasture (much invaded by secondary woodland), closed canopy woodland, coppice, open rides and meadow.

Managed wood pasture is dynamic, slowly changing over long-time spans as individual new trees become established in the protection of scrub and the oldest trees gradually decay. Shaped by centuries of grazing, the open-grown trees characteristic of wood pasture require light and space for their unique assemblages of invertebrates and lower plants flourish, and gradually decline if enclosed by cohorts of new young trees. Management is therefore required, particularly in the absence of grazing and on small sites, such as Odiham, where there is little space for dynamic change. It is particularly important for veteran trees where these have been adversely impacted by the growth of secondary woodland

Managed in rotation, coppice provides diversity in the structure of the woodland, creating niches for birds such as warblers and allowing light to reach the ground flora. Without rotational cutting, coppice becomes overgrown and the structural diversity of the woodland is lost and species-richness diminished.

Meadow (grassland that was created and maintained by a combination of grazing and summer haymaking) is by its very nature, a transitional stage in the process of succession. To prevent it from being colonised by scrub and later woodland, management is again required.

Another key feature of the site is its hydrology – the underlying soils mean that it is naturally wet, with a number of ponds and historic drainage ditches. A balance is needed between ensuring paths are usable and that the water levels in ponds are maintained and retaining the overall wet character of the site.



### 3.1.3. Visitor and site usage and Implications for Management

Visitors to site mainly comprise of local people - the site is not promoted for recreational use and parking is very limited. The site is greatly valued by the local community. Those who participated in the 2009 consultation on the management of the site emphasised the need to maintain the Common's tranquil and wild nature for the benefit of the local neighbourhood.

The views of the local community need to be taken into account, e.g., through the relevant Parish Councils, with regard to the ongoing management required to safeguard the interest features of the SSSI and the cultural history of the site.

### 3.1.4. Management Rationale

Odiham Common preserves examples of habitats that are rare or scarce within lowland Britain. These habitats are all semi-natural, a result of the interaction between humans and their environment over many centuries. Ongoing management of some form is therefore needed to ensure that the plant and animal communities that are rare or no longer commonplace and are dependent on these habitats can be maintained and where possible enhanced and so that the site can act as a reservoir and refuge from which species can spread to the wider countryside.

To target management most effectively to the benefit of the widest variety of species a management plan is an essential tool. Few nature reserves are large enough for the natural processes of succession, death, decay and regeneration to provide sustainable diversity. To maintain this unique mosaic of differing habitats, carefully planned, monitored and reviewed management is essential.

## 3.2 Management Objectives

Hart DC sets biodiversity objectives and targets to deliver our policy commitments. Objectives and targets are:

- a. based on the significant species and habitats as determined by the assessment of significance;
- b. based on biodiversity policy commitments;
- c. reviewed periodically and revised as appropriate, and
- d. documented.

In order to enhance and maintain the features of Odiham Common, 10 main objectives have been identified:

1. To maintain and enhance biodiversity of ancient woodland, wood pasture, meadow, ponds and ditches and safeguard all rare and notable species according to the objectives in the Forestry Commission-approved Woodland Management Plan: [link to online document to follow](#)
  - Manage veteran trees, identify and manage future veteran trees in accordance with the Odiham Common 'Arboricultural Veteran Management Report' (SMW Consultancy Ltd, August 2021) Consultancy.



- Bring existing coppice coupes into a 12-14 year rotation to create structural diversity and prioritise fruiting.
  - Sustain a balance of native woodland species whilst enhancing structural diversity.
  - Address ash dieback
  - Create and maintain deadwood habitat in line with UKFS guidelines<sup>6</sup> to sustain significant saproxylic and saprophytic diversity and provide a medium term carbon sink.
  - Encourage owners of nearby woodlands and land with ancient and veteran trees to manage positively for deadwood.
  - Maintain open space in wood pasture through mowing and scrub/bracken control, allowing the recruitment of open crown trees and shrub species in sunny positions within short and taller grassland
  - Maintain the diversity and extent of glades, rides and the acid grassland under the wayleave through cut and collect, scrub removal and some thinning
  - Maintain and increase diversity in the Southern Pastures grasslands through hay making, cut and collect. Maintain extent through scrub control
  - Restore and manage existing ponds
2. Improve aquatic habitat connectivity and improve path condition through undertaking a feasibility study for recreating ponds that have dried out by using existing draining ditches; implement findings as appropriate.
  3. Continue to explore viable options for the reintroduction of grazing in the future to sustain the rare and threatened habitat of ancient wood pasture (there are no immediate plants to reintroduce this historic practice, however, it is a valued and well-documented sustainable management technique).
  4. Monitor and control non-native invasive plant species.
  5. Maintain the accessibility of the site through the ongoing provision of a network of adequately waymarked, naturally-surfaced paths and encouraging use of open access to disperse visitor across the site and retain the tranquil, wild-feeling nature of the site. Maintain drains as required (see also Objective 2).
  6. Increase efforts to engage with stakeholders, including those from other sectors, and involve local people in caring for the Common to encourage understanding and enjoyment of the site and its wider value.
  7. Promote health and wellbeing, without compromising the nature conservation interests of the site.
  8. Obtain quantitative data on trends for key biodiversity features to assess and inform management activities.
  9. Manage the site in line with Hart DC's sustainability goals, maintaining carbon and water storage on site.
  10. Meet all legal and other obligations.

### 3.2.1. Targets and Performance Indicators

#### *Objective 1: Maintain and enhance biodiversity*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/6947/FCPG020.pdf>

Target 1.1 – condition of 66 veteran trees improved with reduced danger of crown collapse, all over-shaded trees released and secondary growth interfering with branches removed by end of 10-year plan period (see veteran tree plan for detail).

**BPI: No. of veteran trees appropriately managed that are stable with no threat of preventable collapse healthy epicormic growth on the main stem**

Target 1.2 – 79 potential future veteran trees identified and managed to enhance veteran features through halo release, formative pruning and pollarding carried out as required over 10-year plan period.

**BPI: No. of future veterans that have received surgery and are alive with healthy epicormic growth on the main stem.**

Target 1.3 – 10 existing coppice coupes brought into 12-14 year rotation within 10 year plan period (see coppice plan for detail)

**BPI: No. of coupes coppiced within plan period and showing healthy regeneration**

Target 1.4 – woodland structure improved through 10-30% thinning at locations specified in Woodland Management Plan (WMP) and reduction of Holly to 33% (see WMP) within the 10 year plan period

**BPI: % thinning and Holly cover in specified locations within plan period**

Target 1.5 – all fallen and standing deadwood retained in situ, aiming for 20 m<sup>3</sup>/ha (unless there are over-riding H&S considerations<sup>7</sup> or ProW are blocked).

**BPI: Cubic metres of fallen and standing deadwood retained.**

Target 1.6 Rapid Deadwood Assessment<sup>8</sup> undertaken and deadwood plan created and implemented by 2023

**KPI: Plan created and implementation started within specified timeframe**

<sup>7</sup> See National Tree Safety Group document 'Common Sense risk management of trees: Landowner Summary'.

<sup>8</sup> <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/InPractice56jun2007.pdf>

Target 1.7– Maintain existing open space within wood pasture through cutting and scrub control so that by year 10 there is:

- 5-20% cover of open grown shrubs;
- A sward of patches of taller and shorter vegetation over at least 70%;
- Clear evidence of planned wood pasture succession with trees species including oak present at irregular spacings and varying densities, with an overall canopy of 5-20%, representing a range of ages classes and allow open growth grown trees to develop (ongoing scrub work across the site will be planned/reviewed annually, depending vegetation growth/regeneration).

**BPI: % cover of open grown shrubs, sward of taller/shorter vegetation and canopy age classes with plan period**

Target 1.8 – Glades created within woodland to allow 30-35% ground cover of transitional scrub and natural regeneration within 10 year plan period.

**BPI: % ground cover of transitional scrub and natural regeneration within plan period**

Target 1.9 – a structurally varied herb layer maintained with Desirable/important/characteristic species for lowland wet acid grassland, wet grassland and heathland present (Ling, Cross-leaved Heath, Lesser Spearwort, Heath Wood Rush, Tormentil at least occasional/locally frequent) and 40% flowering during May to July. Scrub controlled in woodland glades through annual mowing according to WMP

**BPI: % cover of bare ground**

**BPI: Frequency of desirable/important/characteristic species and % flowering during specified time period**

Target 1.10: Birch and Bramble scrub under wayleave controlled by pulling, cutting and treating so that by year 3, scrub cover is no more than 5-10% and bare ground provided through scrub removal is 2-10%.

**BPI – % cover of scrub and bare ground by year 3**

Target 1.11: Bracken stands managed rotationally each year by cutting/bruising/spraying to reduce cover of bracken to less than 10% by year 10

**BPI: % cover of bracken by year 10**

Target 1.12 - 4 main rides maintained through annual mowing and where necessary thinning, according to WMP

**KPI: No. of main rides cut annually**

Target 1.13 –. Ash dieback regularly monitored and works prioritised following monitoring and recommendations, in accordance with Odiham's current Ash Dieback Plan until holistic approach to managing ash dieback across Hart sites has been formalised and agreed.

**KPI: Removal of grade 3-4 ash trees near boundaries/footpaths**

Target 1.14 Grassland diversity improved and maintained (in accordance with Countryside Stewardship agreement) through haymaking over 0.98ha + 3.30 ha of Southern pastures so that from year 1 at least 2 moderate value indicator species and from year 2 at least 2 high value indicator species are present; wildflower cover is 10-50% with 40% flowering during May-Jul; and bare ground cover is 1-5% in small patches

**BPI: No. of moderate and high value indicator species present in southern pastures from year 1 and year 2 respectively**

**BPI: % cover of wildflower and % flowering in specific time period**

**BPI: % cover of bare ground in small patches**

**BPI: Diversity of plant species compared with 2017 NVC baseline in 2027**

**BPI: Continued presence of Forester moth**

Target 1.15 – scrub controlled with Southern Pastures so that cover is no more than 2% in management parcels by year 10

**BPI: % scrub cover in management parcels by end of plan period**

*Objective 2: Pond and ditch restoration and creation*

Target 2.1 – ditches maintained, ensuring that adjacent ditches are not cleared within 2-5 years of one another

Target 2.2 – restore 2 key ditches plus additional ditches as required on rotation so that drainage flows freely by throughout 10-year plan period.

**KPI: No. of ditches restored within plan period**

Target 2.3 – Restore 1 existing pond every 5 years according to CS agreement so that 75% of southern margins are unshaded; cover of submerged and floating aquatic plants is at least 25% and marginal and emergent vegetation cover is 25-100%. One pond dredged as necessary every 5 years

**KPI: No. of ponds restored every 5 years**

**BPI: % of southern margins unshaded and % cover of submerged and floating aquatic plants and marginal and emergent vegetation**

**BPI: Presence of typical desirable species.**

Target 2.4 –pond re-creation feasibility study undertaken by 2027 and implement as appropriate (any drain modification to be agreed with Natural England)

**KPI: Completion of study and implementation within specified time period**

### *Objective 3: Grazing viability*

Target 3.1 –grazing viability assessment produced by 2030

**KPI: Grazing viability assessment completed by specified date**

Target 3.2 –stakeholder visit(s) to a site with No Fence virtual fencing operations (e.g. Hazeley Heath) organised by 2030

**KPI: No. of visits organised within specified period**

### *Objective 4: Non-native invasive species*

Target 4.1 – non-native invasive species survey carried out annually (to include waterbodies) and actions identified and implemented as necessary

**KPI Surveys completed annually and any actions implemented**

### *Objective 5: Access*

Target 5.1 – path survey undertaken annually to ensure all paths are mapped and described according to a simple categorisation including size/use and condition (e.g. RAG). Use to inform drain management in combination with path maintenance

**KPI Updated path map by specified date, surveys completed annually and any actions implemented**

Target 5.2 – low key consultation carried out with local horse riders to look for common ground and identify potential preferred horse-routes by 2025

**KPI: Preferred horse route identified by specified date**

Target 5.3 - interpretation panels at key site entrance points updated with preferred horse routes to inform both riders and pedestrian Include smaller paths to help distribute access across the site.

**KPI: No. of panels updated by specified date**

Target 5.4 - Low key, unobtrusive waymarkers installed as required to help distribute access across site by 2025

**KPI: Waymarkers installed by specified date**

### *Objective 6: Engagement*

Target 6.1 – 4 onsite and 2 off-site events held per year covering a diverse range of topics (e.g. traditional guided walks with the ranger, fungal forays, foraging/herb walks, volunteer work parties etc.) and hold events with other stakeholders e.g. Odiham Society, other local history societies etc.)

**KPI: No. of on-site and off-site events held annually**

Target 6.2 – at least annual liaison with relevant parish councils and statutory stakeholders including Natural England

**KPI: Annual liaison achieved**

### *Objective 7: Health and wellbeing*

See targets under 5 and 6

### *Objective 8: Monitoring*

Target 8.1 – quantitative data obtained on trends for key biodiversity features as set out in Target Features monitoring table below, commissioning surveys as required.

Target 8.2 – monitoring and surveys continued for lepidoptera, reptiles, amphibians, bats, dormice, birds etc. by local groups

Target 8.3 – deer impact monitoring carried out annually within coppice coupes

### *Objective 9: Sustainability goals*

Target 9.1 - manage the site in line with HDC's sustainability goals, maintaining carbon and water storage on site (see previous targets). Establish baseline for habitat carbon sequestration and consider options to increase sequestration by site management where this does not contradict other site objectives.

### *Objective 10: Obligations*

Target 10.1 - all requirements for statutory consents and approvals for work on the common met

Target 10.2 - regular H&S checks on the features of the common carried out

Target 10.3 - tree safety survey carried out annually and safety works undertaken as required

Target 10.4 - Follow H&S guidelines for warning the public during management activities on the site and ensure that contractors or others working on the Common follow the same procedures

## 4. Management Plan delivery

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## 4.1 Management Infrastructure and Resourcing

### 4.1.1. Staffing and Management Structure

Odiham Common is managed as a SSSI by Hart DC Countryside Services, as the owners of the land with overriding responsibility for the site. Ultimately, any management decisions over the land will be made by Hart DC as the legal owners of the land, however we try to accommodate the views and opinions of our various stakeholders where possible or appropriate.

At present, the Countryside Service sits within Environment and Technical Services. Environment and Technical Services is responsible for delivery of the following services:

- Delivery of Harts climate change action plan.
- Management of Harts countryside sites.
- Management of Harts trees and implementation and enforcement of tree preservation orders.
- Management and enforcement of Harts car parks.
- Implementation, management and enforcement of parking restrictions on the public highway on behalf of Hampshire County Council.
- Maintenance of Harts drainage assets and delivery of Environment Agency funded flood alleviation schemes.

The following services which are reported through Environment and Technical Services are delivered as part of a shared service by a neighbouring authority:

- CCTV – Delivered by Rushmoor (due to transfer to Runnymede BC by August 2022)

- Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance – Delivered by Basingstoke and Deane
- Litter and Dog Fouling Enforcement – Delivered by East Hampshire

The Countryside department is responsible for operating and co-ordinating the implementation of the Management Plan for the site.

### 4.1.2. Community Involvement

#### 4.1.2.1. Volunteers

Hart DC Countryside team run regular volunteer activities across the district and offer a variety of different volunteering roles to suit different interests and abilities. There are currently no volunteers specific to Odiham Common, but the Countryside team may hold work parties at the site.

## 4.2 Budget planning

At present, funding has been secured from the Rural Payments Agency to fund a Countryside Stewardship programme of works on the Commons over the next ten year period. Funded works consist of: -

- Capital items to the value of £6,384 to be delivered between Jan 2022 and Dec 2023. Works to include specific scrub works identified in Central Woods

- Annual payments with an average income of approximately £5,800. This figure will vary and is dependent on the amount of works undertaken each year, particularly in relation to associated veteran tree works. Works funded include aspects of meadow, specifically identified glade, pond and veteran tree management

Other habitat works that would benefit management of the site are identified in Appendix 3, but do not currently receive specific funding. Future funding will be sought where possible for relevant activities and projects that have been identified through this management plan and will be prioritised accordingly. This may include exploration of a Great Crested Newt Recovery Programme.

## 4.3 Marketing

Marketing of our countryside sites is important to ensure we are engaging with our site users encouraging responsible use of our sites and facilitating recreational activities. Marketing and publicity for Odiham Commons and any associated activities will be carried out in accordance with Hart's emerging Engagement Plan.



## 4.4 Action plan and timetable

The Action Plan sets out management tasks by feature and divides the work up into 10 years. The total amount of work needed may not be finished in this timeframe, but at the end of this time a review of the work should be completed, and the Management Plan updated. The Action Plan acts as a guide for management tasks and should be flexible if necessary.

‘Y’ indicate when the tasks should be carried out; ‘N’ indicates that the work should absolutely not be carried out during these months e.g. due to the bird breeding season or to protect other wildlife. a/w – As and when necessary or when time and resources allow.

SITE NAME: Odiham Common					Timings											
Objective	Prescription	Location	Additional target details	Target years	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.1	Manage veterans and future veterans	Potbridge West (a), Potbridge East (b), Central Woods (c), South East Woods (e), Southern Pastures East (f), Southern Pastures West (g)	Halo release and formative pruning, maintain existing halos – follow Veteran tree plan	a,b: 6-10 c: 1, 3, 5, 6-10 e: All f: 2, 6-10 g: 6-10						Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.2	Create future veterans	Potbridge West (a), Potbridge East (b), Central Woods (c), South East Woods (e), Southern Pastures East (f)	Halo release, formative pruning, including creating new pollards	a,b: 6-10 c: 1, 3, 5, 6-10 e: All f: 2, 6-10						Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.3	Coppice	Central Woods (c), South East Woods (e)	Cut coupes in rotation and protect new growth from deer, remove protection after 2 years.	c:All e: 2, 4, 6-10											
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.4	Improve structural diversity within woodland	Potbridge West (a), Potbridge East (b), Central Woods (c), Southern Pastures East (f)	a: 10% thinning, holly removal b, c: 30% thinning, holly removal. f: 10% thinning to create small glades	a, b: 6-10 c: 4, 6-10 f: 1, 2, 6-10	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.5	Create Deadwood	Potbridge West (a), Potbridge East (b), Central Woods (c), North Eastern Woods (d), Southern Pastures East (f), Southern Pastures West (g)	Retain standing and fallen dead wood in line with UKFS guidelines and deadwood plan (1.6). Large diameter and length cut deadwood	a, b, d, e, g: All c: 1, 3, 5, 6-10 f: 6-10						Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	



Site Name:	Odiham Common					Timings											
Objective	Prescription		Location	Additional target details	Target years	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
				stacked in shaded, undisturbed location near (not against) the tree from which is came.													
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.6	Deadwood plan	Potbridge West (a), Potbridge East (b), Central Woods (c), North Eastern Woods (d), Southern Pastures East (f), Southern Pastures West (g)	Undertaken rapid deadwood assessment and create plan	1	Y	Y										
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.7	Open areas within wood pasture and meadows	Central Woods (c) Wayleave, Southern Pastures	Scrub control through pulling, cutting, treating, remove cut material so that cover of scrub is no more than 5-20% in wood pasture								Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.8	Open areas within woodland	Potbridge West & East, Central Woods, North Eastern Woods, South East Woods, Southern Pastures East, Southern Pastures West.	Intermittently clear routes into and around compartments, maintaining transitional scrub/natural regeneration	All	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.9	Open areas within woodland	Potbridge East (b), Central Woods (c), North Eastern Woods (d), South East Woods (e) Southern Pastures East (f)	Mow glades (cut and collect where possible) (no more than 30% of wayleave in c in one year).	c:All b,d, e, f: 1, 3, 5, 6-10						Y	Y					
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.10	Scrub control	Wayleave	Birch and Bramble scrub controlled by pulling, cutting and treating	1-2, 6-7	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.11	Bracken control	Central Woods (c) Wayleave, Southern Pastures	Bracken control through cutting/bruising/spraying	All (or as necessary)		Y	Y	Y	Y							
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.12	Ride management in	Potbridge East (a), Central Woods (c), South East Woods (e),	Zone 2 Ride management by mowing (cut and collect where possible)	a, b, c, e: 1, 3, 5, 6-10 f: 1, 3, 6-10							Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

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Site Name:	Odiham Common					Timings											
Objective	Prescription		Location	Additional target details	Target years	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
		woodland and wood pasture	Southern Pastures East (f), Southern Pastures (g)		g: 2, 4, 6-10												
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.12	Ride management in woodland and wood pasture	Central Woods, Southern Pastures East, Southern Pastures West	Zone 3 Ride management by tree thinning and mowing , maintaining pinch points where branches meet	5							Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.13	Ash dieback	Potbridge West (a), Potbridge East (b), South East Woods (e), Southern Pastures East (f), Southern Pastures West	Remove grade 3 & 4 affected Ash trees near boundaries/ footpaths	a: 1-3 b: 6-10 e: 2, 3, 4 f: 1, 2, 6-10 g: 1-4, 6-10							Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.14	Haymaking	Southern Pastures East and West	Make field dried hay over 4.3 ha annually according to CS agreement. Leave 10-20% of any parcel uncut each year. Remove hay.	All				Y	Y							
1 – Maintain and enhance biodiversity	1.15	Maintain extent of meadows	Southern Pastures East and West	Cut and remove scrub, leaving up to 2% in each management parcel													
2 – Pond and ditch restoration and creation	2.1	Drainage	Central Woods, Southern Pastures East	Ensure drainage flows freely, clearing adjacent ditches 2-5 years apart, every 5 years	All, as needed						Y	Y	Y				
2 – Pond and ditch restoration and creation	2.2	Pond management	Central Woods, South East Woods	Restore one pond every 5 years through dredging, retain overhanging trees, bushes and any submerged deadwood, manage margins by cutting to control scrub, ensure no more than 25% of southern side of pond is shaded	2, 6												
2 – Pond and ditch	2.3	Pond creation	Central Woods, Southern Pastures East	Undertake feasibility study into rewetting clay pits via	5												

Site Name:	Odiham Common										Timings											
Objective	Prescription		Location	Additional target details	Target years	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M					
restoration and creation				existing drainage ditch network Explore possibility of a new pond to help with drainage issues																		
3 – Grazing viability	3.1	Grazing – viability assessment		Undertaken viability assessment by 2030	By 10																	
3 – Grazing viability	3.2	Grazing – stakeholder visits		Organise 2 stakeholder visits to sites using innovative grazing solutions	By 10																	
Objective 4: Non-native invasive species	4.1	Non-native invasives	All	Regular surveys for non-native species (including aquatic; implementation of any control measures required	All		Y	Y	Y													
Objective 5 - access	5.1	Path survey	All	Ensure all paths are mapped and described according to a simple categorisation including size/use and condition (e.g. RAG). Use to inform drain management in combination with path maintenance, waymarking and possible identification of horse route.	1																	
Objective 5 - access	5.2	Riding route	All	Undertake low key consultation with local horse riders to look for common ground and identify potential preferred horse-routes	2-3																	
Objective 5 - access	5.3	Info panels	All	Update panels at key site entrance points to reflect new horse route, if identified	3																	

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Site Name:	Odiham Common					Timings											
Objective	Prescription		Location	Additional target details	Target years	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Objective 5 - access	5.4	Waymarking	All	Install low key, unobtrusive waymarkers to help distribute access across	1-2												
Objective 6 - engagement	6.1	Events	Any	Hold on-site and off-site events and use social media platforms build relationship with site users and other stakeholders	All												
Objective 6 - engagement	6.2	Liaison		At least annual liaison with relevant parish councils and statutory stakeholders including Natural England	All												
8 - Monitoring	8.1	Tree safety	All areas	Conduct tree safety survey, carry out required safety works	All							Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Monitoring	8.2	Biodiversity trends	All areas	Undertaken monitoring as set out in Target Feature Monitoring Plan below	Various												
8 - Monitoring	8.3	Survey groups		Facilitate surveys with local groups as appropriate	Various												
8 - Monitoring	8.4	Non-native invasives	All	Survey for and monitor changes in abundance and distribution of non-native invasive species	All		Y	Y	Y								
8 - Monitoring	8.5	Annual deer impact survey	Coppice coupes	Annual deer impact survey	All	Y	Y										
10 - Obligations	10.1	Statutory consents		Meet all requirements for statutory consents and approvals for work on the common													

SITE NAME:		Odiham Common				Timings											
Objective	Prescription		Location	Additional target details	Target years	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
10 - Obligations	10.2	H&S checks	All	Carry out regular H&S checks on the features of the Common	All												
10 - Obligations	10.3	Tree safety	All	Carry out tree safety monitoring, undertake safety works as required	All												
10 - Obligations	10.4	H&S procedures	All	Follow H&S guidelines for warning the public during management activities on the site and ensure that contractors or others working on the Common follow the same procedures	All												

## 5. Monitoring

### 5.1 Operational activity summary

Example of record keeping for operational activities for Potbridge East (PE), Potbridge West (PW) Central Woods (CW), Northeast Woods (NeW), South Pastures East (SPE), South Pastures West (SPW) and Southeast Woods (SeW)

Action	Activity	Additional operational details	Target years	Location (compartment, specific area)	2022 Planned	Completed	Details (e.g. area completed, percentage cut)	2023-2031 etc.
Page 98	1.1	Manage Wayleave	Cut and remove arisings	All	Central Woods	X		
	1.2	Manage Wayleave	Scrub control	All	Central Woods	X		
	1.3	Manage Wayleave	Top wayleave between Aug and Oct (no more than 30% annually)	All	Central Woods	X		
				CW, NeW, SeW	X			
				CW, NeW, SeW	X			
				TBC	TBC			
				TBC	TBC			
				All				

Action	Activity	Additional operational details	Target years	Location (compartment, specific area)	2022 Planned	Completed	Details (e.g. area completed, percentage cut)	2023-2031 etc.
4.1	General woodland management	Tree thinning	All	All	X			
4.2	General woodland management	Scrub management	All	All	X			
4.3	General woodland management	Invasive species	All	TBC	X			
4.4	General woodland management	Ash dieback monitoring	All	All	X			
4.5	General woodland management	Tree operations to target ash dieback	All	All	X			
4.6	General woodland management	Zone 2 ride cuts, scallop alternative areas on 2-3 year rotation	All	PE, CW, SeW	X			
4.7	General woodland management	Zone 3 ride cuts, manage scrub on 8-20 year rotation	Year 5	CW				
4.8	<i>General woodland management</i>	<i>Manage veteran trees as per veteran tree management plan</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>X</i>			
4.9	General woodland management	Coppice and fence hazel as per rotational coppice plan and FC requirements	All	PW, CW, SeW	X			
4.10	General woodland management	Deer Monitoring survey as per FC guidance	All	PW, CW, SeW	X			
4.11	General woodland management	Tree safety inspections	All	All	X			

Action	Activity	Additional operational details	Target years	Location (compartment, specific area)	2022 Planned	Completed	Details (e.g. area completed, percentage cut)	2023-2031 etc.
5.1	Access management	Mow main paths	All	PE, CW, SeW, SPE, SPW	X			
5.2	Access management	Mark PRoW route	2022	All	X			
5.3	Access management	Manage drainage on footpaths where appropriate	TBC	TBC				
6.1	Structures	Update notice board	All	CW	X			
6.2	Structures	Survey safety inspections	All	All	X			
6.3	Structures	Upkeep of furniture	2022, 2025, 2027	NeW	X			



## 5.2 Target Feature Monitoring

### Target Feature Monitoring:

Feature	Target	Location (compartment, specific area)	Target year	Target reached?	Year achieved
Lowland wet acid grassland, wet grassland and heathland	Ling, Cross-leaved Heath, Lesser Spearwort, Heath Wood Rush, and Tormentil all at least occasional/locally frequent (10-50% cover) and 40% flowering during May to July	Central woods, Wayleave	2026		
Lowland meadows	At least 2 moderate value indicator species; from year 2 at least 2 high value indicator species; 10-50% cover of wildlife flowers, 40% flowering during May-July; 1-5% bare ground in small patches Improved diversity of plant species (2017 NVC baseline)	Southern Pastures	2023, 2024 – 2032  NVC 2027		
Invertebrates - wetlands	Maintain or increase species richness, including specialists associated with newly created early successional marginal habitats	Ponds	2023		
Invertebrates - woodland	Maintain or increase species richness	Woodland	2023		
Invertebrates – lowland meadows	Maintain or increase species richness and ensure continued viability of Forester Moth population.	Lowland meadows	2023		
Breeding birds	Carry out update of 2010 survey and identify species gains/losses. Aim to maintain presence of remaining rarer species (including Lesser Spotted Woodpecker).	Entire site	2024		

Reptile species	Continue monitoring of reptile species and produce population estimates/identify key localities. Targeted surveys to confirm Adder presence.	Wayleaves, lowland meadows, wetlands, and woodland edge	2024		
Great Crested Newt	Monitor presence in Whitehall Pond via surveys and/or e-DNA assessment.	Whitehall Pond	2024		
Dormouse	Continue presence/absence surveys within site, including nest boxes and nut searches	Areas of woodland and scrub	2023		
Bats	Establish monitoring programme with local bat group	Entire site/bat boxes where relevant	2023		
Veteran trees	Veteran tree health check	All veteran trees	Rolling programme		

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1 Appendix 1: Odiham Common timeline

**1978:** Land provided as exchange land was conveyed to Hart District Council by Hampshire County Council.

**1980:** Land from the Common taken to construct the A287 bypass was conveyed to Hampshire County Council by Hart District Council.

**1992:** Designation by English Nature (now Natural England) as an SSSI. A short draft management plan developed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust.

**1993/4:** Last known grazing by commoners.

**1994/5:** Hart District Council commissioned consultants to prepare a detailed management plan for the site.

**1997:** Application to PINs (under Section 194 of the Law and Property Act, 1925) for Secretary of State consent for perimeter fencing around the north-east compartment of Odiham Common for a temporary 5-year period on an experimental basis (to facilitate grazing management of the Common).

**1998:** Consent given for temporary fencing following a Public Inquiry associated with the above application resulting in consent being given.

Ten year agreement between Hart District Council and Rural Development Service (latterly Natural England) under Countryside Stewardship Scheme commenced.

**1999:** Felling and removal of timber from around 10ha in NE Compartment started. Some grazing took place (mainly cattle).

**2002:** Application made to PINS (under Section 194 of the Law and Property Act, 1925) for Secretary of State consent for permanent fencing on the Common to facilitate grazing.

**2002:** 'An assessment of Odiham Common Management Plan and progress so far' was prepared by Richard Burden for Odiham Parish Council.

**2002:** 'Public and Parish Council consultation on the Odiham Common Management Plan and its implementation so far' was prepared by Richard Burden for Odiham Parish Council.

**2003:** 'A Community Management Plan for Odiham Common' was prepared by Richard Burden for Odiham Parish Council.

Public inquiry associated with application for permanent fencing. The Inspector recommended that the application for consent for the erection of 4,795m of permanent fencing with foot/horse/field gates be refused.

**2003:** Temporary consent for fencing expired and grazing ceased on the Common.

**2004:** Taskforce established by Hart District Council to agree future management needs.

**2005:** Interim Management Dossier for Odiham Common SSSI 2005-2010 prepared to guide future management.

**1992 - to date:** Various research, survey, monitoring work and associated reporting prepared looking particularly at the ecology but also history and land management of the Common.

**2008:** Hart District Council Members' proposal to put the development of a new management plan on hold and follow the

procedure outlined in 'A Common Purpose: A guide agreeing management on Common Land' (University of Gloucester 2005) was supported by the Parish.

## 6.2 Appendix 2: Further details of ecological surveys identified in the Management Plan

### *Odiham Common/Wood SSSI – Phase II survey (2018)*

This report, carried out by Joel Miller of HBiC in June 2017, comprises an updated National Vegetation Classification (NVC)/botanical survey of the entire Odiham Common and Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI (similar to that carried out in 2009 – see below). It describes the habitats present on site, the specific NVC floral communities, and plant species lists (including notable species). The survey recorded an exceptional total of 53 ancient woodland indicator species, and an impressive number of 10 grassland indicator species, alongside 11 species Near Threatened in England. It also identifies the positive impact of conservation management being carried out on site.

### *A survey of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates of Odiham Common, Hampshire (2018)*

The report details the results of monthly invertebrate surveys carried out across Odiham Common between April and October 2018, by Scotty Dodd and Dr Jonty Denton. 1,097 species were identified, including 57 with nationally recognized conservation designations and a further 205 with a nationally Local distribution. All of the sampled terrestrial assemblages were found to be in a favourable condition, using the Natural England Pantheon/ISIS programme for

**2009:** Management Plan for Odiham Common 2009-2019 developed in line with 'A Common Purpose' guidance.

**2021:** Countryside Stewardship agreement and Woodland Management Plan agreed.

SSSI assessment, whilst none of the sampled wetland assemblages were.

### *Odiham Common fungi survey (2011)*

A fungal survey of the broad-leaved woodland areas of Odiham Common was carried out between February and November 2011, recording 416 species in total, with 31 of the species new for the Vice County of North Hampshire.

### *Odiham Common SSSI Bird Survey (2010)*

This report provides the results of a breeding bird survey carried out on Odiham Common between March and July 2010, by John Eyre and John Collman. 45 species were identified across the site, with 34 confirmed as breeding within the site boundary. Several notable species/species of conservation concern were recorded, including Cuckoo and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, although not all were confirmed as breeding.

### *Odiham Common felled area, grassland areas, and wayleaves - Phase II survey (2009)*

A precursor to the 2017 HBiC surveys detailed above, carried out by the same surveyor between June and August 2009. It includes similar information to that detailed under the later report.

### *Entomological survey and assessment of Odiham Common (2009)*

This report provides the results of an entomological survey and assessment carried out between April and October 2009, at key localities across Odiham Common, by Mike Edwards and Peter Hodge. A total of 513 species were recorded, including 41 with nationally recognized conservation designations.

#### *Odiham Common moth survey (2002)*

A targeted survey, carried out in June 2002 by Tim Norriss, recorded 45 species of moth on Odiham Common, including the Forester moth

#### *List of birds found on Odiham Common in the spring and summer of 1986, 1995, and 2002*

A total of 51 bird species were recorded from Odiham Common across the three years, with 32 identified as breeding in 2002. A range of notable species/species of conservation concern are listed, including Nightingale and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

### **6.3 Appendix 3: Further details of Site Management Planning documents**

#### **Woodland Management Plan 2022-2031 (Approved by Forestry Commission, 2022)**

Sets out permitted site operations and limits for identified woodland areas of Odiham Commons over a ten-year period.

#### **Countryside Stewardship Agreement 2022-2031 (Approved by Natural England and Rural Payments Agency (RPA), 2022)**

Legally binding agreement between landowner and RPA relating to funding that has been agreed to cover specific operations on site

over a ten-year period, to include specific areas for capital scrub works, as well as annual operations relating to glade, meadow and veteran tree management.

#### **Arboricultural Veteran Management Report (SMW Consultancy Ltd, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021)**

Independent report that was part-funded by RPA's PA1 feasibility study prior to entering into the Countryside Stewardship Agreement. Report identifies veteran and mature trees for future veteran management and prescriptions for managing those trees and immediate surrounding habitat.

## Odiham Commons Operational Monitoring Plan 2022-2031 (Internal departmental document)

Internal document summarising overall plan of habitat operations across site. 'Operations Summary' tab below shows operational activity summary and includes any currently secured funding streams. 'Stewardship' funding refers to the current Countryside Stewardship Agri-Only Scheme that is funded through the Rural Payments Agency.

Compartment Name	Parcel Number	Funded works	CS code	Target operation
Central Woods	SU 75523791	Stewardship	GS13	Cut wayleave, incl. scrub management
		Stewardship	GS13	Top wayleave between Aug and Oct (no more than 30% per annum)
		Stewardship	WD4	Cut glades, incl. scrub management
		Stewardship	WT5	Pond management
		Stewardship	BE6	Veteran tree management
Central Woods	SU 75523791	Not at present	N/A	Coppice (Woodland Management Plan)
		Not at present	N/A	Deer monitoring on recent coppiced areas
		Not at present	N/A	Ride management
		Not at present	N/A	Glade management (non-CS)
		Not at present	N/A	Tree thinning (Woodland management plan)
		Not at present	N/A	Ash dieback
		Not at present	N/A	Ditch management
		Not at present	N/A	Pond management (non-CS)
South Pastures East A	SU 7452 9202	Stewardship	GS15	Hay making
		Stewardship	GS6	Cut and remove arisings
South Pastures East B	SU 75523791	Stewardship	BE6	Veteran tree management
South Pastures East	SU 75523791	Not at present	N/A	Ride management
		Not at present	N/A	Glade management (non-CS)
		Not at present	N/A	Tree thinning (Woodland management plan)
		Not at present	N/A	Ash dieback
		Not at present	N/A	Ditch management
		Not at present	N/A	Monitoring surveys
South Pastures West	SU 74528111	Stewardship	GS15	Hay making
		Stewardship	GS6	Cut and remove arisings

		<b>Stewardship</b>	BE6	Veteran tree management
<b>South Pastures West</b>	<b>SU 75523791</b>	<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Ride management
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Glade management (non-CS)
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Tree thinning (Woodland management plan)
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Ash dieback
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Monitoring surveys
<b>Southeast Woods</b>	<b>SU 7552 5451</b>	<b>Stewardship</b>	WD4	Cut glades, incl. scrub management
<b>Southeast Woods</b>	<b>SU 75523791</b>	<b>Stewardship</b>	BE6	Veteran tree management
<b>Southeast Woods</b>	<b>SU 75523791</b>	<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Coppice (Woodland Management Plan)
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Deer monitoring on recent coppiced areas
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Ride management
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Glade management (non-CS)
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Tree thinning (Woodland management plan)
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Ash dieback
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Ditch management
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Pond management (non-CS)
		<b>Not at present</b>	N/A	Monitoring surveys

## 7. Maps

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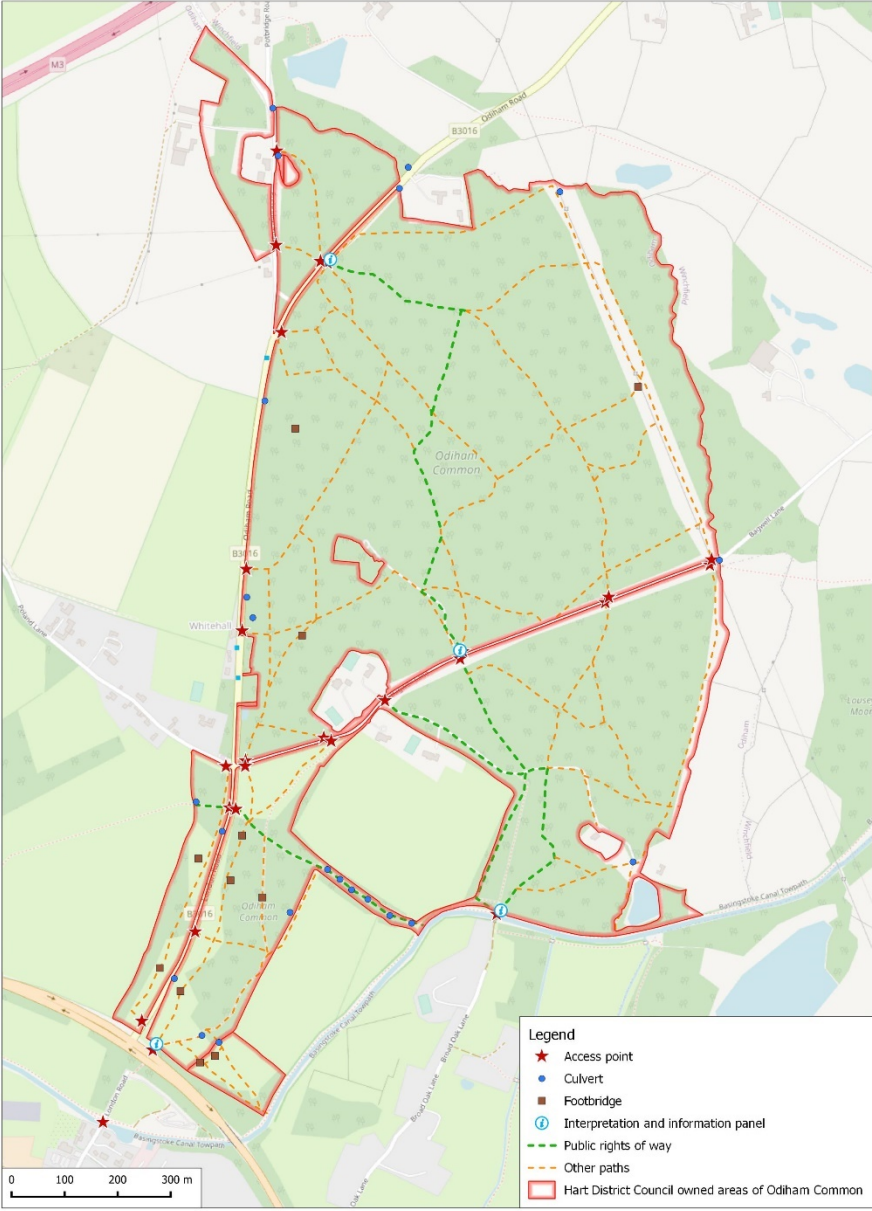


Map 1: Odiham Common location and extent



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© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.

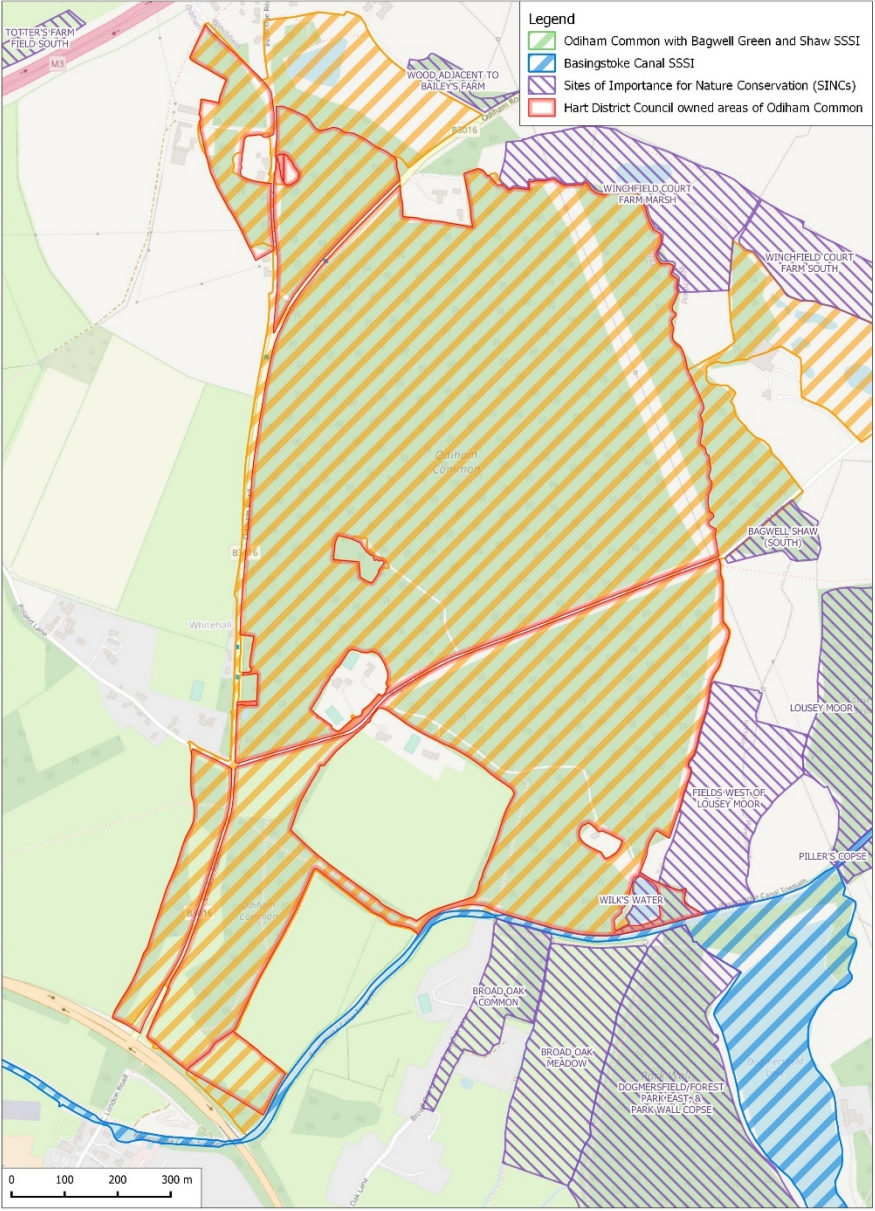
Map 2: Access and infrastructure



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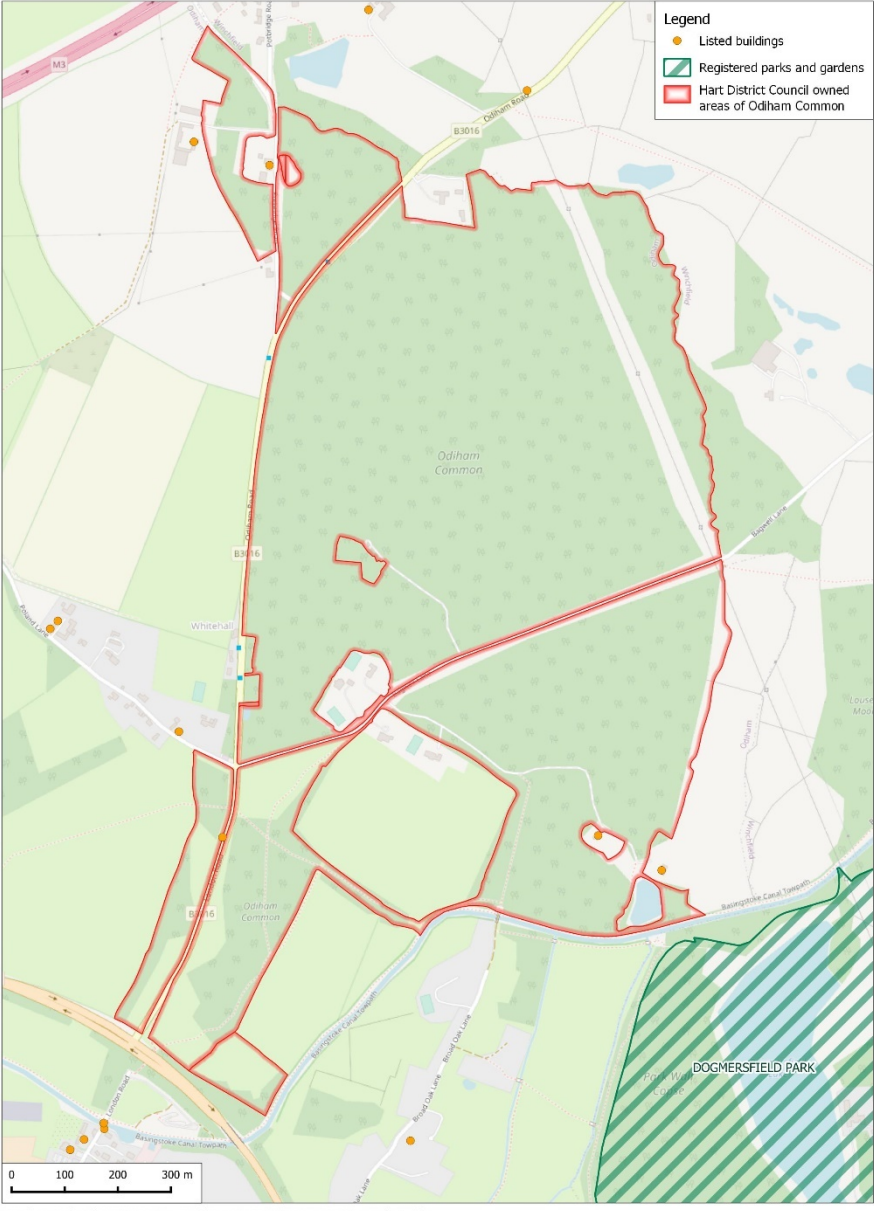


Map 3: Nature conservation designations



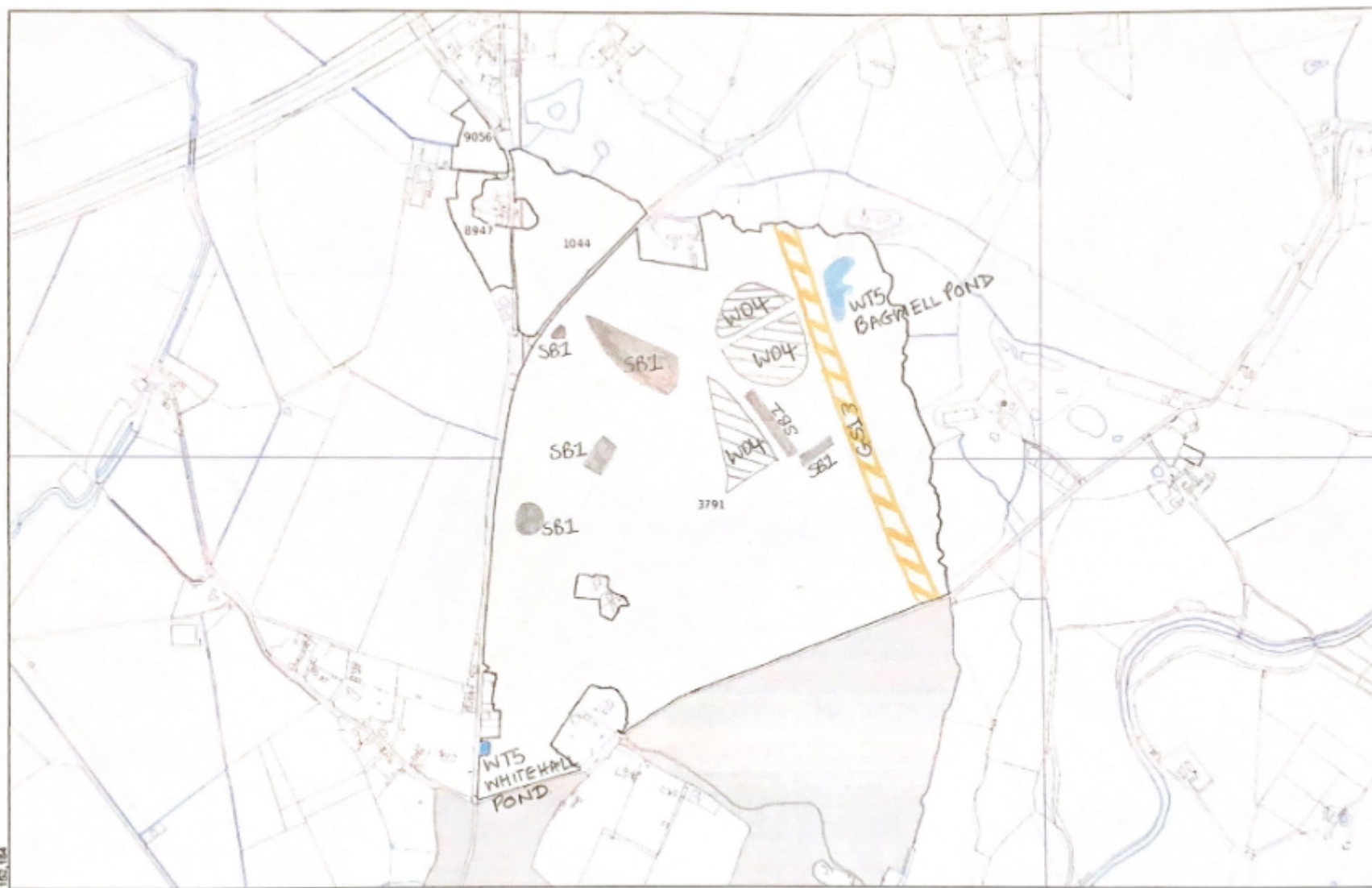
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 SINC data provided by Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC).

Map 4: Heritage features and landscapes



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**Maps 5: Countryside Stewardship Agreement for Central Woods, Potbridge East, Potbridge West and Northeast Woods** (Includes management activities for scrub control (SB1), glade/wood pasture (WD4), ponds excluding Whitehall Pond (WT5) and wayleave (GS13)





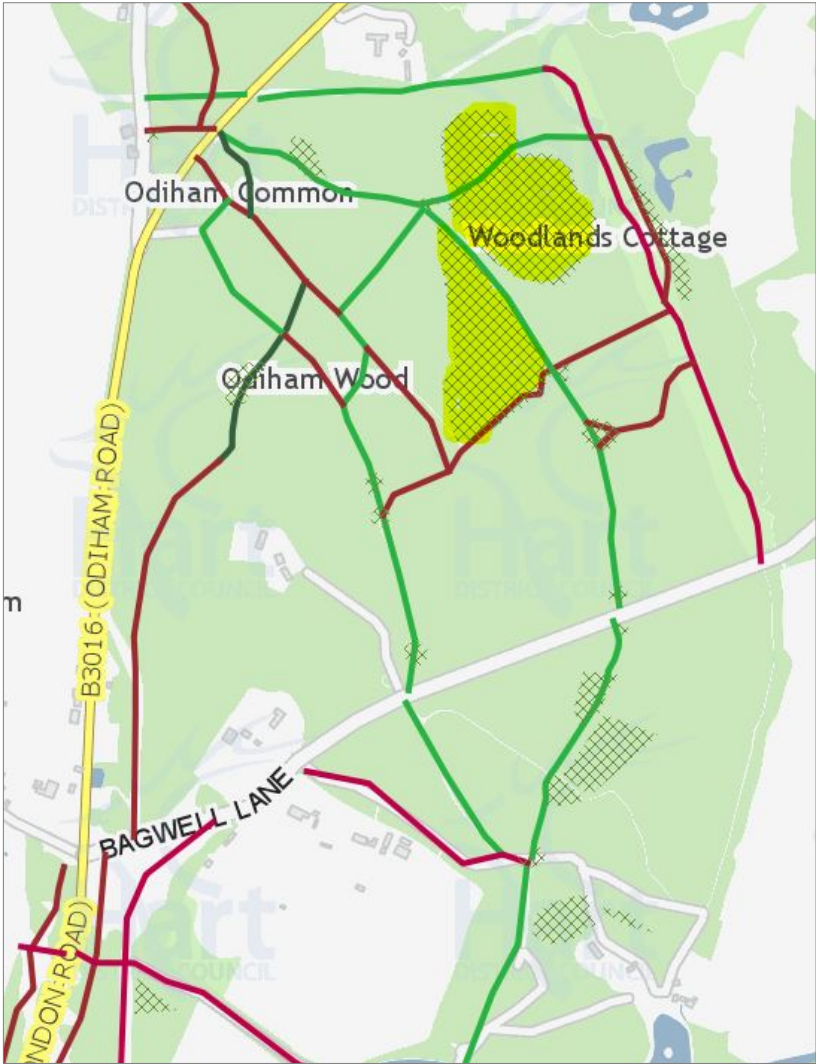
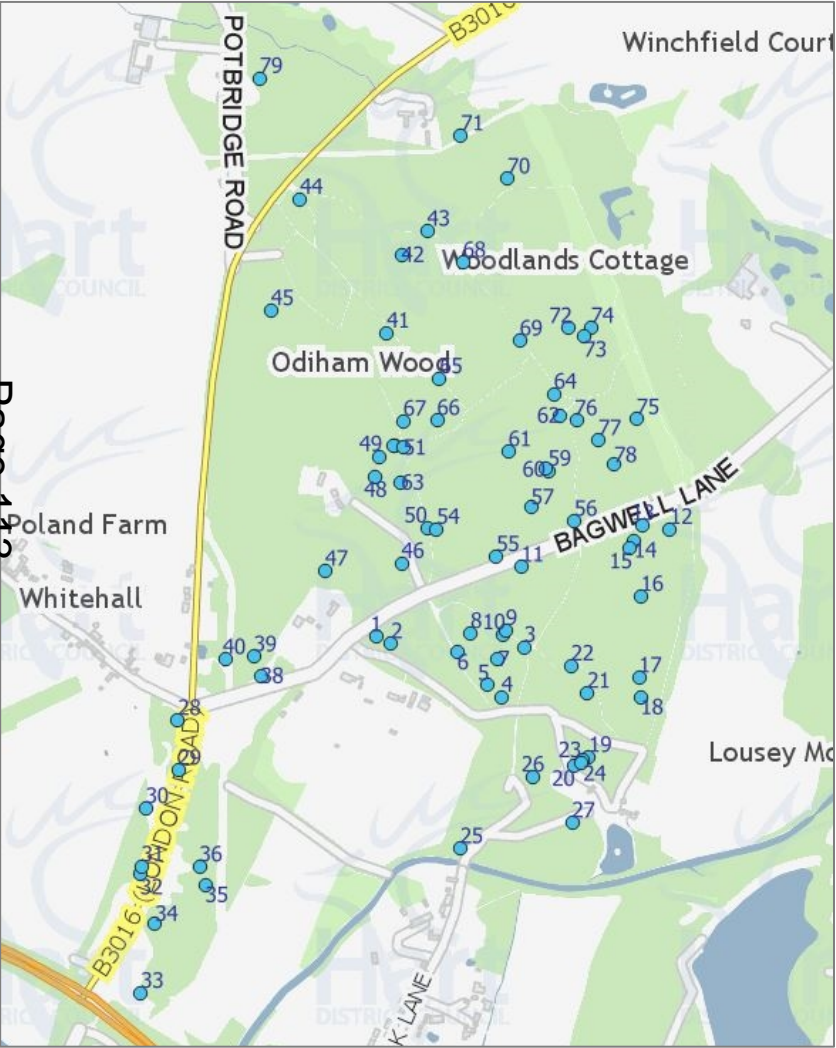
**Maps 6: Countryside Stewardship Agreement for Southeast Woods, Southern Pastures East and Southern Pastures West** (Includes management activities for grassland (GS6) and hay making (GS15))



**Map 7: Trees identified in the SMW consultancy report for veteran and future veteran tree management, part-funded through Countryside Stewardship**

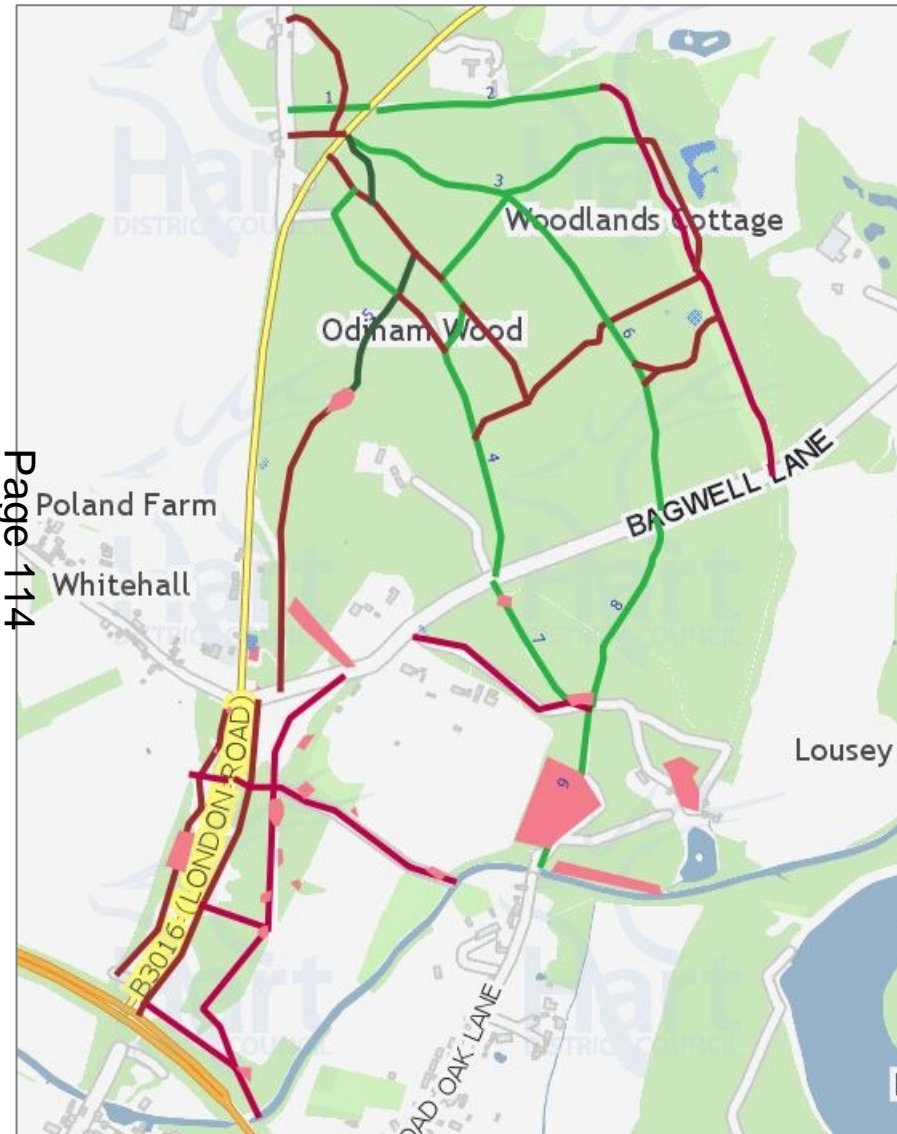
**Map 8: Glades** (those managed under the Countryside Stewardship agreement are highlighted in yellow)

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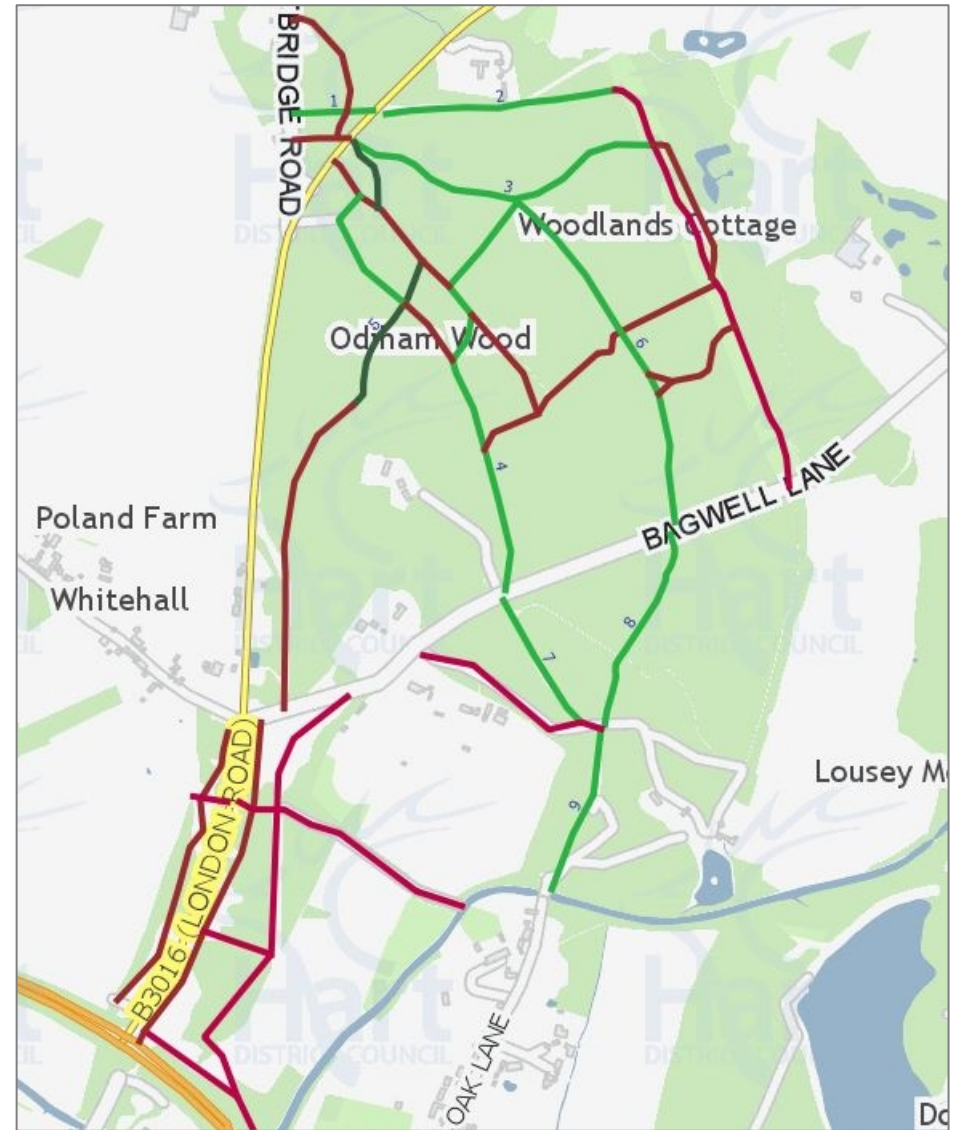




**Map 9: Ash dieback based on 2021 site inspection**



**Map 10: Paths and rides** - priority rides predominantly under zone 2 management (light green) and zone 3 management (dark green), main paths for general maintenance identified (red)

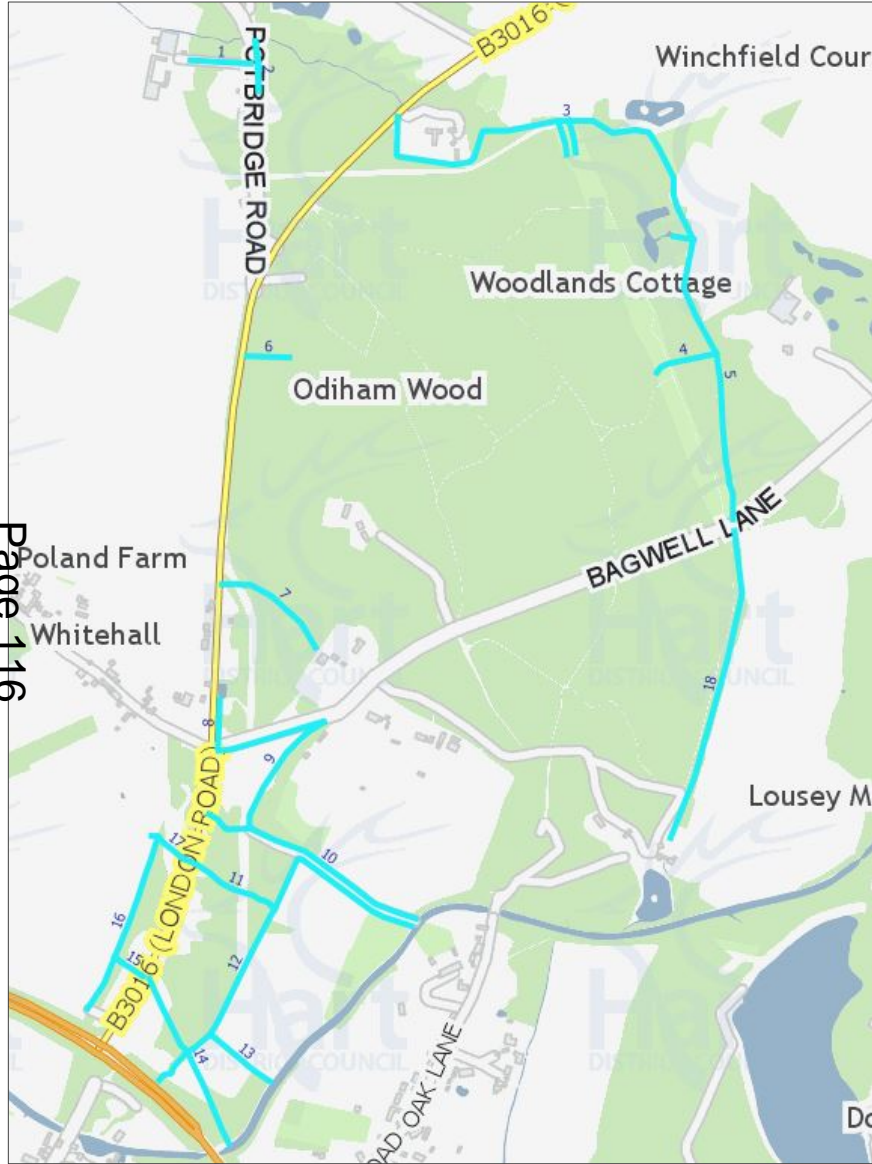


Map 11: Roadside flailing





Map 12: Ditch management



Map 13: Coppice coupes





**Appendix 2, Paper A**  
**Consultations sought and responses received for Odiham Commons**  
**Management Plan draft proposal 2022-2031**

Draft plan and associated documentation sent to the following:-

Local Ward Members

Odiham Parish Council

Basingstoke Canal Society (no response received)

Forestry Commission (in addition to this response, HDC liaised with FC in an extensive consultation on the overall Woodland Management Plan for site)

Natural England

Resident representatives for Poland Lane, Bagwell Lane and Potbridge

Hampshire County Council

National Trust (adjacent landowner)

Hart DC responses are shown in bold italics below and general points have been collated and address in the Odiham Management Plan 2022-31 DRAFT under Section 10.2 'Responses'.

**National Trust response:**

Dear Liz and Hart Countryside Team,

Thank you for sending over the Odiham Common draft management plan. As neighbouring landowners, I have looked over the management plan and approve the content. I believe the introduction to grazing livestock on the common will be most beneficial.

The National Trust have introduced grazing cattle to one of our woodland reserves (The Chase, near Newbury) with great success.

[The Chase | National Trust](#)

Please keep us up to date with any works planned around the hunting lodge/Wilks water. A joint venture between ranger teams in the future would also be welcomed.

**Natural England response**

Hi Liz,

Further to our conversation yesterday I have skim read the documents and have no comments at this stage. Broadly the aspects covered in the Plan are in line with NE guidelines.

Kind regards,

Jane

Hi Liz,

As requested, please find below my feedback after sight of the management plan for the common.

Firstly, I think your vision for the woodland on page 5 of the plan corresponds well with the SSSI objectives set for the broadleaved wood and wood pasture elements of the common.

Your mention of the common acting as a green corridor on page 6 rather deftly reflects one of Natural England's main focus areas of nature recovery, as well as our future plan to create a nature recovery network that aims to ensure protected sites remain in favourable condition and that also both expands and connects protected sites within a local area.

It is promising to see the inclusion of grazing as a potential future management option in the Opportunities section of the plan, as it could help maintain a varied sward structure for the benefit of each grassland habitat's associated invertebrate assemblages across the common, in addition to supporting the maintenance of scrub cover within target for favourable condition of the site.

The management objectives covered on pages 30-31 align agreeably with the site- specific targets set for the special interest features of the common that define favourable condition for this SSSI.

Finally, it is heartening to see that over and above the detailed outline of measures to enhance biodiversity across the common, the management objectives also have a good breadth in terms of encouraging opportunities to engage with the local community, which is another key focus area of the organisation under our Connecting people with nature work programme.

I do hope this feedback proves useful!

Kind regards,

Natalie

**Follow-up response from NE to Hart DC's query about path surfacing and access:**

Natural England cannot specify particularly exacting or appropriate levels of access by the public to land that is owned by a third party. Having said that, with land that has a SSSI designation, then the management of the site concerning public access should attempt to limit both disturbance or damage to the special features of interest for which the site was originally designated.

As an example of this, path maintenance for use of by the public should be undertaken in the most practical way to reduce the risk of changing the extent of adjoining notifiable habitats, which could lead to in some circumstances to either the introduction of non-native invasive species or pollution of nearby watercourses. Any plans for enhancing public access or adapting recreational use of SSSIs should be judiciously studied to enable their compliance with the future maintenance of monitored features on site.

In relation to commons, there is a greater requirement that works reflect their locality, so local materials that mirror existing foot paths should be employed for use of in resurfacing a path.

Best,

Natalie

**Hampshire County Council response**

Odiham plan looks good. You guys know what you are doing, so nothing further from me!

**Odiham Parish Council response**

Dear Liz

I confirm that Odiham Parish Councillors discussed the Management Plan at their full Council meeting on Tuesday.

Councillors made no comment on the proposed ecological management of the Common but did support residents in their request for representation on the Consultative Committee.

Please can you keep the Parish Council updated on this. Cllr Coleman is Odiham Parish Council's representative but it would be good to be kept in the loop.

Many thanks

Andrea

*Hart response to Parish Council, following clarification discussion*

*Hi Andrea,*

*Further to our conversation today I wanted to clarify the main point we discussed. It was unclear from your email whether the objection was to have no consultative group or whether it was more to do with residents being excluded from a consultative group and not having their voices heard. My understanding from you is that it is mostly about residents feeling they have no mechanism to express their views in the new management plan proposal.*

*To be clear, the most recent consultative group for Odiham originally set up for a specific common purpose to write the previous management plan, which had a considerable amount of significant works proposed (mainly the open space creation, timber removal, etc). The group should have ended at the end of the 'project' and been replaced with more typical methods of communication in line with other sites, but for no particular reason has never officially ended (but should have done once the original purpose of the group had been met, i.e. completion of the previous 'project'.*

*I think we all agree that a positive aspect of managing our local area is engagement with residents and site users. However, the current engagement is heavily focused on a small handful of properties that are in the closest proximity to the site, but should really reflect the views of residents across the wider community Odiham/Winchfield/etc. Therefore, what we propose is to liaise with the Parish Council and Ward members who will be in tune with the needs and views of their local residents, so that you can liaise directly with us and feed back comments and queries. We feel this would provide a clear mechanism for balanced engagement with the entire community. In addition, we would continue to respond to individual resident comments/enquiries through our usual channels, e.g. via website/email enquiries, on a more ad hoc basis, as is the case in other areas across Hart.*

*For significant future projects, there will be a stakeholder engagement process that will identify the relevant people and groups, as and when such projects arise.*

*I hope this clarifies things and please come back to me with any additional comments you have from your councillors on this. I understand this will go to Overview and Scrutiny, so there will be an opportunity for further comments with those in attendance, at that point.*

*Many thanks,*

*Liz*

#### **Odiham Society response**

Liz,

Sincere apologies for not responding to your requests for comments on the Odiham Common Management Plan. The Society has been a bit pre-occupied recently with the move of our archives to our new home in the Parish Room in Odiham and our launch of our first exhibition on subjects connected with the village.

We have reviewed the draft plan and we feel that it is an excellent document and forms a sound basis for the future management of this very important local natural asset.

I have a few minor comments:

1. Page 15 - Should the reference be to 'Bartley Heath' not 'Hartley Heath'? Hartley Heath may be correct but I have never heard of it.

2. Page 19 - I was interested in the reference to otters but surely these would inhabit the canal itself rather than the common as their main source of food is fish. (incidentally I gather that otter spraint has been found near Colt Hill bridge).

3. Page 29 - In para 3 note that 'plants' should be 'plans'.

I note a couple of references to the possibility of introducing grazing on the Common but this appears to be a long term objective (2030 is mentioned). If grazing is desirable, I would question why it is not being considered sooner, although I appreciate that it is a controversial issue.

As I have mentioned, the Odiham Society is now planning to arrange periodic exhibitions at the Parish Room and we would like to explore with you the possibility of having an exhibition focusing on the history and ecological importance of the common. Would you and your colleagues be interested in working with us on that idea? The exhibition could be used to promote the Management Plan.

Best wishes

Philip

#### **Forestry Commission response**

Hi Liz

I hope you are well and thank you very much for your email. I am sorry it has taken so long to get back to you. As you have stated you already got an approved WMP from ourselves , so we have little to add. I would though highlight the need for active Chalara management as a priority and draw up a work programme on tackling this as sadly the situation will not improve.

I also wish to draw your attention to the fact we received numerous emails from the residents of Potbridge raising concerns over the work planned , the following is a section of a letter we received that went to our CEO and I believe the MP “agree that the proposals for thinning and Holly reduction in Potbridge be removed from the Woodland Management Plan. In my letter of 10 November I explained again my purpose in writing to Mr Stanford was to ask him to agree that the proposals for thinning and Holly reduction in Potbridge be removed from the Woodland Management Plan. I hope our request and the reasons behind it are clear in our letters to you. All the residents in Potbridge, our District Councillors, and James Sunderland, the MP resident in Potbridge, all know that the proposed felling in Potbridge would be extremely bad”.

I trust any consultation with the residents has been include in drawing up the plan

Regards

Andy Glover

#### **CLr 1 response**

Many thanks for these, I’ve had a careful read through.

I’m hoping and expecting that the residents group will respond separately and in detail. They have built up a comprehensive knowledge of the site and its issues over the years and the more we can show we’ve listened to them (not quite the same as agreeing!) then the better the relationship should be and hopefully you can help them understand the difficult choices that have to be made.

From my perspective I would note:-

#### **Odiham Common Management Plan (March 2022)**

1. General, the PDF document shows as “Gypsy Traveller and....” In the tab heading. This can be fixed by editing the Document Title in the Properties (under Info in the File menu).

#### ***Completed***

- a. Very happy to help with Word issues, if necessary and apologies, if you’re already very familiar.
  - b. It might have been easier to circulate the Word version for comments and edits, as you can merge the comments and tracked changes.
2. Page 3 – this should auto update, but you can force that by clicking anywhere in the document, use Ctrl-A to select all and then right click and select “Update Field” ***Completed***
  3. 1, page 4 – I would suggest a “purpose and scope” section would be helpful to be very clear about the purpose of the document and its scope (both geographically and authoritatively).

#### ***Added***

4. 1.1 – It should also refer to the Hart Local Plan 2020 ***Content of Hart Local Plan not directly relevant, relates more to planning policy***
5. 1.2.2
  - a. The reference to the SSSI doesn’t explain how it relates to the site and reports its current condition. Suggest adding “ ...and this is to be maintained going forward by the policies and actions described in section x.y.z). ***This section is a vision for the future and should not include information on how the site will be maintained.***

- b. Page 5 – this is mainly description, not vision. ***The vision is an aspirational description of the site as we envisage it in the future.***
- 6. 1.2.3 – this is also mainly historic description, which is good to have, but should be in a separate section. Any vision should be forward looking. ***Couldn't find reference to historic description***
- 7. 2.1 – Who are the “customers”? Would help to provide some guidance. I think its members of the public using the space and any organisation paying (or needing permission) for access. ***Have amended to reflect general ‘customers’***
- 8. 2.3 – Reference to Map 1 (page 53). Unfortunately the map image is too low quality to be read. It would be helpful to also show the SSSI boundaries. ***PDF version shared was lower quality, but original Word Doc is in a higher quality. SSSI boundaries shown on Map 3, but have asked consultant to make this clearer***
  - a. Similarly for Map 2 and several others.
  - b. The area that is the “common” includes private house that appear to be outside the SSSI designation, yet clear influence the overall site. It would benefit from some description of these features (or maybe in 2.5?) ***Have added detail in Section 3.10.1.1 ‘Physical’***
- 9. 2.7.1 – When was the Emergency Plan last reviewed? When is that due? Does Hampshire Fire & Rescue get a copy? ***Reviewed annually. Hampshire Fire and Rescue have original copy***
- 10. 2.7.3 – This needs a little update, as we don’t have a Dog Warden any longer. ***Amended***
- 11. 2.9.1
  - a. page 12 – its not clear which “management plan” is being referred to. ***Changed wording for clarification***
  - b. The comms policy seems to be focussed at Parish Councils, rather than the Odiham Consultative Group, which includes the various stakeholders. ***Have added Hart response in Appendix under ‘Responses’, which addresses the frequently raised comments/queries***
    - i. Also in section 3.1.3,
- 1. 2.9.2 – Suggest this should explain how those working parties will be formed. “...through specific requests to the Odiham Consultative Group, who will cascade such request to their members.” ***As above***
  - a. Additionally, I’m aware that the Scout Association often seeks areas to undertake service works on, so could be another source of effort.
- 2. 2.9.5 – Should this point to a future action to conduct a survey? ***Added a line for future consideration (Section 3.9.5)***
- 3. 2.10.2.1
  - a. Would a copy of Appendix 5 be available on the Hart website? And add the link. ***Not sure which Appendix 5 is – presumable the internal document table. This is shown as a summary table – the annual recording and monitoring document will remain an internal document as it is for operational purposes and not suitable for publication.***
  - b. It would be helpful to show these features on a map, I think most show-up on the Hart GIS tool.
- 4. 3.2 (3) Plants -> “plans”? ***Amended***
- 5. 3.2.1 – These targets (and KPIs) need specific dates, so that work is reasonably prioritised and spread through the plan period. ***Target dates are shown in 5.1 Action plan and timetable***
- 6. 4.4 – There is a lot of detail here, I can only assume that it makes good sense to those that know such things! ***Hopefully!***

7. 5.1 – With a “completed” column (and other information columns), would there be annual updates to this Plan or a separate progress report? ***‘6.1 Operational activity summary’ is an example to demonstrate the key information that will be recorded, to help staff keep track of works internally. The rest of the plan outlines what should be delivered over the ten years and will be available to the general public. This type of recording table will be used by managers and site rangers to monitor work activities and amend as needed (e.g. where works were not completed, whether they should be moved into another year, etc). Progress reports will be a requirement by Rural Payments Agency/Natural England/Forestry Commission/etc, as requested to demonstrate we are meeting any legal requirements and agreements.***
- a. And 5.2 etc

#### **Ash Dieback Management Plan (Draft 2020)**

1. I would recommend page, section and version numbers to ease referencing. ***Amended***
2. The overall plan looks good to me, but suggest that the consideration of “risk” should be more than just property. It should include: popular paths, roads and infrastructure items (eg. telephone and power cables) at direct risk. Clearly a broken phone line is a smaller risk than a downed power cable. ***The different types of risk are shown in the plan as examples, but not limited to these. Have added roads and infrastructure items.***
3. I wonder if the grades, inspection rates and actions could be more usefully added to Table 1 for easier referencing? ***Inspection rates added, grades and actions already included.***
4. Table 2 to be completed. ***This is an example table so does not require completing. Have added information about the current software Hart DC uses to record hazardous tree information.***

I hope that all makes sense, very happy to answer questions and explain more if that helps.

#### **Cllr B response**

I have taken a look at the draft management plan and have seen Councillor (A)'s input which I agree and support. Below are some comments from me.

#### **Section 1 Priorities and Vision.**

It is clear from this section that Odiham Common is a unique challenge for Hart's Countryside team in that it is managed primarily to protect and enhance its biodiversity unlike other assets like the County Parks which are managed primarily as SANG "leisure" facilities.

1.2.2 refers to "effective engagement" with members of the public. This has historically been challenging at times in particular in achieving a joint vision of the Common as a "wild place and cultural landscape", a very different place from a country park.

This management plan is a unique opportunity to create and agree that shared vision.

#### **Section 2 ,**

##### **2.8.1 Past management for Nature Conservation.**

The section title is significant and indicates Hart's priorities for the site. It would perhaps be useful to categorise the management activities for clarity, something like:

- what we do to enhance biodiversity
- what we do to facilitate public access and enjoyment
- what we do to control "invasive species"

This approach might better enable public understanding and engagement. This section includes the word "grazing" which has had an unfortunate negative history.

***This section (3.8.1) specifically refers to management for nature conservation, so have added the word 'habitat management' to further clarify. Public access and enjoyment is addressed in other sections, such as '3.9 People'***

My personal view is that it is now time to reconsider selective grazing as a means of natural management and an alternative to modern, disruptive and damaging mechanical management. Hart and Hampshire Wildlife Trust now have a lot of experience of selective grazing and it should not be ruled out for Odiham Common.

I note the comments in 2.10.6.4 on this topic.

## 2.9 People

When the Consultative Group was formed to support the Common Purpose, many stakeholders, such as the Open Spaces Society and others, had an interest. It is now appropriate to update the stakeholder engagement arrangements and work with those stakeholders who are most passionate and engaged with Odiham Common. Working solely with Parish Councils will in my view not be inclusive enough. Ward District Councillors and interested residents should be included. The future arrangements set out in paragraph 2.9.1 need to be updated to provide more detail.

***This has been addressed in the Appendix under 'Responses' section***

### 2.10.7.4

I welcome the opportunities set out in this paragraph including re reinstatement of occasional ranger led walks on the Common.

## 3.2 Management objectives

On the whole I support these objectives with a couple of concerns:



1. Tree felling in the plan period should be restricted to only that which is necessary to manage Ash die back.

***This has been addressed in Appendix 'Responses' section***

2. Management of existing open spaces by mechanical means should be done with great care not to damage paths and rides.

***Agreed, will partly depend on other factors such as resources, restrictions to when contractors can get onto site, National Grid and the works they carry out, but we will do our best to reduce impact by working with National Grid for less visual impact, e.g. rutting.***

### 3.2.1 Targets and Performance Indicators and sections 4 Action Plan and 5 Monitoring

I don't wish to comment on particular indicators or action plan items but note that there are quite a number. A couple of comments:

1. It is not clear to me how the plan consultation responses will be handled. In the past Hart's Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) have considered evolving plans and made recommendations to Cabinet to advise on plan adoption. This might include detailed scrutiny of indicators and action plans.

***Understanding is that this will go to Overview and Scrutiny, then Cabinet for endorsement. An additional section has been added in the Appendix under 'Responses', which will be recirculated to consultees, to show consideration of key points raised and responses***

2. O&S have regular service plan reviews with heads of service. It would probably be appropriate for Odiham Common plan to be included in these service reviews.

***Head of Service has been engaged with as part of the Odiham Management Plan review process***

## **Feedback from Resident Representatives**

**Odiham Common Management Plan – letter addressed to Cllr. Neighbour following circulation of draft management plan:**

Liz Vango circulated the new Management Plan just before the school half term and Jubilee Bank Holiday when some members of the community, including one of the residents' representatives and the Chairman of the residents association, were on holiday. We are sorry but it was therefore impossible for us to meet the abbreviated deadline.

Ever since 1994 the residents have shown a huge interest in the common. This is not surprising as they live within the ambit of the common; use the common regularly with many walking their dogs daily; they value the benefits the common provides to them through informal recreation, exercise, wellbeing, tranquillity; and closeness to nature and wildlife. The common is a key part of their daily lives. The Land Use Consultants surveys in 2009/10 confirmed the common was predominantly used by the local community. Representatives of the residents have served on every committee organised by Hart since 1994 and bring the usually unique perspectives of the user experience and public enjoyment: perspectives that Natural England, Forestry Commission and Hart Countryside do not provide.

The consultation on the new Management Plan has started for many of the residents by looking at the last ten years. We were surprised there was no review with the Consultative Committee at the end of the last Plan. What went well? What not so well? What lessons can we learn and take forward? As the residents reviewed the last 10 years they saw a common that had deteriorated. In 2010 the residents questioned the amount of open space that Hart planned to create and had doubts about their ability to cope with managing the new open space especially as funding tends to be for creating something rather than maintaining it. Those doubts proved to be fully justified. Trees were felled and replaced by bracken and bramble that is now rampant. Open spaces might be cut once but then the mowing was reduced to cutting a path through the space and then abandoned. Paths and rides were identified as problem issues in 2010 that prevented enjoyment of the common but little was done and so the problem has simply got worse. Many were waterlogged even in our survey in mid-July 2021 and of course are even worse during the winter months. Management of the paths/rides has been poor and in the next 10 years Hart barely get beyond plotting them and so there is no optimism there will any significant improvement in the paths/rides during the next plan. Grass cutting on the rides, paths and open glades has been reduced from twice a year ( see page 3 of the 2010 Plan) to once and in the next ten years it seems they will at best have a cut in the autumn with some every other year in the first five years. Many of the waterlogged paths were adjacent to areas of tree felling and we notice trees are to be 'thinned' close to an entrance on the B3016 used by visitors parking their car and adjacent to a wide ride that provides an important entry point for humans and horses and is notoriously waterlogged particularly of course in the wetter winter months. The last woodland area to be 'thinned' near Bagwell pond is now a beautiful, wall to wall carpet of bracken. Are we sure the proposed 'thinning' will not lead to greater water problems on the ride and another carpet of bracken that will deter visitors? It seems significant to us that the driest paths are where no felling has taken place and the worst close to felling.

It is of course good to learn of the great crested newts but users also like simple wildlife like ducks. Ducks had been on the ponds for at least 40 years but where are they now? Perhaps they do not like the algae and grass filled ponds. The residents are therefore pleased that two ponds will be managed during the next ten years although Bagwell Pond was dredged during the last Plan but to no good effect. It was not surprising that Hart refused to allow

the consultative committee to meet from 2015 to 2019 but in 2017 we did submit the attached memorandum to Steve Lyons identifying some of the issues of importance to the users at that time although there was no evidence it was welcomed or valued. The outcome of the last 10 years is a less attractive common with a much changed landscape in need of maintenance of paths/rides, open spaces, bracken/bramble, and water management. The number of visitors has dwindled. For example some residents choose to walk on other PROWs than struggle through mud filled paths and there are fewer riders. There was an upturn in new visitors from the local community at the start of the Covid lockdown but they have not been retained.

There are two specific issues we wish to highlight. Firstly the residents are bemused by Hart official's proposal to abandon the consultative committee. There is no explanation of why this would be beneficial. It flies in the face of the DEFRA guide 'A Common Purpose: A guide to agreeing management on common land' that sets out best practice for managing a common and stresses the views of all interested parties should be taken into account. That was the process used by LUC in preparing the 2010 Management Plan but it has been abandoned for the current Plan. There is frequent mention of the importance of engagement in the Management Plan and it is difficult to reconcile this with the reduction in the engagement with the relevant district councillors and residents' representatives by abolishing the Consultative Committee. Of course, the Parish Councils must be involved but, if you have interested parties with knowledge of the common willing to participate, bringing all the expertise together is surely the best option. It is difficult to think of organisations willingly abandoning direct engagement with end users. Walks on the common with the ranger are hardly a satisfactory alternative to positive engagement with all parties.

Our second issue concerns the felling in Potbridge. After a site visit in June 2020 involving the three residents' representatives and two Hart rangers it was agreed, apart from two or three specific trees, no felling would take place in the Potbridge East section of the common i.e. between Potbridge Road and the B3016 in recognition that Potbridge lay between two busy roads – the M3 and B3016 – and the trees provided a valuable sound barrier as well as a much valued character and sense of place. This agreement was confirmed in the exchange of e-mails from two of the residents' representatives on 23 June 2020, 1 and 2 July 2020 and from Hart on 1 July. For Potbridge West we suggested removing the 10%+ felling until the preparation of the ash die back plan so that the two issues could be considered in context. However, when the residents next saw the Woodland Management Plan in 2021, felling in Potbridge was included and at 30%+. We reminded Hart of the agreement and asked to revert to it. On 2 June 2021 Hart suggested for the East section having a no felling zone parallel to Potbridge Road in which only trees providing a H&S issue or standard maintenance be felled and with only a 10% felling in a strip parallel to the B3016 although the residents still favoured the original agreement. We next saw the Woodland Management Plan on 21 July 2021 and were astonished to see 30% felling was still included and again took issue with Hart as we thought they had made a simple mistake and inserted

the wrong section into the document. We never received a response but assumed the document had been corrected. We then discovered in September 2021 that without any explanation Hart had submitted the Woodland Management Plan to the Forestry Commission with the East section having a 30% thinning plus a reduction of Holly (that accounts for 20% of the trees in the section), plus removal of necessary ash die back trees (5% of the trees in the section), plus haloing of a veteran tree. In the West 10% tree thinning plus removal of ash die back trees. Ash accounts for 15% of the trees in the West. Liz Vango explained that felling in Potbridge had been included 'because FC have said the entire site must be included for reasonable management techniques'. The result is that felling of some 40% of the trees to the East and 20% to the West are included in the current Management Plan. The mortality rate from ash die back is some 90% and so a 10% thinning in the West can be expected from the natural consequences of ash die back and felling of that scale in Potbridge East would be devastating and so unnecessary.

The good news is that the Forestry Commission advised us on 29 November 2021 that 'the works proposed in the Woodland Management Plan are not legally binding, that Hart District Council will not face any action from the Forestry Commission if they do not undertake the felling'. They clarified that advice on 7 December 2021 by telling us 'The work in the Woodland Management is not legally binding and the FC do not insist that the work is carried out, we have no legal powers to enforce the felling that is in the plan. The FC whilst reviewing the works stated that felling could be carried out within areas other than those that were originally stated. There are areas of Ash trees within the common that are suffering from chalara and unfortunately a significant amount of these will die.' There is thus a very clear statement from Forestry Commission that there is no need to include thinning, et al in Potbridge in the Management plan. Natural consequences of ash die back on the West Section will more than reduce the trees by 10% and they have indicated there will be more than enough natural ash die back felling elsewhere on the common. The Hart proposals about Potbridge East ranging from no felling; a no felling zone and strip parallel to the B3016 with 10% felling; to the current 40% felling hardly suggest there is a sound scientific basis for including 40% in the Management Plan. There is no funding for the felling. It is nonsense to include an activity no one wants, that is non critical and that has no funding: if additional funding happens to become available it should be allocated to activities that are desired and will increase public enjoyment. We therefore respectfully request that felling in Potbridge be deleted except for haloing, ash die back, H&S, or standard maintenance.

A key part of good public sector management is transparency and accountability. As we have briefly set out our experience is that the track record of management activity over the past 10 years on Odiham Common has not been good. If external engagement is to be reduced we would see a need for greater internal accountability of objectives and outcomes of the Countryside Department in relation to its activities on Odiham Common.

As one household reminisce of daily walks on an attractive common with a unique character, landscape and sense of place; weekly walks with the children to feed the ducks and embed a love of nature and wildlife in the next generation; leaving food at the regular place for the fox, checking the next day that it has all gone, and replenishing it; watching in hushed silence as a deer gives birth; standing in awe as four small fox cubs run towards us thinking we were mother returning with lunch, only to realise we were mere humans that provoked a screeching stop, a magical moment as we gazed at each other before they turned turtle and dashed off. All now consigned to history and on the current common not likely to be repeated.

As we say au revoir we trust we have provided you with a picture of the common without the consultant's rose tinted spectacles and signposted for you and your Cabinet colleagues what really needs to be done. A common, even one that 200% ticks all the bio-diversity boxes, but with dwindling users and shorn of those who provide a passionate interest in its well-being, provide support and defend it, where public enjoyment is simply a luxury extra that is always lost in bio-diversity priorities is indeed a sad, dark and dank place. We fear for the future of the common especially with officials seeking to simply have their way. It has underachieved and failed to provide its full potential benefits to the local community.

The new Management Plan is merely a biodiversity plan with lip service to wider benefits and aspirations for the common. Bio-diversity of course is important and after the 2004 Public Inquiry when Hart and Natural England had their plans for the common rejected a Director of Natural England confidentially visited the residents in Potbridge to look at the common and offered removal of the SSSI designation. The residents rejected the removal of the SSSI status and so we hope you can appreciate we do support bio-diversity objectives but there is a wider remit. The pace of change should be at a rate that can manage the new maintenance requirements and does not lose sight of the unique landscape, sense of place, or character; recognition that good paths and rides provide the essential infrastructure of the common all of which are ingredients of healthy exercise and improved mental health and mood; and that public enjoyment is an essential and not a luxury. There are words about engagement and health and wellbeing but they are very lightweight – health and well-being objectives limited to liaison with the parish councils and on/off-site events and engagement actually reduced. We may have missed it but we did not see much recognition of public enjoyment. If the common is to realise its full potential and maximise all the benefits it can provide to the community a bio-diversity approach in itself is inadequate We suggest

- A change of culture is required to genuinely embrace the wider potential of the common, understand the elements that contribute to the wider potential, and be willing to accept others may have an occasional view that is legitimate and valuable
- Some of the key objectives and targets need to be sharper with progress monitored at appropriate stage points throughout the 10 years. For example we welcome the mention of rides and paths but an annual survey was part of the last plan: some of the waterlogged paths would benefit from action now but there are no targets to improve any paths and no funding. Again we welcome bracken and scrub control but in some categories there is no indication of volume or area to be controlled and a clear starting position and clear end position would help identify the effort involved, ensure adequate progress was being achieved, and areas addressed were reviewed for effectiveness of the action: we recognise bracken and bramble return and keep spreading.
- There needs to be greater accountability through the Oversight and Scrutiny Committee.
- Lessons must be learned from the last 10 years. Particularly about the rate of progress and availability of resources. There is no point in dashing into management activities that create maintenance activities that cannot be met or maintained. For example we support the haloing of trees to provide some great veterans for future generations but 66 is a significant increase on the 20 in the last plan and using the LUC criteria this will create 3.3ha ha of open space. Can this be managed? Managing the common is a marathon not a sprint.
- The Plan indicates £5,800 pa of CS funding is available. Many of the activities are unfunded – including path repairs, ditch management in the central woods and southern pastures, glade management, and ash die back. £2151 pa of the CS funding is earmarked for haloing veteran trees (66 X £326). There is a big backlog of neglected maintenance from the last 10 years but the amount of CS resource available is only half of the funding allocated for the last plan and we ask whether all the activities included represent a realistic aspiration. We fear that any aimed at public enjoyment will be squeezed out.

We bid you Au Revoir and trust you will have the full benefits that the common can provide to the community at heart. We ask you to ensure all available resources are allocated to the neglected backlog of maintenance: water management – waterlogged paths, ditches, ponds; getting control of the rampant bracken and bramble; and adequate mowing to make the common an attractive place for humans to enjoy. The longer these tasks are delayed the worse the common will become and the more expensive to put right.

*Above letter signed by current resident representatives for Potbridge, Bagwell Land and Polland Lane.*

**The following items were received by the Council (from the resident representatives), prior to management plan draft and again following management plan draft circulation:-**

10 year plan to address the following priorities:

1. Public enjoyment and character of common become priorities – We believe that the balance is suitable for a site of this sensitivity
2. Waterlogged paths: repair and maintain – We discuss pathway in Objective 5. Odiham enjoys over 10km of pathways with several Public Rights of Way managed by the County

Council. We will those under our control in a manner that is sensitive to the area and financially viable

3. Ditches and watercourses: inspect, clear; repair and maintain - this is covered on Objective 2
4. General maintenance: mow; remove invasive bracken and bramble - These are important components of a healthy Woodland. However, there is provision to control for transitional scrub and bracken in the plan
5. Ponds: clean water and return of birds and wildlife- This is of course a subjective matter but we will endeavour to maintain the ponds as important wildlife features and this is included in the Plan a feasibility study will be undertaken to look at what options are available
6. Deal with diseased ash (See Ash Dieback Plan)
7. Only fell healthy trees when absolutely necessary and consider the consequences - We have considered the consequences to the environment and are making good progress. This will be a continuation of the excellent woodland managing of the previous plan
8. Obtain grants for approved work in the Plan Completed
9. Improve Communication Proposals for future comms included
10. Review work carried out

**Petition also received from Resident Representatives, signed by a number of households living in Bagwell Lane, Potbridge and Poland Lane**

Content of petition:

'You are currently considering the details of the next 10 year plan for Odiham Common. You are aware that public use and enjoyment of the common has deteriorated because of waterlogged paths, poor maintenance, and the big expansion of bracken and bramble.

- We want you to stop the decline.
- We support the response of our representatives to the inadequate draft management plan.
- We want you to positively and constructively engage with representatives of the community and abandon you attempt to terminate the local input. How can you justify termination of the Consultative Committee?
- Give equal weigh to biodiversity and management activities that enhance public enjoyment and include some of the latter equally in the 10 year plan.
- Scrap the 'more of the same' approach that will continue the decline of what people appreciate. The common must be a pleasant and enjoyable place for humans.'

## Hart District Council

### Ash Dieback Plan for Odiham Common 2020

To be used for monitoring and decision processes for ash dieback management at Odiham Commons until an overall Tree Strategy that addresses ash dieback has been formalised and agreed for Hart District Council.

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#### 1.0 Overview

The following plan has been developed utilising the latest guidance from Forestry Commission, as well as direct consultation and site visits with Hart's designated Forestry Commission Advisor.

#### 2.0 Odiham Commons current condition

Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI is a large area of woodland, wood pasture and grassland mosaic in North Hampshire, designated in 1992 for its invertebrate assemblages and supporting habitats, including a mosaic of woodland and wood pasture, lowland dry acid grassland and purple moor rush pasture.

The active work by Hart District Council in recent years has included creating more rides and glades, whilst enlarging existing rides. This has developed the mosaic habitat effect across the site and created multiple open spaces to link habitats throughout the woodland.

Its current condition has been upgraded to favourable, following a recent assessment by Natural England (Odiham Common with Bagwell Green and Shaw SSSI Integrated Site Assessment Report, 2019).

It is important to look after the mosaic of open and closed canopy space throughout the woodland, whilst maintaining links between them, to enable the important invertebrate assemblages to be retained and enhanced.

Like many sites across the UK, Odiham Common has a large proportion of ash trees that have been identified as having ash dieback disease. Whilst there would be benefit to creating further existing space at the site, it has been agreed with Natural England and the Forestry Commission that the



current levels are adequate. Therefore, in the majority of cases where possible, preference will be given to encouraging natural regeneration of the woodland where ash dieback needs to be managed. This plan sets out the approach Hart District Council will be taking to identifying and managing ash dieback across the site, in a way that compliments the overall composition and condition of the site.

### 3.0 Management Principles

Management for Odiham Commons woodland, in relation to managing ash dieback disease, is based on joint guidance from Natural England and the Forestry Commission on SSSI management under such circumstances (Managing woodland SSSIs with ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), April 2019). Where information has been taken directly from this document, it is italicised below.

- Specimens with less than 25% of their crowns affected can be considered as having *a good level of disease tolerance where they are within a known area of infection and surrounding trees are more severely affected*. Therefore, noting the condition of surrounding ash trees will also be beneficial and where groups of ash trees are surveyed, it is important to retain those with grade 1 rating, to help with the retention of potentially tolerant individuals. In addition, *tolerance of disease is highly heritable and will be passed onto new generations of trees*.
- *Trees with more than 50% of the crown affected will show little or no annual growth increment and are likely to die*. Therefore, where trees are recorded as grade 3-4 and within falling distance of people or property, there needs to be a plan for active removal.
- It is important that the monitoring programme includes monitoring trees that do not currently show signs of ash dieback (i.e. grade 1), as it can take years to identify more tolerant trees and baseline data sets a useful benchmark for ongoing monitoring.
- Where there is a high proportion of grade 1 and 2 trees, it may be *several years* until more serious level of dieback occurs. If ash is removed before looking for resistant specimens, we will not be allowing a resistant generation to develop. Therefore, there should be a limit of ash removal over the next ten-year management plan cycle, with the majority of ash-specific works focusing on grade 3 & 4, where ash dieback is the main reason for the works. This should be sufficient, providing there is good management (removal) of grade 3 and 4 specimens.
- Furthermore, *955 species make use of ash trees as a habitat on one site. Some of these are obligate or highly dependent on ash. These species are vulnerable and likely to decline if suitable alternative habitat is not provided when ash dies*. This supports Hart's monitor and response approach, which gives the woodland an opportunity to grow new species or ash trees to replace felled ash, as part of natural woodland regeneration. Planting will only be supported where regeneration is not apparent within the first 3 years.
- If there is an unpredicted catastrophic rate of decline in the health of ash on site over the next ten years, this will need to be taken into account with the 5-year management plan review.
- Ash dieback disease affects woodland most where there are existing issues and challenges, such as
  - *Reduced diversity of tree/shrub species*
  - *Unsuccessful natural tree regeneration due to lack of light grazing/browsing by deer and other animals*

- *Lack of structural diversity across the wood in terms of tree size/class/shrub layer/open space/dead wood*
- *Damage to trees and regeneration by grey squirrels/other pests and diseases*
- *Non-native species*
- *Climate change impacts*

Therefore, it is imperative that the overall management of the woodland continues for these other features, to promote structural diversity and ensure the overall health of the woodland does not suffer

- Ash trees and stands that affect the health and safety of people should be considered as the priority.

#### 4.0 Recording, Monitoring and Implementation Plan

Regular monitoring is recommended to map the progress of the disease, *at least annually....recommended between late July and early August*. Therefore, monitoring will ideally adhere to these timescales, particularly in areas deemed to be high risk to members of the public. Ash trees and ash stands will be monitored regularly and recorded according to their graded condition. Location risks will also be applied, using an appropriate risk zoning system. Where ash poses a higher potential health and safety threat (e.g. adjacent to main paths, roads, buildings, neighbouring properties, infrastructure items), the ash will be inspected annually. Where ash stands are present and are away from areas considered to be high risk (see above definition), they will be monitored every 2-3 years. If areas in low risk areas reach grade 3, they should be inspected more frequently i.e. annually, to help monitor and control spread to the wider area.

*The overall impact on a stand will be less in mixed stands*. Therefore, grade 3&4 trees that are 'stand alone' should be removed as well as those in groups of grade 3&4 ash, but the single species group should be prioritised if any priorities need to be made. Annual felling works should be prioritised in the following order:

1. H & S (adjacent to paths, buildings, etc)
2. Groups of trees with high proportion of ash
3. Individuals
4. Groups of mixed species containing ash

However, *felling a large proportion of mature, diseased ash in the same stand...can make the remaining (more tolerant) trees more vulnerable to infection by honey fungus*. It is therefore preferable to retain more mature trees where possible by felling smaller sections of ash rather than large areas all at once, to help retain the woodland's overall structural diversity.

Trees and groups will be graded according to their current condition, to enable the recorder to compare with previous years of data (Table 1). Other useful information such as percentage of growth on a tree or stands of trees should also be noted to assist with comparing with historical records and building up a long-term picture of tree health.

*Table 1. Grading and proposed activity for inspection and recording of ash dieback.*

Grade	State of health	Dieback cover	Inspection frequency	Recommendation (where rate of decline is steady)
1	Good	0-25%	Every 3 years	Continue to monitor as per frequency outlined in above management principles

2	Reasonable	26-50%	Every 3 years	Continue to monitor as per frequency outlined in above management principles
3	Poor	51-75%	Annually	Plan for removal of tree within following 2 winters if within area of high health and safety concern
4	Very poor	76-100%	Annually	Definite removal within following winter (or sooner if appropriate), if in area of high health and safety concern

It is also important to take into account the rate of decline, as those individuals declining at a higher rate will need a more rapid decision and response. Such examples may require an increase in frequency of inspections, for example where a tree or group of trees show a significant change in percentage dieback between one annual inspection and the next. Table 2 is an example of the level of information that should be considered for ash dieback records. At present, a software mapping system is used to record tree safety issues.

*Table 2. Hart DC use a software mapping system (currently Ezytreev) to record data and the type of information that is recorded is demonstrated in the example table below.*

Tree ID (or group of trees)	Dieback cover percentage (%)	Grade (1-4)	Location risk zone (1-3)	Other notes (e.g. condition of surrounding trees)	Recommendation	Timescale
1						
2						
3						
4						

According to the guidance document, *if the loss of native species is greater than 10% over a 5 year period, then the condition is unfavourable*. Therefore, recording and monitoring should include the diversity of native species within the woodland, every 5 years.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT HART OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.**

#### **Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

##### **Q1) The Countryside Manager to seek further evidence on the differences between this most recent draft Plan and the previous one**

The purpose of the 2010 -2020 Management Plan was to analyse the following areas and propose management that would be most suitable for the SSSI. These included:

- Obtain Stakeholders perspective about what they value about the common
- Examine the range of management options available to improve/maintain those features that are valued and
- Select the most appropriate management options

This was done under the principles of “common purpose” a method of public engagement recommended by DEFRA. Note: as common land, any formal consent we may have needed from DERA, would have to have shown that we followed these principles, and they were adopted as a precautionary option.

It principally promoted and delivered large areas of restoration where rides, glades and coppicing would be implemented and could be seen as quite drastic.

The proposed plan focuses on routine maintenance of the common and does not contain significant proposals for change.

##### **Q2) Can we improve the pathways in a way that is sensitive to biodiversity and help improve access for the residents**

The proposed plan has struck an appropriate balance between biodiversity, informal recreation, and access to the common

It is worth noting that any increase of recreational activity or the construction or improvement of pathways would have a detrimental impact on the site’s biodiversity value, require additional finances and require consent from Natural England (NE) to implement. Draining the land is also not an option as it is part of the ecological structure of the SSSI. The 2009 consultation also notes the value of the site as “a tranquil and wild” benefit for the local area. Increases in visitation would impact on this.

##### **Q3) The possibility of applying for additional Government funding schemes appropriate to local groups for climate change activities**

The Countryside Service has a good track record at identifying and securing grant funding. We will continue to monitor funding opportunities and submit appropriate applications.

#### **Questions submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee from Residents**

**The Countryside Manager to provide answers to the questions submitted in the Appendix by Stuart Royston to Cabinet**

1. Invite Cabinet to re-assure itself of the financial viability of the plan

The grant funding identified is based on an annual average over the lifetime of the plan. This can be flexed with additional monies being drawn down as required the plan anticipates that the majority of the labour and resources to deliver the plan will be taken from existing staff budgets with volunteers backfilling when available. If additional works are identified, then bids for additional funding can be made to NE.

**2. In the light of the response from Odiham Parish Council, the residents, and the lack of consultation with Winchfield Parish Council all of which throw doubt on the wisdom of the proposed 'liaison' arrangements: invite Cabinet to consider alternative, more effective consultation arrangements that would bring together and unite the key stakeholders at a local level**

We do not believe there is a need for further "consultation" as this is a management plan which principally sets out the proposed maintenance regime for the common and therefore has little need or ability to vary. When a new "Project" demands the need for future engagement then we will undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify key groups and organisations that will need to be consulted. We will also ensure that this considers consultation with Winchfield Parish Council.

We note Odiham Parish Council's response and have no issue with the Parish Council building a relationship with the residents and passing on information to the District Council. We would advise that the Parish Council need to ensure that any feedback is representative of the entire parish.

**3. Ask Cabinet to appreciate that for a common such as Odiham Common – a SSSI site that offers potential to provide many benefits for people in the community – a successful plan should embrace biodiversity and wider public benefit objectives in a mutually supporting way and that the plan is weak on 'public enjoyment' objectives**

The Plan provides a balance that is "fit for purpose" for a remote nature reserve of this sensitivity.

**4. Paths and rides provide the essential infrastructure for public enjoyment and poor paths are one of the major factors preventing enjoyment of the common: invite Cabinet to prioritise repair and maintenance of waterlogged and muddy paths and earmark any unused resource from the £32,227 budget allocation for this purpose**

Officers have reviewed the 22/23 Odiham Common budget and confirm that there is no unallocated resource available. The majority of the cost in the budget provides a dedicated Ranger for this site.

**5. Invite Cabinet to ensure biodiversity objectives, targets, and performance indicators that particularly enhance public enjoyment are afforded priority and with this in mind:**

**a) Make reduction of bracken a priority with achievement targets at 2 year intervals rather than simply at the end of the plan**

Prescription 1.11 within the "Action Plan and Timetable" of the management plan proposes to treat Bracken in all years (or as necessary)

**b) Review the much reduced mowing regime after 2 years to ensure it is adequate for ensuring Odiham Common is an attractive place for visitors**

Actions 4.6, 4.7 and 5.1 to 5.3 within the "Operational Activity Summary" of the management plan confirm the arrangements for monitoring the operations.

There are a variety of walks around the common totalling over 10km. Which allows visitors to the common to enjoy up to approximately 2 hours of walking.

Odiham Common is not a country park and will be principally managed for nature conservation. which visitors will be able to enjoy.

Prescription 1.12 within the “Action Plan and Timetable” of the management plan proposes a rotational cut that will create the highest value for biodiversity whilst maintaining a clear passage.

**c) Prioritise ditch and water management to keep the common free of unnecessary excess water and its ponds attractive**

Objective 2: Pond and ditch restoration and creation within the “Action Plan and Timetable” of the management plan covers this adequately. It is worth noting that Odiham Common has wet woodland / marshes within it, each supporting its own specialist ecology which are listed as priority habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

**6. Invite Cabinet to remove from the plan the non-critical, unfunded tree felling in the small compartments in Potbridge that would be detrimental to the people**

There is no uncritical and unfunded tree felling proposed

## **Cabinet**

**DATE OF MEETING: THURSDAY, 4 AUGUST 2022**

**TITLE OF REPORT: GREEN GRID PILOT PROJECT – SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING**

**Report of: Head of Environmental & Technical Services**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Strategic Direction and Partnership**

**Key Decision: N**

**Confidentiality: Open**

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To provide an update on the Green Grid Pilot Signage and Wayfinding Strategy and to seek Cabinet direction on the final design to allow the strategy to be completed.
2. To seek approval to proceed with the manufacture and installation of the signage and wayfinding along the pilot route between Fleet Railway Station and Hartland Village.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Cabinet:

- Selects the final design for the Green Grid Pilot Signage and Wayfinding Strategy from the two shortlisted concept designs, details provided below and in Appendix 2;
- Agrees that approval of any minor variations to the final design be delegated to the Leader

## **BACKGROUND**

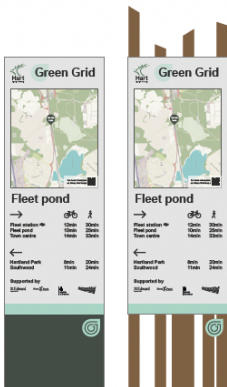

3. In August 2019, Cabinet approved the implementation of the Fleet Pond Green Corridor Project. This project aimed to create a sustainable transport corridor with significant environmental improvements connecting Fleet, via Hartland Village, with Farnborough.
4. The project is funded by Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund, S106 contributions from the Hartland Village development and by the Council.
5. This project was selected to be the pilot for the Council's Green Grid, which aims to create routes between all settlements to encourage walking, cycling and other forms of sustainable healthy transport. As well as connecting communities together, there is an opportunity to connect people to existing green spaces and other key destinations.
6. The widening of the shared pedestrian and cycle route between Fleet Pond car park and Fleet Rail Station; the improved access road between the car park and A3013 Cove Road and the enhanced car parking facilities elements of the project were completed in July 2022. In addition, signage and wayfinding is also required along the route.



7. Further to Cabinet approval, in Spring 2022, the Council procured consultants to create an identity and signage strategy for the pilot route, which could then be used throughout the Green Grid network. In addition, the consultants were also tasked with refreshing the Council's logo and producing updated branding guidelines. Once both these projects are completed, the consultants will move on to create a signage strategy for the Countryside Service's sites. All three of these projects are interlinked, providing consistency of brand across and throughout Hart District.

## MAIN ISSUES

8. The consultants, Integrity, initially created four concept designs and in consultation with officers, these were reduced to three. These concepts were further refined for the stakeholder consultation.
9. The proposed signage and wayfinding concepts were considered at several workshops attended by key stakeholders in June 2022. A summary of the feedback collated in these workshops is provided at **Appendix 1**.
10. Based on the feedback received, the preferred elements from the range of concepts designs were combined into two final options. Details of the developmental journey to create these final two options based on the feedback from the workshops are shown in **Appendix 2**.
11. From this the final design options are shown below, with further details provided in **Appendix 3**:

	Concept A - Brand & timber	Concept B - Materiality
Design		
Materials	Painted aluminium panels with vinyl graphics. Timber of aluminium frame/structure depending on location.	Steel panels with vinyl graphics. Aluminium frame/structure, clad in timber.

Pros	Clear and easy to read. Industry standard construction, panels are easily maintained and changed. Construction can be adjusted to suit environment.	Clear and easy to read. Unique appearance with many configurations possible. Construction can be adjusted to suit environment. Durable construction.
Cons	Timber would be more prone to ware/vandalism.	Different configurations increases manufacture cost Timber would be prone to vandalism / ware but not structural.
Durability/Life Span	10 - 15 years for urban 8+ for timber, but easy to replace	10 - 15 years
Cost	£27,390	£30,425
20 year cost (circa)	£75k	£62k

11. The final design concept needs to be selected from the two refined option. On balance, whilst officers like both options, Concept B - Materiality would be the preferred option given the ongoing maintenance costs.

12. The signage will be installed along the route as each element is completed.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

13. A number of concept designs were presented to the Council and key stakeholders and feedback sought. Those concepts that received less support or that did not receive positive feedback were not progressed any further.

### **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

14. The Green Grid's Signage and Wayfinding Strategy would help to deliver the Corporate Plan objective to provide "infrastructure that encourages people to walk, cycle and use buses", as well as the Council's Vision 2040, which supports creating a more connected environment through effective walking, cycling, or road and rail links.

### **Service Plan**

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? Yes
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal? Yes

### **Legal and Constitutional Issues**

15. Cabinet is the appropriate decision-making body for this decision, in line with the Terms of Reference within the Constitution.

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

16. Funding for the wider Green Corridor project approved by Cabinet in August 2019 included a budget allocation for the design, manufacture and installation of the signage and wayfinding of £23.5k. It is estimated (subject to procurement) that the cost of either of the two designs presented in this paper could exceed the allocated budget by approximately £7k. It is proposed that the increased cost for the signage and wayfinding will be contained within the overall Green Grid project costs and offset with savings elsewhere within the budget.
17. Cabinet will be provided with an update on the overall Green Grid project cost later in the year.

### **Risk Management**

18. In accordance with the councils agreed project management procedures a risk register for this project has been prepared and is tracked by the project team. The main risk identified for the manufacture and installation of the signage and wayfinding is the possible impact of inflation and material/labour shortages and the potential impact on cost. To estimated costs reported in this paper have been adjusted to accommodate this risk.

### **EQUALITIES**

19. All signage and wayfinding must be read and understood by as wider audience as possible. The Green Grid wayfinding strategy has been designed to provide legible signage for all users, some key points to ensure readability are;
- All wayfinding in the Hart District Council brand font Arial which has been selected for good legibility
  - All text in sentence case, with upper- and lower-case letters for easy recognition
  - Cap heights vary from sign to sign but selected to give good readability at distance
  - Height of text on totems positioned for readability for wheelchair as well as standing users
  - Contrast of text to background accessed to ensure it exceeds the minimum 4.5:1
  - Sign panels to have a matt finish to reduce glare.
20. A full Equalities Assessment will be undertaken once the final design and strategy is completed to ensure that the signage and wayfinding (including the final design and the location of the signage) promote equality and can be read and understood by as many of our residents and visitors to the area as possible.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

21. Whilst there will be carbon implications to the manufacture and installation of the signage and wayfinding, as well as with its maintenance and repair, the signage and wayfinding will help to promote sustainable travel in the district, so offsetting these carbon emissions.

### **ACTION**

22. Subject to approval of this reports recommendations, officers will progress the Signage and Wayfinding Strategy and procure the manufacture and installation of the signs.

**Contact Details:** Adam Green, [adam.green@hart.gov.uk](mailto:adam.green@hart.gov.uk) and Christine Tetlow, [christine.tetlow@hart.gov.uk](mailto:christine.tetlow@hart.gov.uk)

## Appendices

**Appendix 1** – Summary of the feedback from the stakeholder workshops

**Appendix 2** - Development of the Final Signage and Wayfinding options showing the combination of options, into two final designs

**Appendix 3** – Details of the Final two Signage and Wayfinding options in greater detail

## **Hart Council Green Grid Signage and Wayfinding Workshops**

21st June 2022

In developing signage and wayfinding for the Green Grid pilot project (a new route between Fleet Railway station and Hartland Village), several workshop sessions were undertaken in June to collate feedback from a range of key stakeholders who have an interest in the Green Grid pilot.

### **Aims of the workshop sessions:**

- 1. Present the key principles of the wayfinding strategy and their application**
- 2. Gain feedback on the proposed strategy and proposed sign types**
- 3. Introduce three design concepts for the wayfinding**
- 4. Discuss the sign concepts and proposed materials and identify preferences**

The feedback listed below were raised within the workshops by the key stakeholders and have helped to advance the strategy and the final designs options.

## **Feedback on the Green Grid Signage Strategy**

### **Target users:**

- Regular users would be more familiar with the route and therefore the signage should be aimed at new users who haven't used the route or are not familiar with the journey. Signage should encourage users along the path rather than into the pond's surrounding because it is a nature reserve for wildlife.
- There should be sufficient marketing to ensure that the public recognise the Green Grid branding to ensure its success

### **Sign family:**

- A sign within the information family for seasonal information i.e. cattle grazing would be needed.
- Ensure there is synergy between the Green Grid signage and other signage in the area, to ensure they complement each other and it's not 'death by signage'.
- Consider fitting into existing signage (signs or pole sharing) in a town or park rather than using separate, stand-alone Green Grid signs
- Consider how to ensure that Green Grid signs is not imposing on existing signage.
- Ensure that signage is easily changeable for maintenance and updating

### **Wayfinding information and mapping:**

- An interactive district map, linking to other routes for users would be really useful.
- Consideration should be given to digital instead of static maps for ability to gain extra information
- Consideration is needed when there are two paths crossing, how will that then be communicated?

## Summary of feedback on the Green Grid Design Concepts

### Wayfinding icon:

- The preferred icon was unanimous, all attendees preferred the 'teardrop' icon with the abstract 'gg' inside.
- There was also unanimous support for having an icon as a low impact signage option when possible.
- The 'teardrop' shape with its 'organic nature' would work well in the country.
- The 'teardrop' looks like a location pin, it's slick and subtle and would fit well in the environment. The other icon could be confused from a distance for the QR code due to its decorative 'g'

### Wayfinding concepts:

- Some attendees did not select a favourite, but those attendees who did favour one concept were split equally between all three concepts.
- Feedback and comments for each concept were given by various attendees.

### Concept 1

- Would be most at odds with our rural woodland setting but recognise this could work in urban locations.
- Clean professional appearance presents the correct image for the Green Grid.
- Cold, industrial and impersonal visually, but appropriate in an urban environment.
- Too urban
- Counterintuitive - style is at odds with aims of the Green Grid.

### Concept 2

- Largely favoured because it would work in an urban and country environment.
- The phased approach between wood and metal on the secondary wayfinding signage was thought to be a good solution.
- Soft, human concept that imitates growth and emerging from the ground.
- Wood element softens the appearance of the signs.
- Too fussy.

### Concept 3

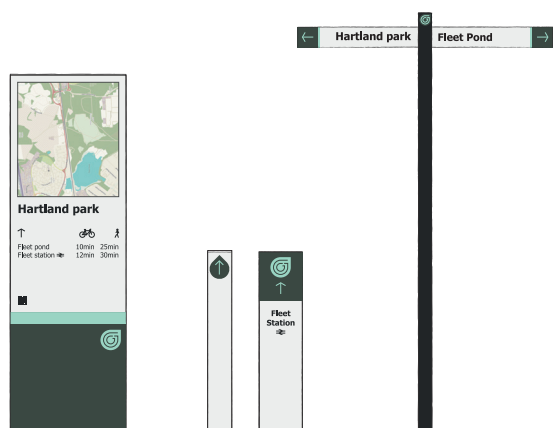
- Using wood as the primary material blends in naturally with countryside settings. The colours also fit a countryside environment.
- It would blend well with Hartland Village Country Park and existing signage/branding
- This is a non-intrusive design for country settings, and when used in an urban setting it would stand out. The use of a natural material would promote a countryside walk which is a purpose of the Green Grid.
- Review the contrast when reversing the word sets to ensure visibility is sufficient in different lights.
- Need to ensure that timber used is at least FSC certified and sourced from local managed woods if possible. There was a discussion about utilising timber from the Hart Council managed woodland but this was discounted due to small volume available and also the issues with uniformity and certification.

### **Other concerns raised**

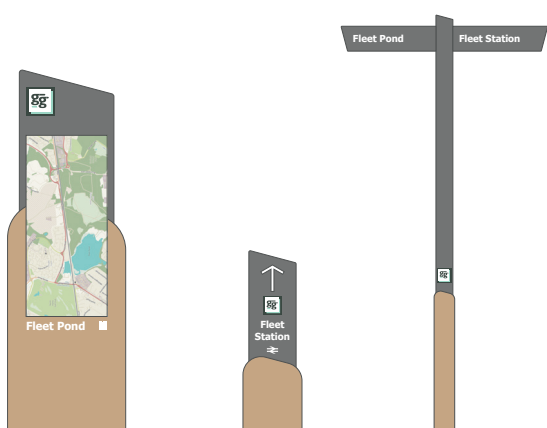
- A fourth concept had been removed before the stakeholder consultations and two councilors who had seen very early design concepts were disappointed that this option wasn't available anymore.
- Concerns around being as environmentally friendly as possible with the materials were raised and discussed.
- Graffiti and vandalism is a big problem and where possible all of the signage should be resistant to graffiti and arson. This will need to be considered in detailed design for whichever concept is chosen.
- Solar lighting in dark areas could be incorporated to improve usability.
- As the Green Grid will span across varying locations, both urban and rural, could there be a combination of designs to reflect the user's location at that juncture?
- A suggestion to combine Concept 1 and Concept 3 to work across urban and countryside was unanimous. Using messaging/design on Concept 1 and the posts from Concept 1 or 3 depending on the environment.

# INITIAL DESIGN CONCEPTS

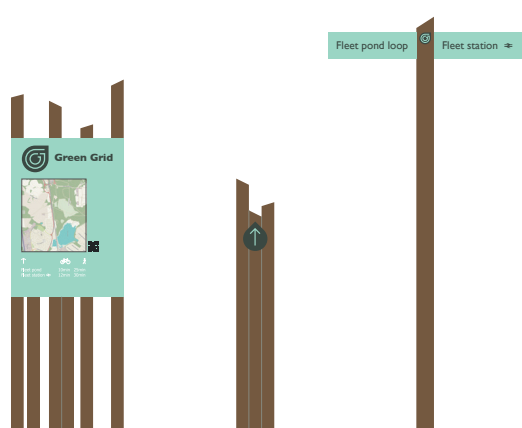
Original 4 concepts presented to project team.



CONCEPT 1 BRAND INSPIRED



CONCEPT 2 MATERIALITY



CONCEPT 3 TIMBER INSPIRED



CONCEPT 4 RECYCLED MATERIALS

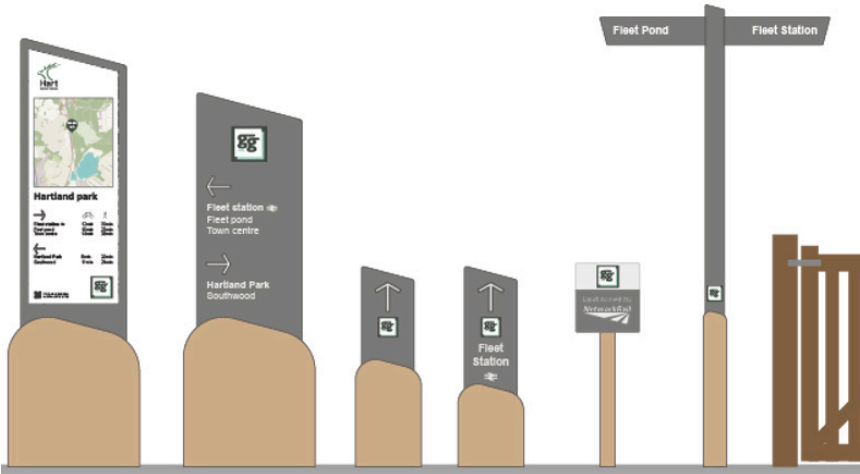


# CONSULTATION STAGE CONCEPTS CARRIED FORWARD

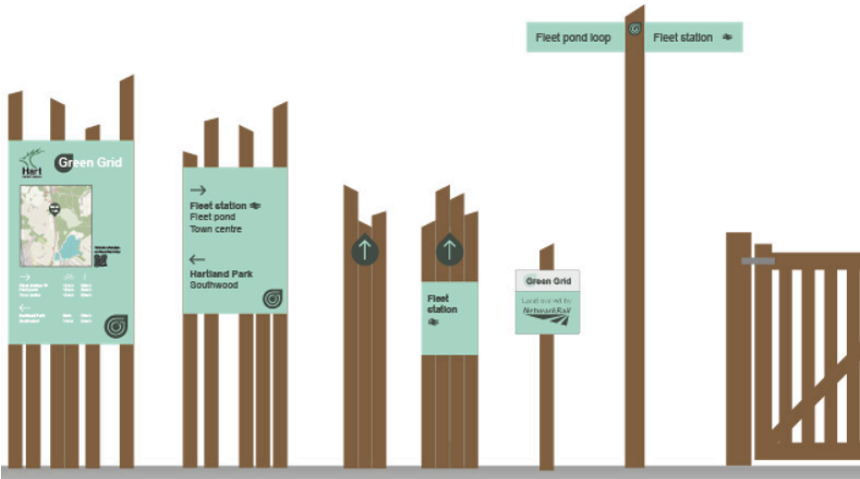
Prior to consultations the options were reduced to 3 after feedback that the recycled concept would be challenging to gain approval to install on Highways.



CONCEPT 1 BRAND INSPIRED



CONCEPT 2 MATERIALITY



CONCEPT 3 TIMBER INSPIRED

# DETAILED DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR APPROVAL

At the consultations there was a split of opinion across all 3 concepts and a suggestion that brand and timber could work together. They have been merged to create a concept that has signs best suited to urban or rural environments.



FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER COMBINED



FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY



## **GREEN GRID PILOT SCHEME** WAYFINDING STRATEGY

**Version 3 - 15-07-2022**

A strategy for the wayfinding & signage across the Green Grid pilot scheme.

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# YOUR WAYFINDING OUR VISION

Our vision is to create a wayfinding strategy that successfully delivers the aims of the Green Grid - creating clearly signed routes which become well used. The strategy will consider the sign types required to navigate the Green Grid, as well as how to apply the signs balancing clear navigation with minimum number of signs. Providing appropriate information levels to ensure easy navigation between destinations, whilst also encouraging exploration and promoting other areas.





# WAYFINDING KEY PRINCIPLES

**A good wayfinding strategy needs to take account of seven core wayfinding principles:**

## People centred



The system is built around the people using it and the needs they have.

## Context



The system allows people to easily establish where in the site they are at any point.

## Hierarchy

A clear hierarchy of signs exists that progressively narrows down the journey, from “big picture” to “building identifier”.

## Relevance



Only information that is relevant to the current stage of the journey is displayed at any one point.

## Legibility



Signs are legible and accessible to all users, using a combination of typography, colour, and symbology.

## Consistency



Consistency exists in naming, graphics, colours, etc. at every level of wayfinding, from the entrance to site, to the parking and the destination.

## Environmentally appropriate



The signage design and manufacture is sympathetic to and consistent with the environment in which the signs appear.

Appealing to target groups

Clear but sympathetic to environment

Green Grid first then other destinations

Works for pedestrians and cyclists

Legible in forest and low light levels

Consistent and at home in urban and countryside

Sustainable construction to back up ethos

## People centred



**The system is built around the people using it and the needs they have.**

The wayfinding solution has to be people-centred. By this we mean the system needs to encourage usage by the target groups, with appealing entrance signage & ways of communicating the different Green Grid routes in the area.

## Context



**The system allows people to easily establish where in the site they are at any point.**

Strike a balance of clear and easy navigation when heading to a specific destination against not oversigning particularly in SSSIs.

## Hierarchy

**A clear hierarchy of signs exists that progressively narrows down the journey, from “big picture” to “destination”.**

Developing an adaptable hierarchy, which can grow with additions of new routes and destinations. The primary function is signing the designated Green Grid routes but with additional useful information.

## Relevance



**Only information that is relevant to the current stage of the journey is displayed at any one point.**

The signage needs to work for both pedestrians and cyclists, taking account of the additional speed and so less thinking time when cycling to provide navigation which reassures and avoids the need to stop when cycling.

## Legibility



**Signs are legible and accessible to all users, using a combination of typography, colour, and symbology.**

A successful wayfinding system will provide the right information at the right time in the clearest possible manner. For the Green Grid this includes routes through areas which during the winter months even during the day will be unlit with low illumination levels. The signage therefore needs to be highly visible, even considering use of reflective materials.

## Consistency



**Consistency exists in naming, graphics, colours, etc. at every level of wayfinding, from the entrance to site to the destination.**

A sign family which is consistent, but can fit into the opposing environments of countryside locations as well as urban. Achieved through the use of colour and materials.

## Environmentally appropriate

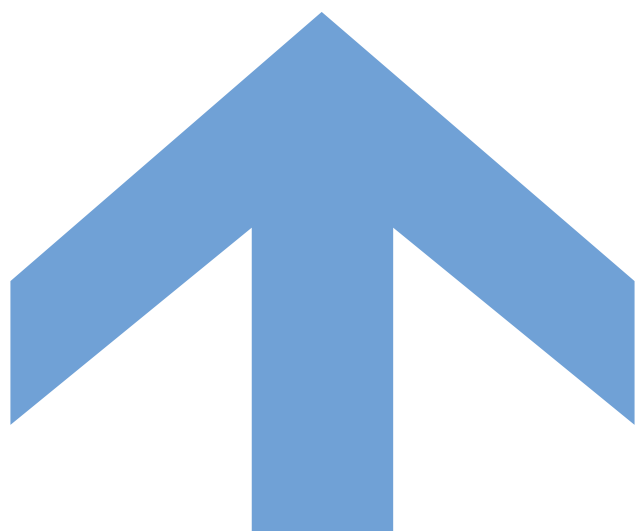


**The signage design and manufacture is sympathetic to and consistent with the environment in which the signs appear.**

As well as aesthetically fitting into the natural environment, the signage needs to take account of foundation restriction in SSSIs and have a low impact.



## 2.0 - ANALYSIS

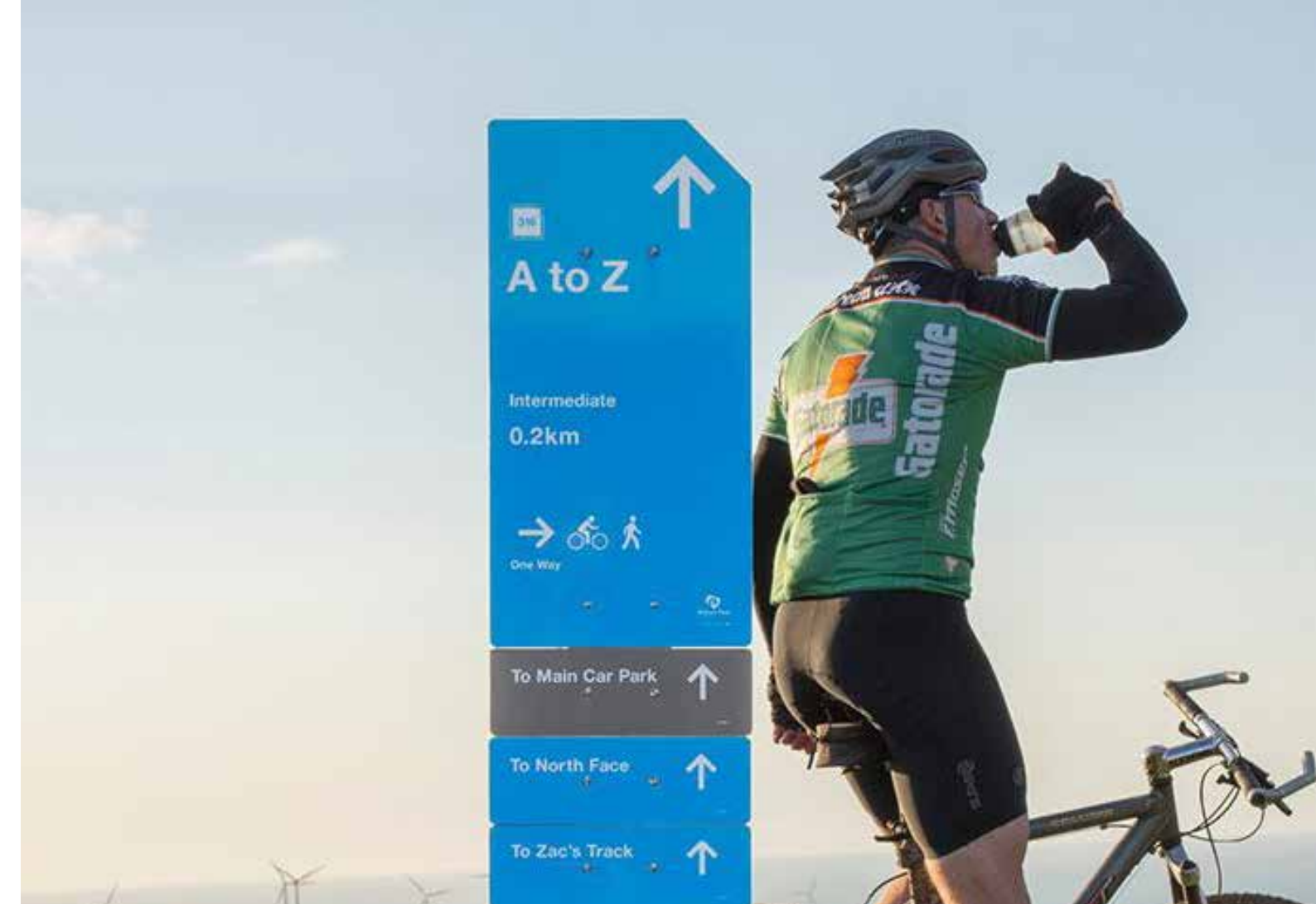




# USER ANALYSIS

Whilst the routes will be used by dog walkers, runners and other existing users of the countryside the key target groups are those who do not currently use sustainable transport, specifically young families and commuters. To target these groups the signage needs to be highly visible and appealing. There will be considerable overlap between families and commuters and workers in the higher age demographics are likely to have grandchildren. Therefore the appearance of the signage should be modern and vibrant aimed towards this younger demographic and the future.

Another aspect to consider is the transport methods being used, with cyclists and pedestrians sharing spaces the safety particularly of young children needs to be considered and high speeds discouraged at areas likely to have a high density of pedestrians. Conversely the system needs to take into account the increased speed of cyclists, finger posts are best read on foot and can be difficult to read when approached on a bike. Some decision points may require signage which is specifically for cyclists.





# SCENARIOS

## “I don’t want to drive to the station”

### Commuter

Dave and Lucy have just purchased their first house. Money is a bit tighter as a result, and they’re also concerned about climate change and want to reduce their car usage. Their rental flat was close to the station, but now they’ve moved they drive.

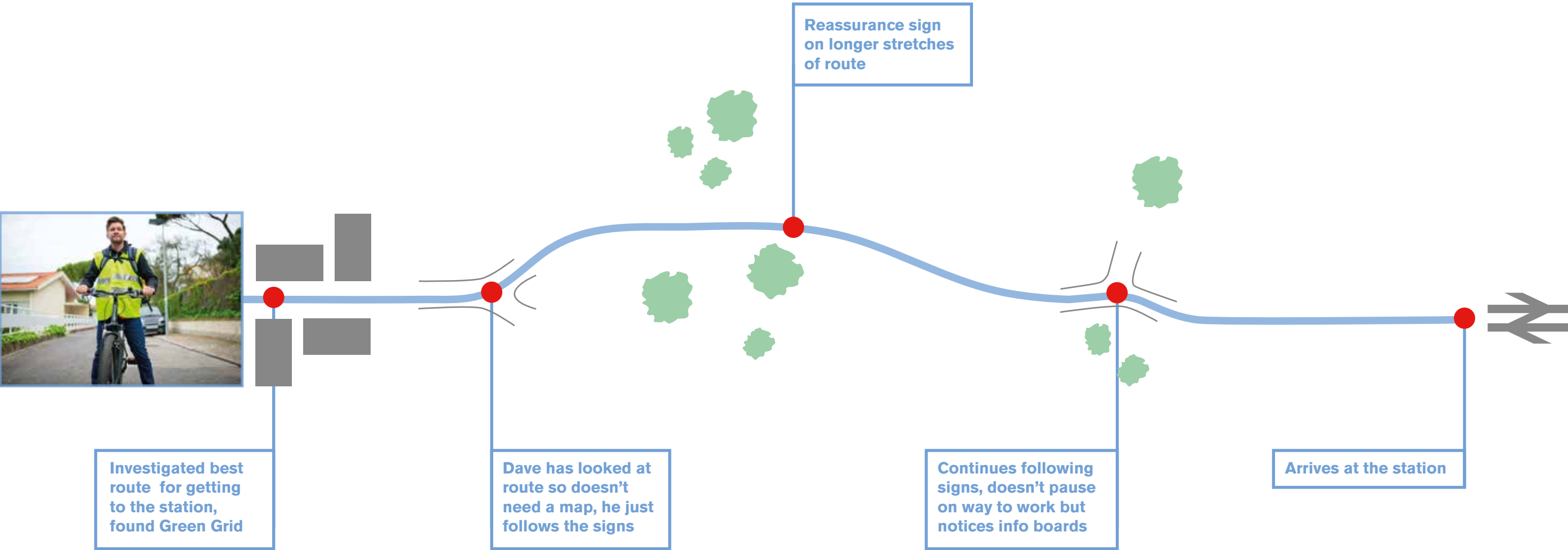
They want to cycle instead and have seen the Green Grid sign near their house. They look up the route and discover that it takes them straight to the station.

### Challenges

Neither are regular cyclists, and not used to following unfamiliar routes - particularly off road. They leave early for work and don’t have much time so want the route to be easy and not involve stopping to look at their phone.



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# SCENARIOS

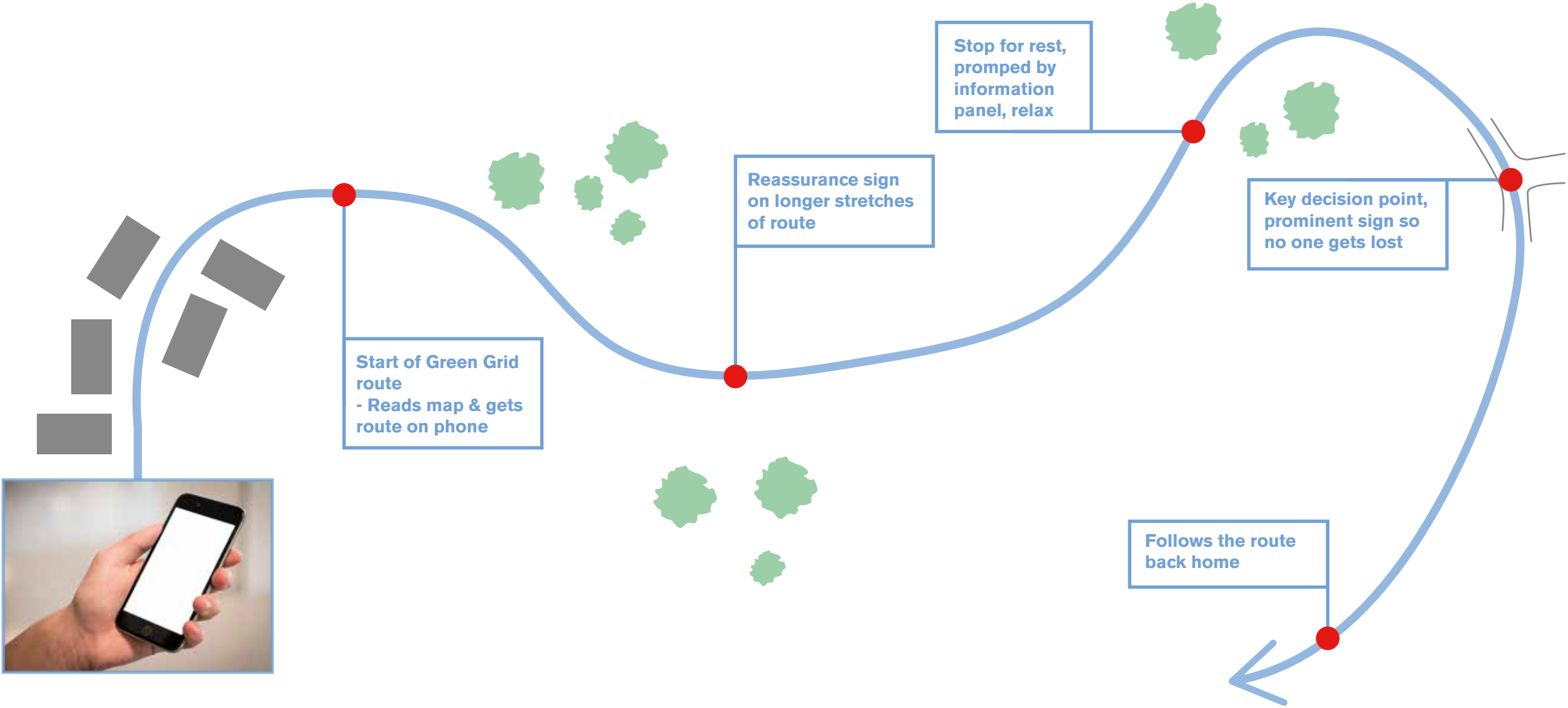
## “What shall we do today?”

### Young family

Fiona is a mother of two young children, and is looking for new things to do with the whole family at the weekend. They would normally drive to an attraction, but after looking on her phone one evening discovers the Green Grid which includes a route within walking distance of her house.

### Challenges

Fiona is used to self contained attractions with no need to follow signs on a specific route. She is also used to navigation and doing most things on her phone, viewing the route on her phone gives reassurance. She also with two young children needs to know walking times.





## 3.0 - STRATEGY





# SIGN DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS AND ENVIRONMENT



## MATERIALS & ENVIRONMENT

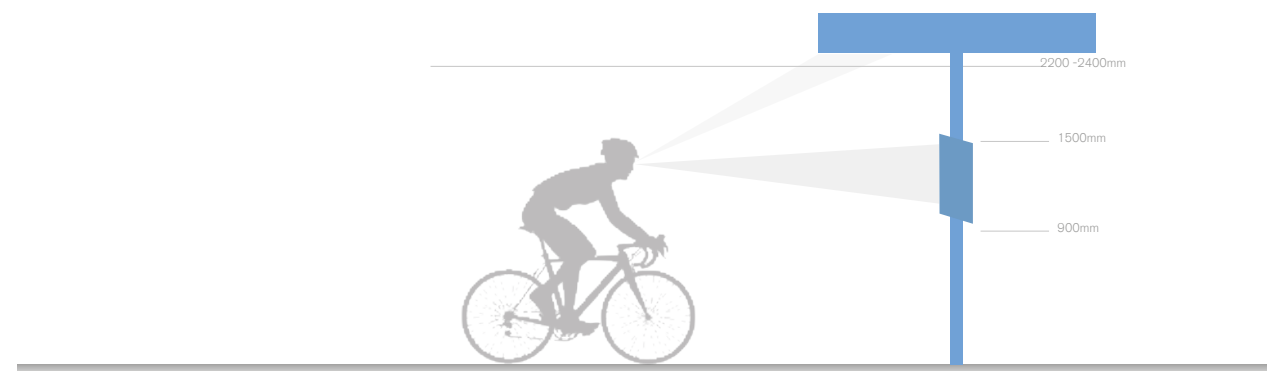
Material selection will be an important aspect of this project.

Encouraging sustainable transport, the signage should also be sustainable. With the pilot route and a high percentage of routes likely to be in countryside settings environmentally appropriate materials need to be considered. Hart council have set a precedent for high quality and inventive use of timber and local crafts people for signage and furniture and countryside sites.

This works brilliantly for the countryside, but not in urban environments. For the Green Grid, signage which gives consistency, is economical at higher volume and fits in the urban environment just as well the countryside is required.

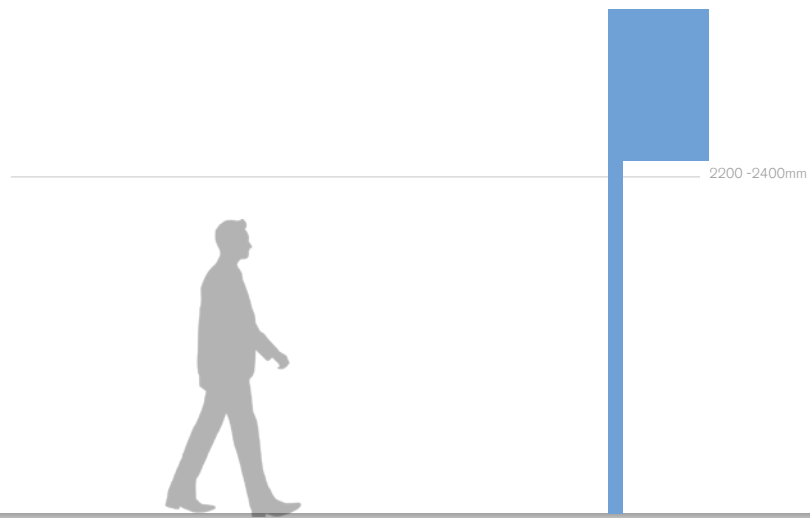


# SIGN DEVELOPMENT DESIGN PRINCIPLES



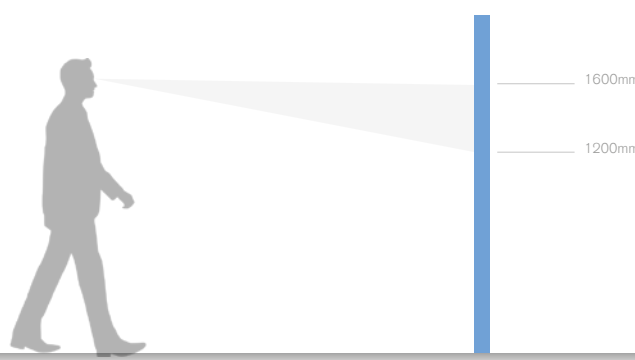
Text CAP HEIGHT  
50mm - 75mm

**CYCLING SIGNAGE**  
The optimum viewing height for signage is between 1500 & 900mm when cycling. Cap heights between 50 - 75mm are ideal for cyclists giving viewing distances of between 25 - 30m at the slower speeds. Text size is trade off with the visual appearance and sign size and we'd recommend a size of 55mm to fit the recommended sign sizes. A panel sign facing onto the path of cyclists will help increase visibility at cycling speeds, as high level finger post signs are harder to read.



Text CAP HEIGHT  
35mm

**PEDESTRIAN SIGNAGE**  
For post mounted signage a clear height underneath of 2200 - 2400mm ensures the panels are at a safe height but also visible across a crowded area. Cap height 35mm ensures legibility at distances of around 10m.



**PEDESTRIAN TOTEMS**  
The optimum reading height for pedestrian totems is between 1600 & 1200mm when walking. Cap height 35mm ensures legibility at distances of around 10m.

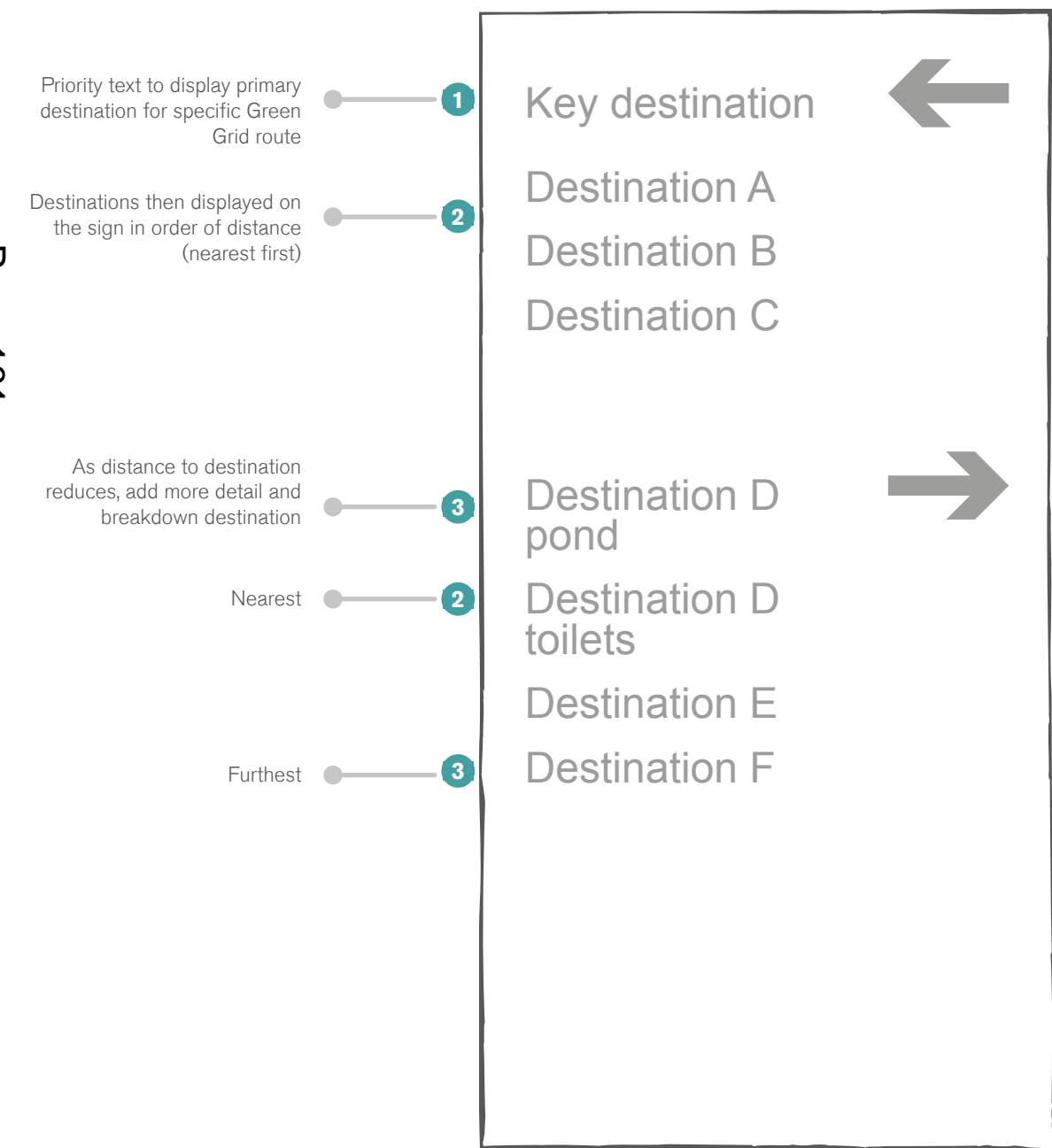
# SIGN FAMILY HIERARCHY OF INFORMATION

A good wayfinding system should have a clear information hierarchy that moves a user from “big picture” to “fine detail” as they move towards their intended destination.

The Green Grid has some unique features in that the primary aim is to navigate specific routes between destinations. Alongside this however it should achieve the following;

- Sign to other key destinations along the route
- Highlight recreational activities or walking routes
- Encourage dwelling in desired location, or discourage in areas of special scientific interest.

## GENERIC PRINCIPLES



## GREEN GRID



# SIGN DEVELOPMENT MAPPING



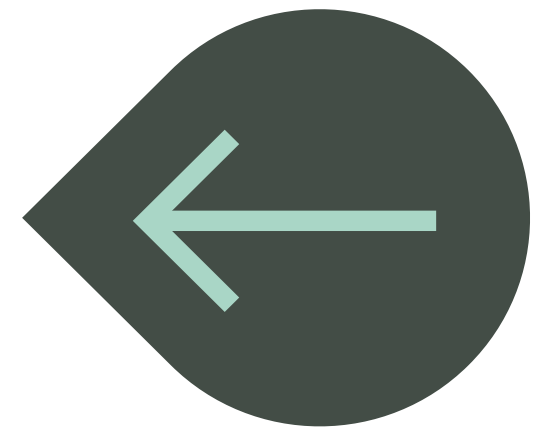
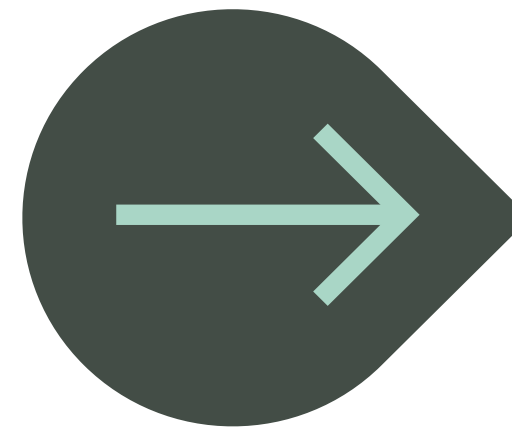
The use of mapping will be an important part of the Green Grid. The map will be a live document which is added to as additional routes are incorporated into the Green Grid.

- An online map which can be used to view the Green Grid routes on the Council website to plan journeys.
- A map sign at key points on the Green Grid, predominantly starting points of each route, but also key decision points. The map will be viewed alongside comprehensive directional information which includes walking time guides. A QR or NFC would allow users to access a map on their mobile device which they can use as their journey progresses.
- Finally on the go on a mobile device, the ability to locate yourself live on a route will really increase the reassurance and usage of the Green Grid by younger users.



# SIGN DEVELOPMENT ICONS

An icon has been developed, this as an important way of identifying the Green Grid. The icon will be used on signage, and as a waymarker which can sit alongside existing rights of way signs. Just as importantly it can be used in other applications such as social media or web to promote the Green Grid and build recognition.

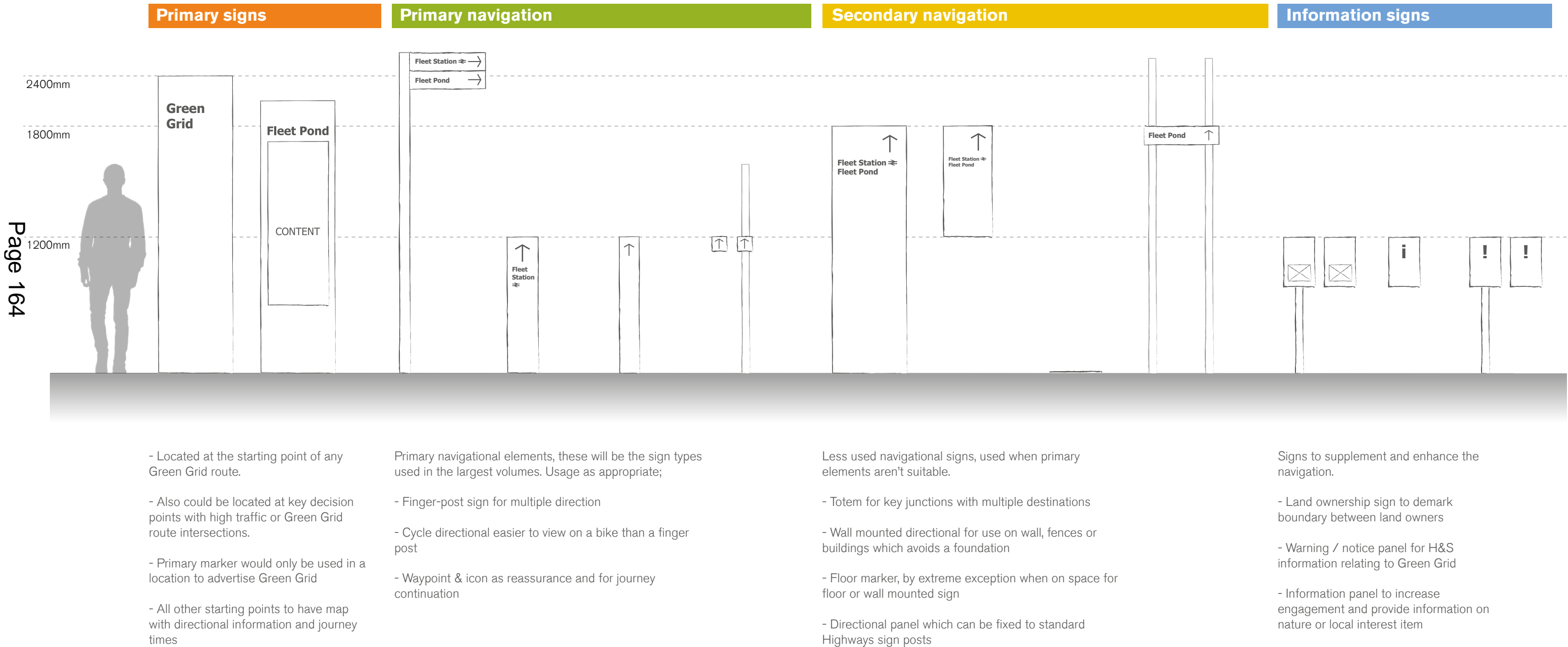


Green Grid icon



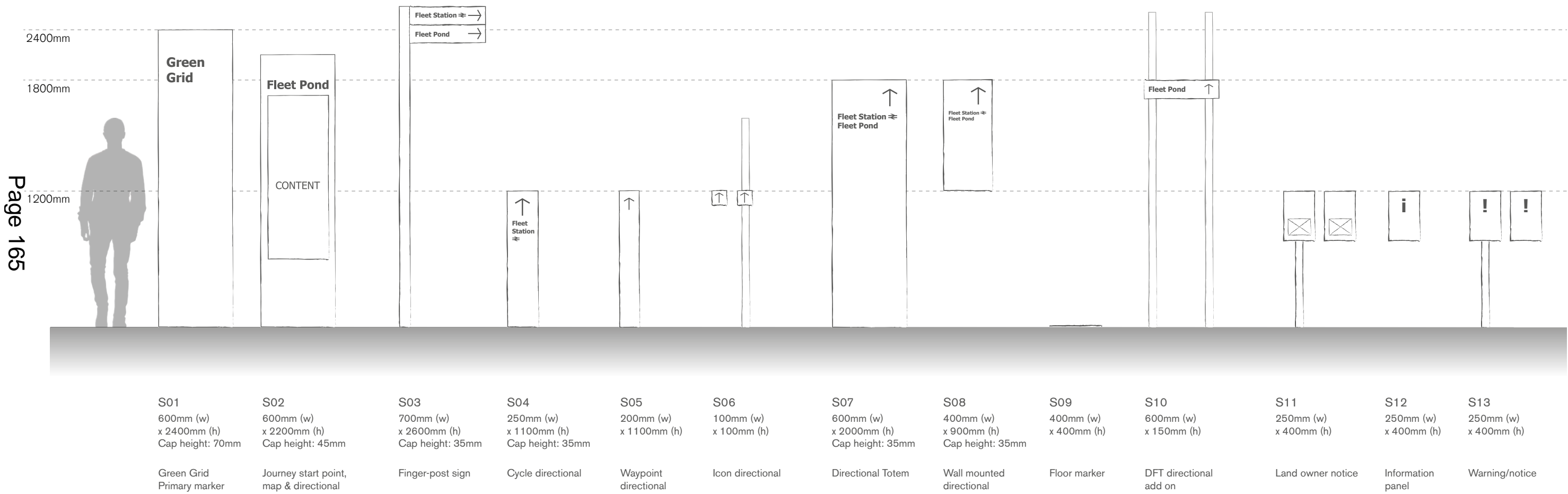
# SIGN FAMILY GREEN GRID

The sign family is based on our survey and design development and covers the key sign types we think will be required for both the pilot and future routes.



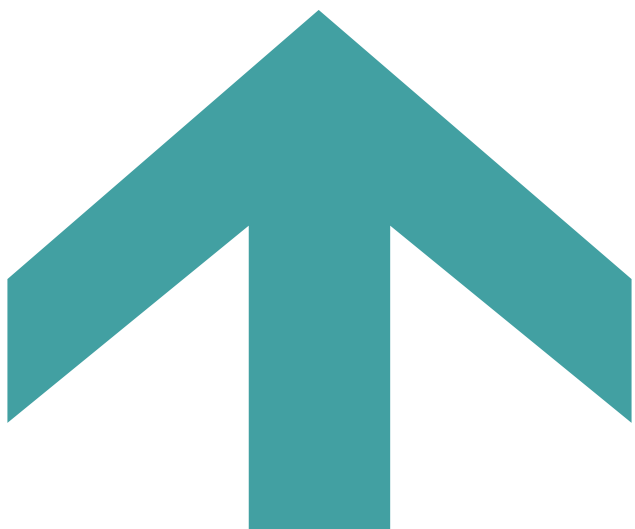
# SIGN FAMILY GREEN GRID

The sign family is based on our survey and design development and covers the key sign types we think will be required for both the pilot and future routes.





# 4.0 - CONCEPT





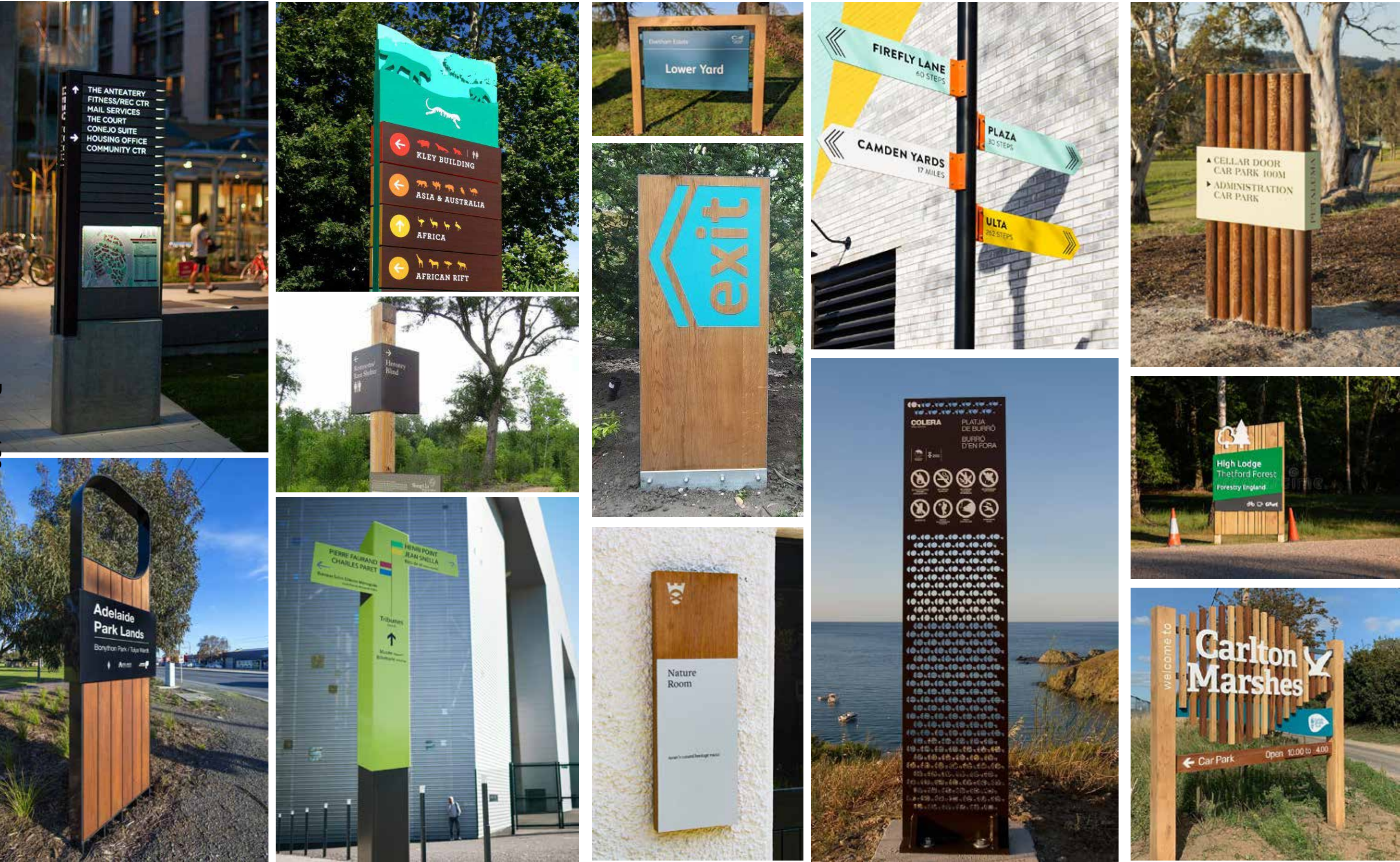
# SIGN DEVELOPMENT WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE



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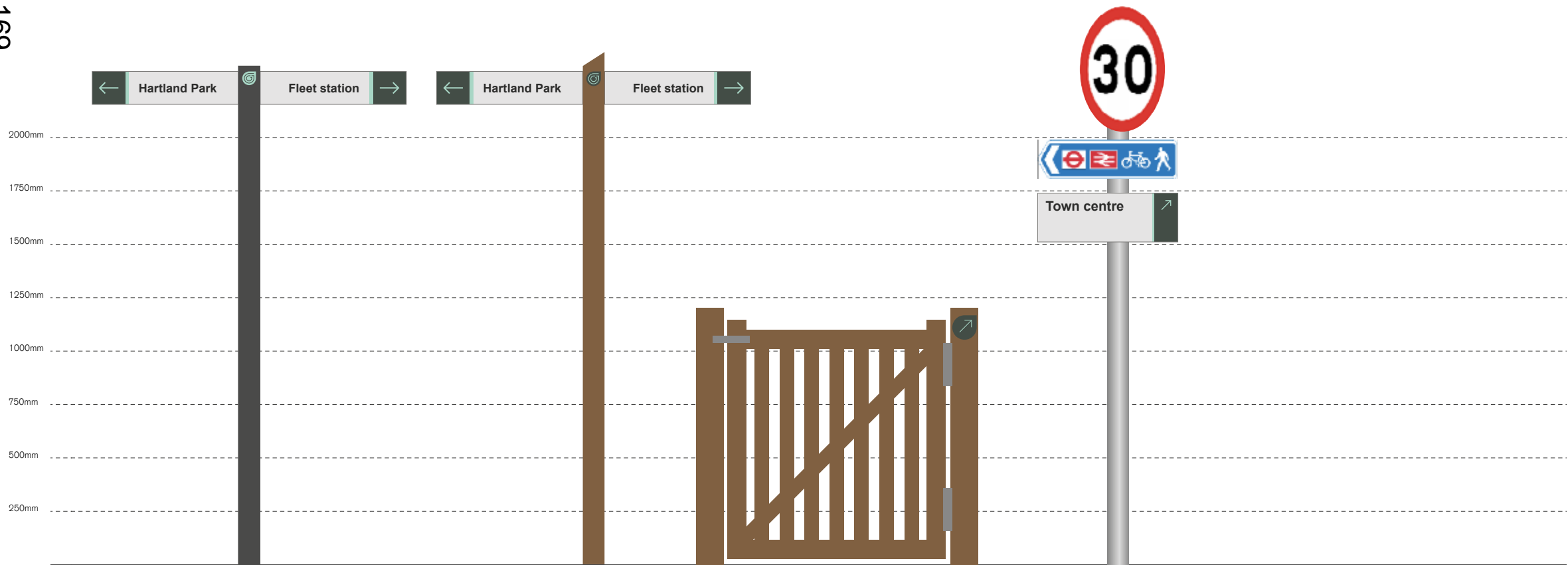
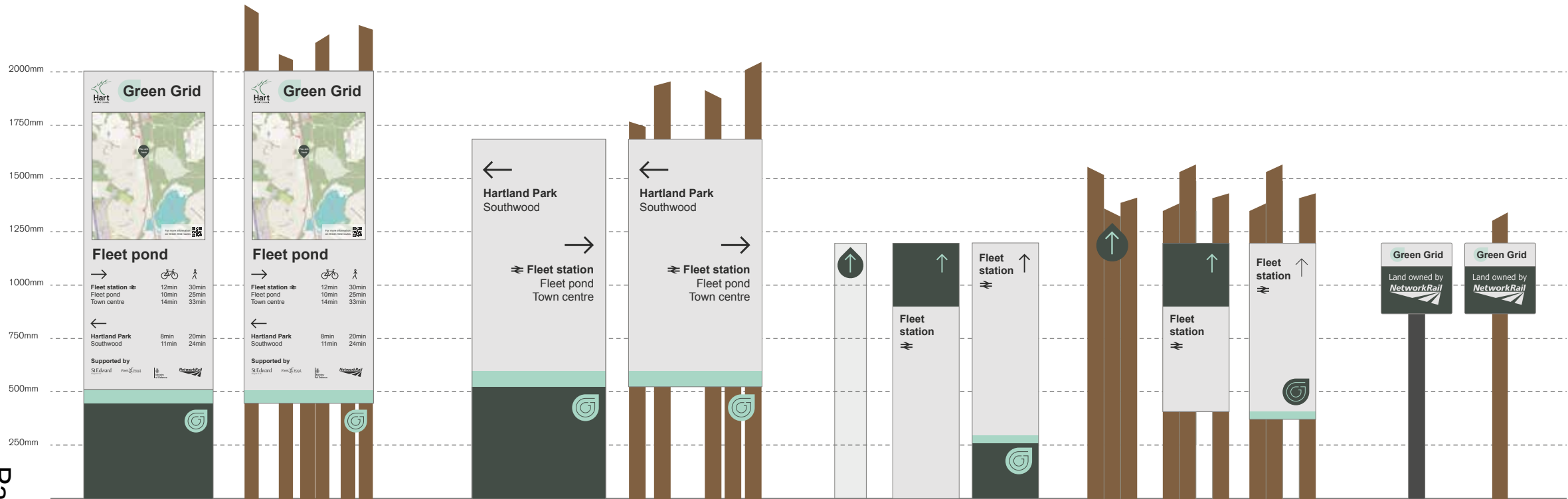
# FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER





# FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER

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# FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER



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# FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER

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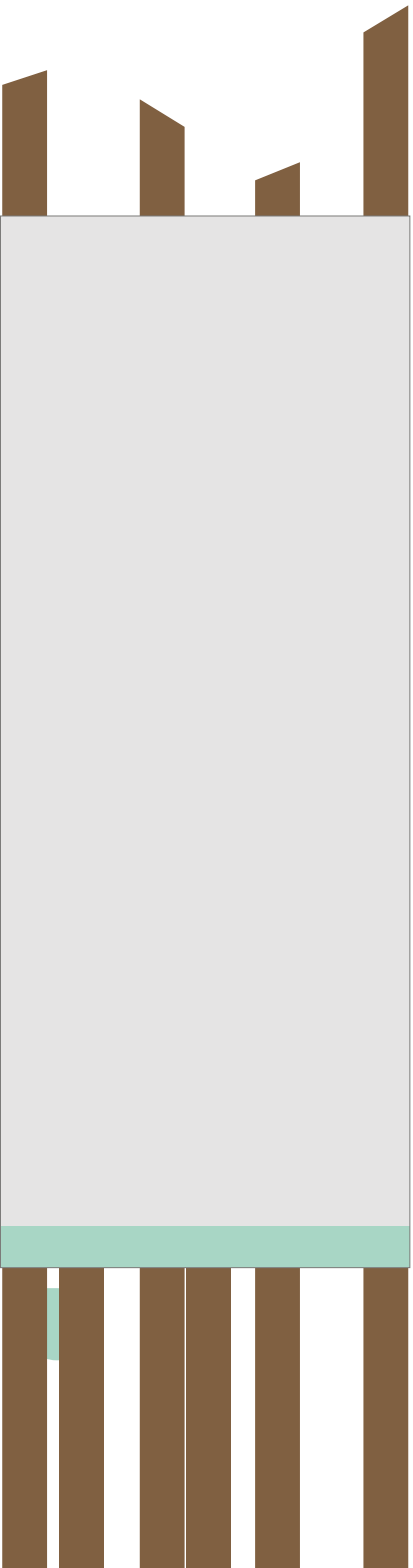
Top



Front



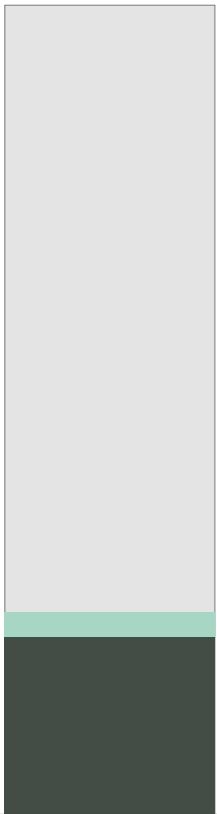
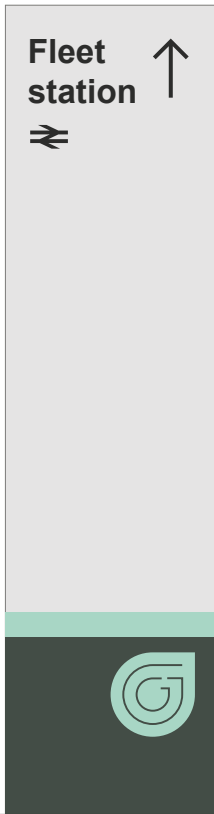
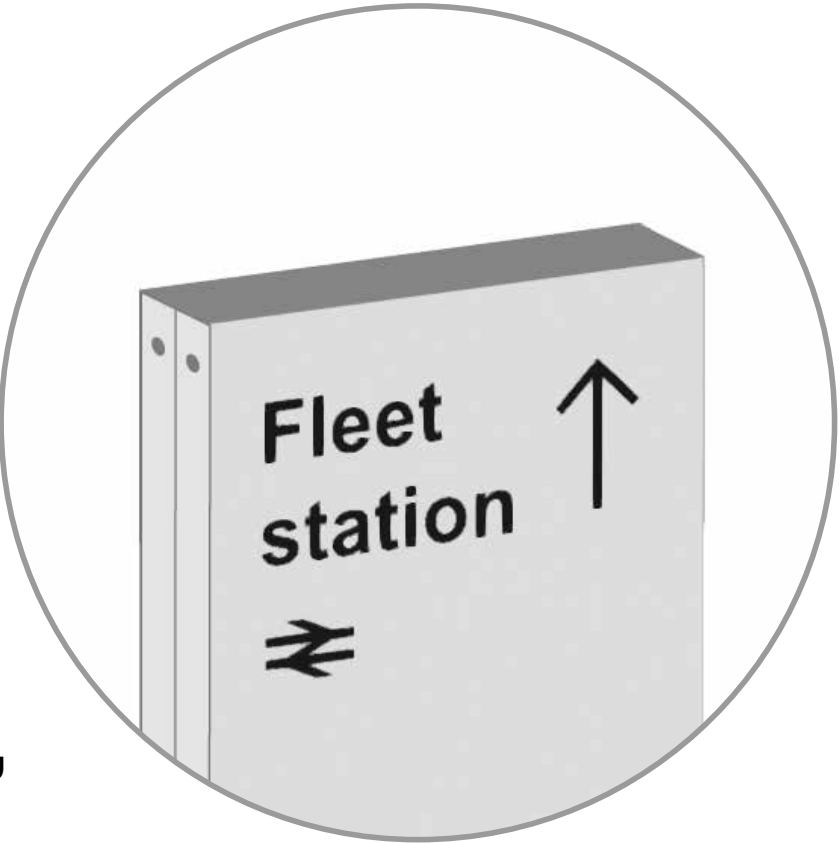
Side



Rear

FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER

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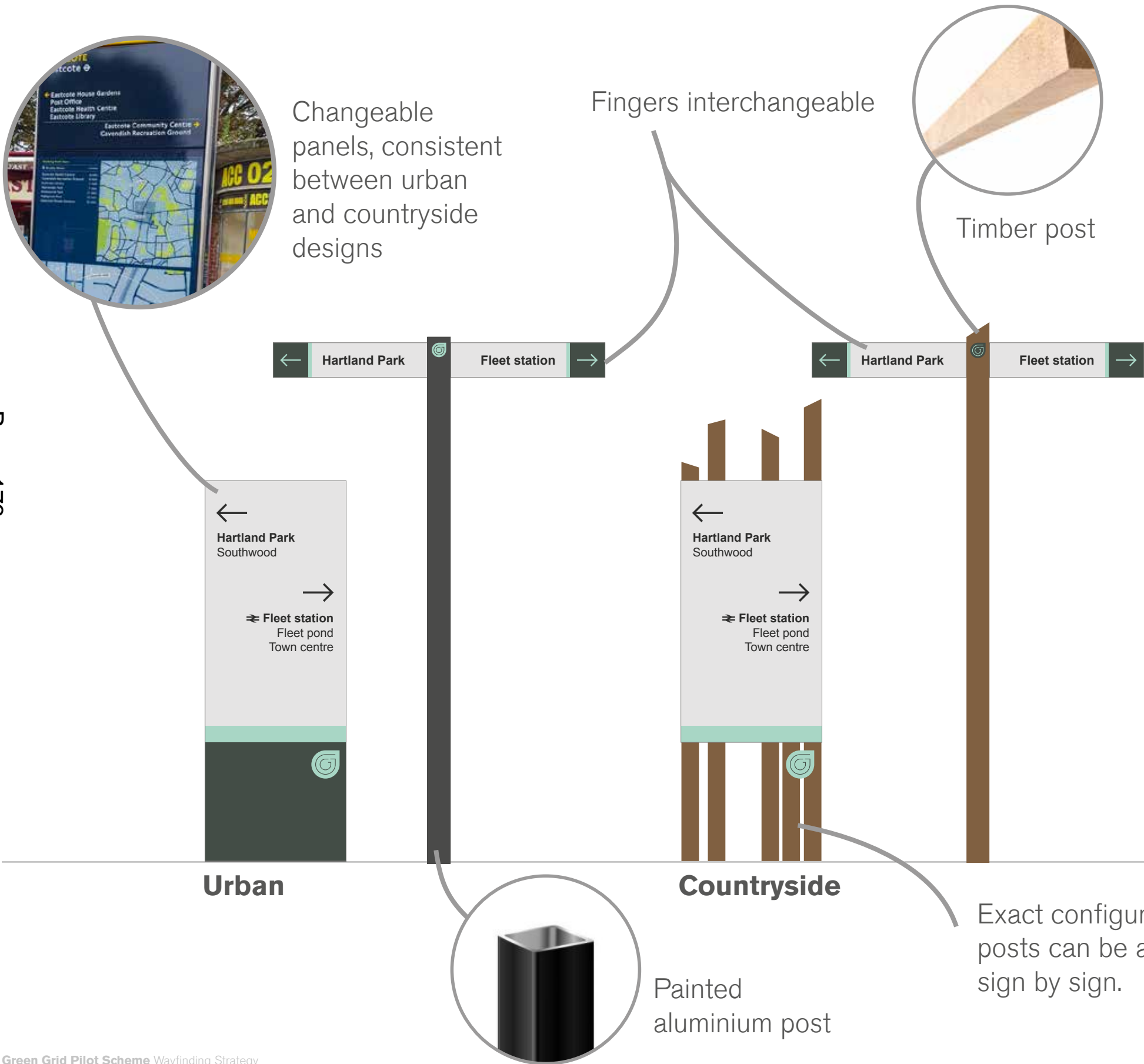
Front

Side

Rear

# FINAL CONCEPT A BRAND & TIMBER

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This concept takes the new brand elements, colours, font and design and presents them as wayfinding. The supporting structure is adjusted to suit the urban or countryside environment: using either painted aluminium or timber.

**Pros**

- Clear and easy to read.
- Industry standard construction, easy for maintenance and changing
- Construction can be adjusted to suit environment

**Materials**

Painted aluminium and timber with vinyl graphics

**Cost & lifespan**

- 8/10  
(1 - Expensive, 10 - Least expensive)
- 10 - 15 years for urban
- 8+ for timber, but easy to replace



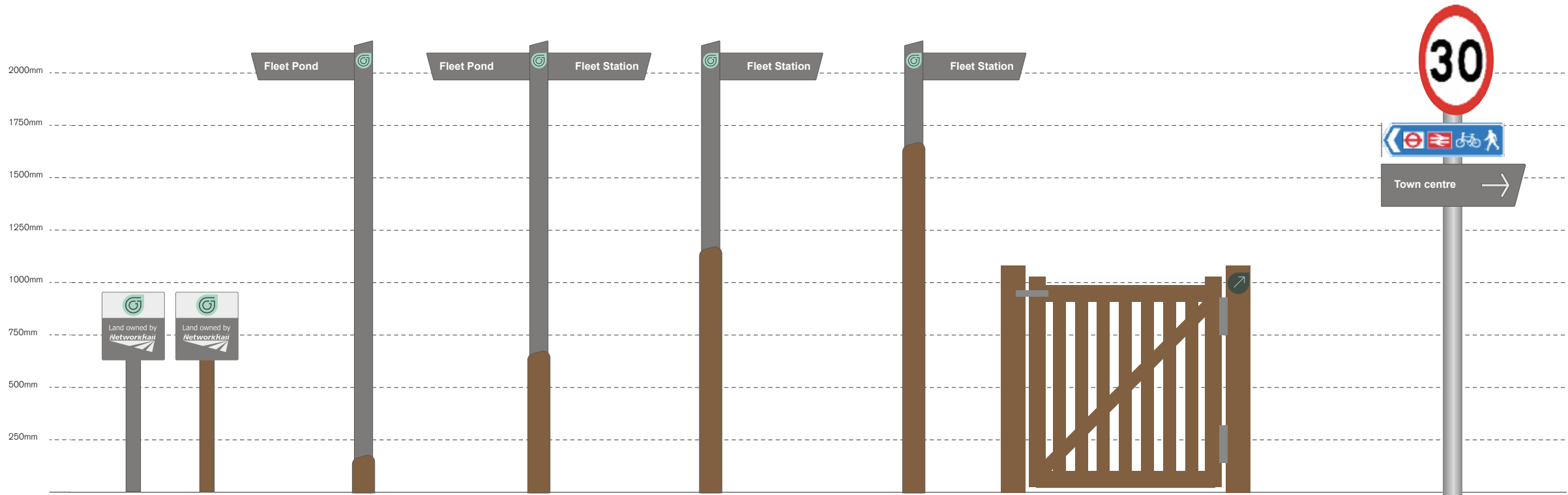
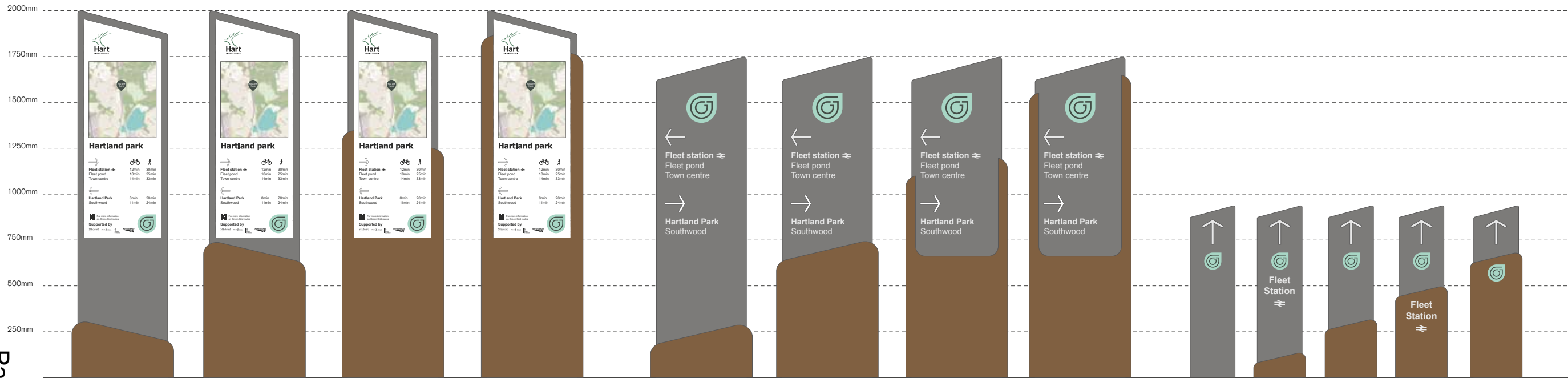
# FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY





# FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY

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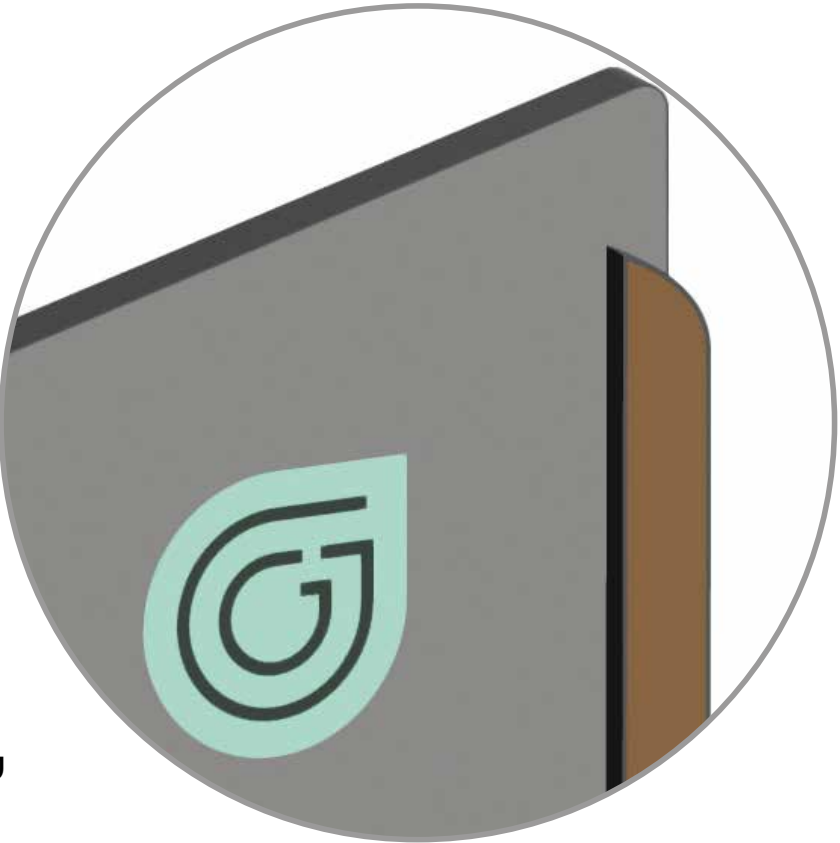
FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY



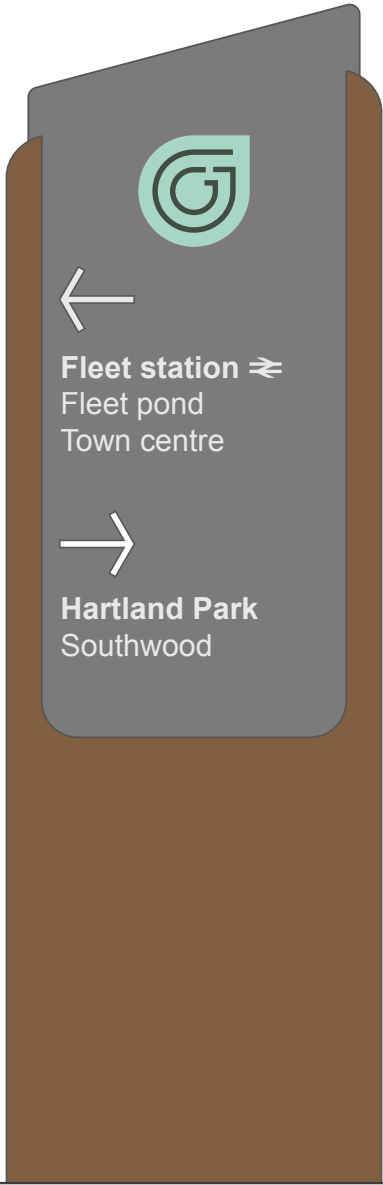


FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY

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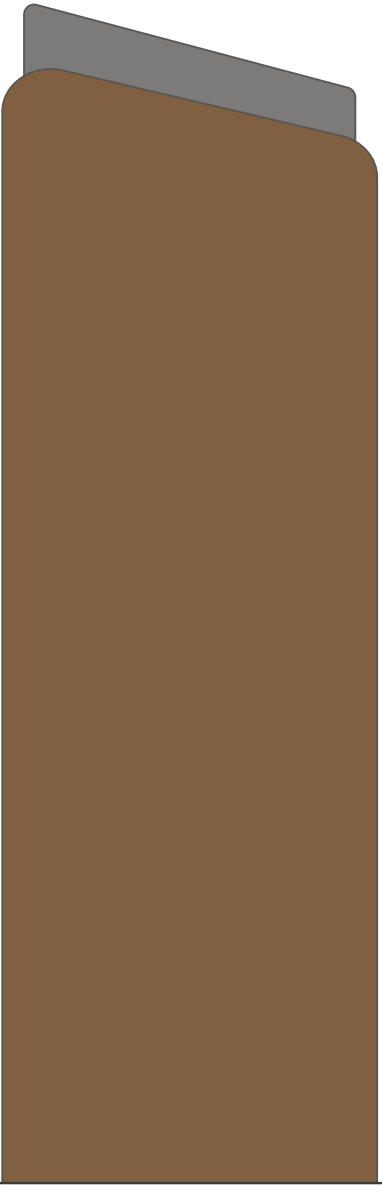
Top



Front



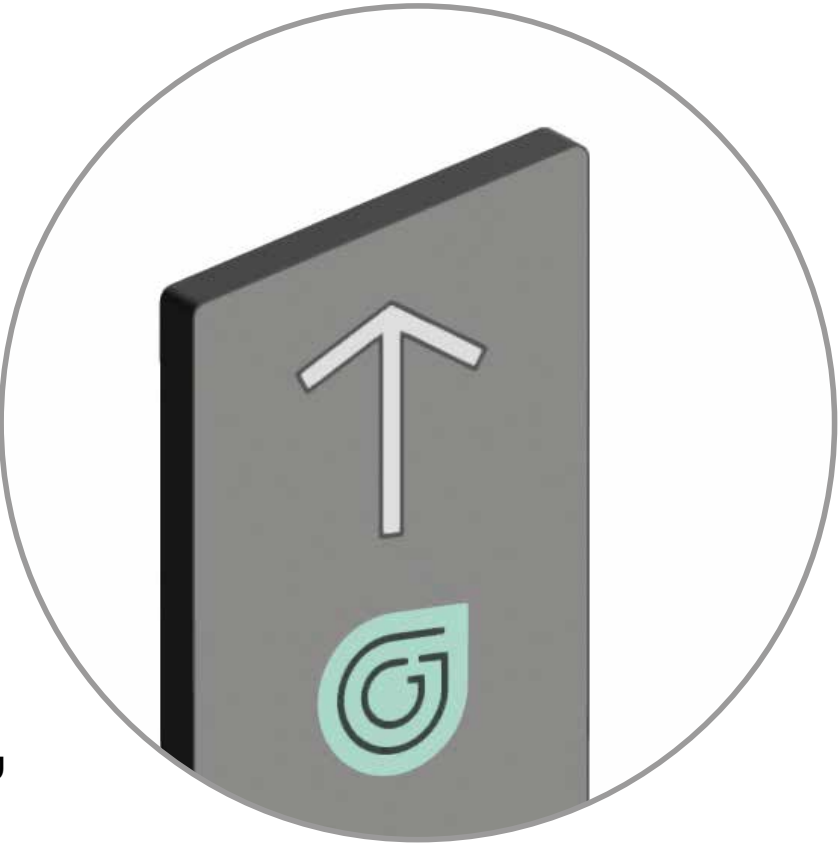
Side



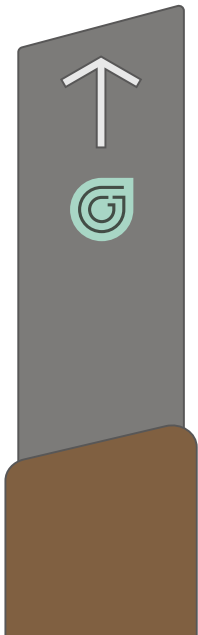
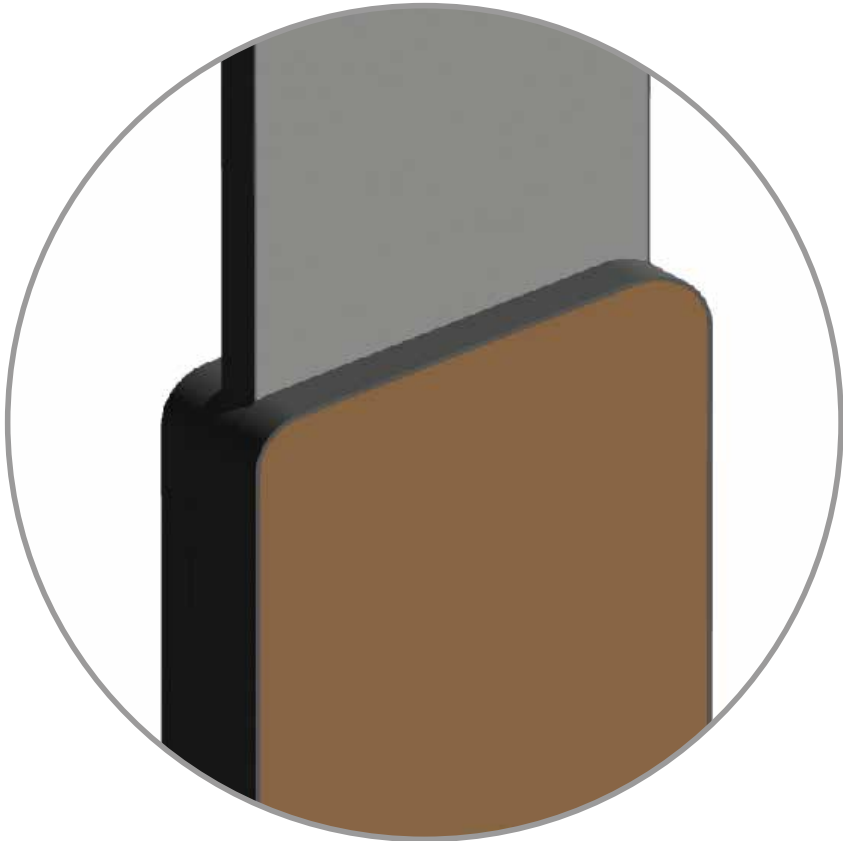
Rear

FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY

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Top



Front



Side



Rear

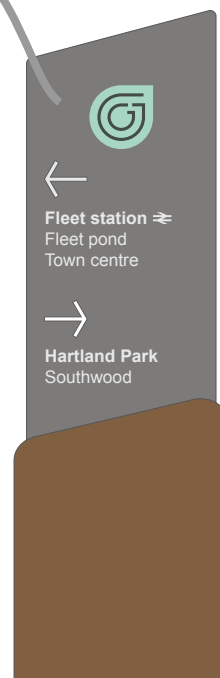
# FINAL CONCEPT B MATERIALITY

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Mild steel with a black finish

Fingers and sign panels easily changeable



Timber to be agreed in the next stage of work, detailed design. It will be FSC certified as a minimum standard



White vinyl text

This concept blends urban and natural and uses an interesting materials palette

## Pros

Unique appearance with many configurations possible

Construction can be adjusted to suit environment

## Cons

Different configurations increases manufacture cost

## Materials

Steel and timber with vinyl graphics

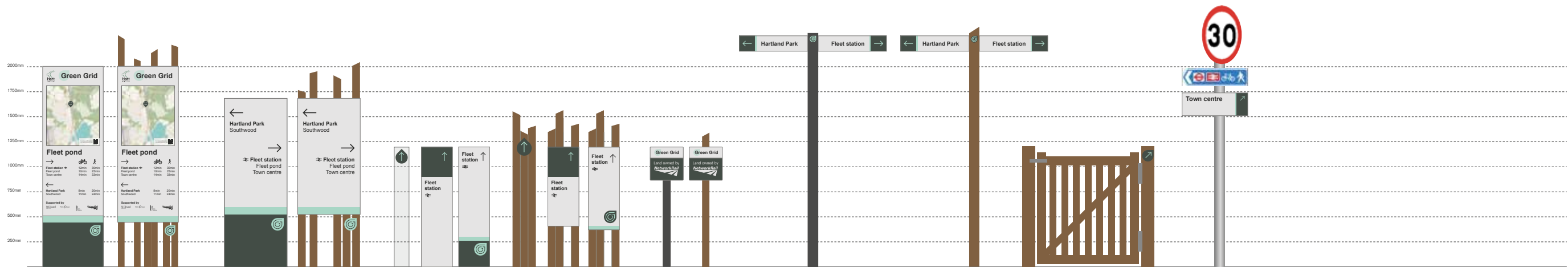
## Cost & lifespan

6/10

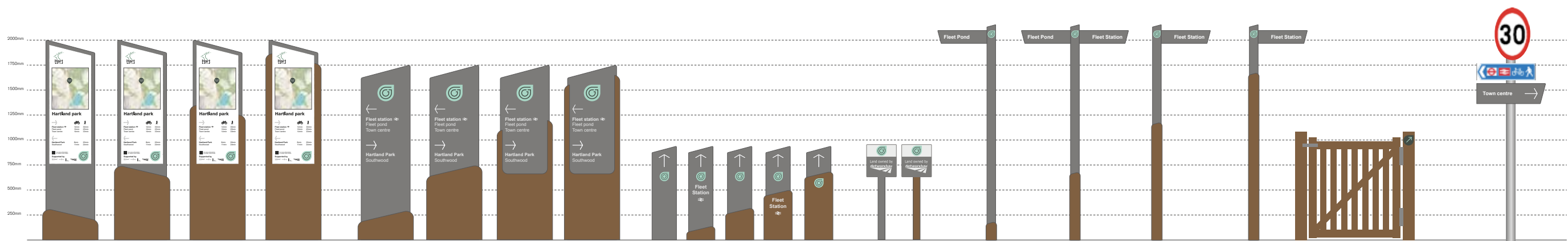
(1 - Expensive, 10 - Least expensive)

10 - 15 years

# CONCEPTS



**FINAL CONCEPT A** Brand & timber



**FINAL CONCEPT B** Materiality





# 5.0 - PHASE 1

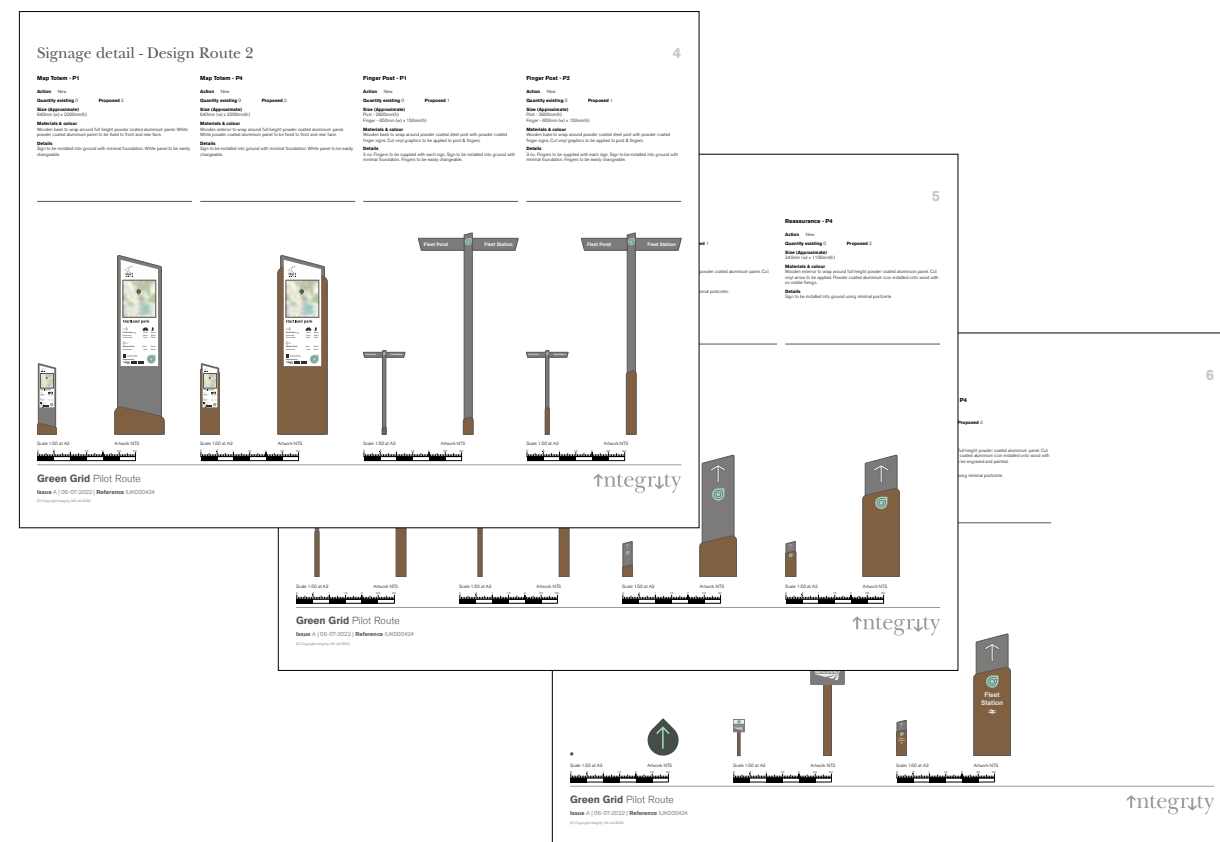
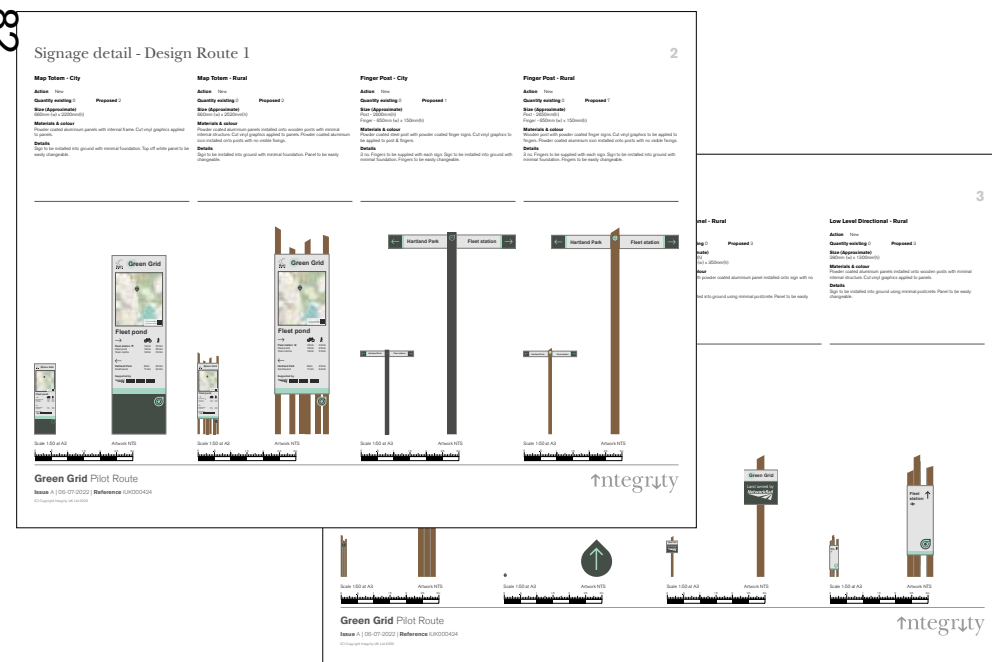


## PHASE 1 ESTIMATED SIGN QUANTITIES

To allow a budget to be generated the phase 1 route has been reviewed and likely signage points noted. Please note this does not constitute a signs scheme for phase 1, and is purely for budgeting purposes.



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PHASE 1 SIGNAGE BUDGET

The budget costs for each signage concept are benchmarked with industry signage costs and cover both manufacture and installation. These costs for bespoke sign systems have not been based upon detailed technical drawings or site survey so there will be variance when detailed costings are produced. Definition of exact signs for phase 1 could also lead to a variation. As a result a contingency has been included in these costs.

Concept 1 Brand & timber Budget £27,390

Sign type	Quantity	Cost
Map totem - urban	2	£2660
Map totem - countryside	2	£4040
Finger post - urban	1	£490
Finger post - countryside	7	£6590
Reassurance - countryside	3	£1800
Marker	18	£490
Warning panel - countryside	3	£1090
Directional - countryside	3	£2860
Installation	1	£4870
Contingency, 10%		£2500

Concept 2 Materiality Budget £30,425

Sign type	Quantity	Cost
Map totem - P1	2	£3600
Map totem - P4	2	£3600
Finger post - P1	1	£670
Finger post - P2	1	£740
Finger post - P3	1	£800
Finger post - P4	5	£4720
Reassurance - P2	1	£985
Reassurance - P4	2	£2240
Marker	18	£490
Warning panel - P4	3	£1050
Directional	3	£3890
Installation	1	£4870
Contingency, 10%		£2770

P1 - P4 denotes height of timber element





↑ntegr↓ty

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+44 (0)7961 686776 | [matthew.stonely@integrity.co.uk](mailto:matthew.stonely@integrity.co.uk)

**MARDEN** | Allingham Barn, Summerhill Road, Marden, Kent TN12 9DB | +44 (0)1622 831238



# Budget Monitoring – Period end 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Cabinet

Date 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022



# Recommendation

That Cabinet

- A Notes the Q1 revenue outturn position of an underspend of £126k
- B Notes the Q1 capital outturn position
- C Approves the transfer to reserves of £110k of costs received from health & safety court case.

# Glossary of Terms

Revenue costs include the day-to-day expenses of the council and any fees and charges that offset those costs. The net revenue budget is funded by Business Rates , Council Tax and government grants

Capital expenditure relates to one off investment items that add value to assets or deliver a new asset. Funding for these items can be a variety of sources including grants, capital receipts and borrowing.

Reserves are funds set aside for specific purpose in the future. The 2022-23 budget for Hart District Council was set with some of these contributions already allocated as funding for specific one off spend.

# Revenue Overview

Service Area	Total Budget	Total Projected Outturn	Cont. (from)/to EMR	Projected Outturn post Reserves	Variance from budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Community	719	764	(45)	<b>733</b>	14
Corporate Services	6,844	7,826	(982)	<b>6,820</b>	(24)
Place	2,320	2,210	110	<b>2,256</b>	(64)
Technical & Environment	3,082	3,082	0	<b>3,052</b>	(52)
Non-Controllable costs	(1,005)	(1,005)	0	<b>(1,005)</b>	0
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>11,960</b>	<b>12,877</b>	<b>(917)</b>	<b>11,856</b>	<b>(126)</b>

# Capital Overview

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Service Area	C/F Budget 2021-22	2022-23 Budget	Total 2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Forecast
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Community	0	1,817	1,817	1,817
Corporate Services	0	90	90	90
Place	0	0	0	0
Technical & Environment	536	1,636	2,172	2,172
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>3,543</b>	<b>4,079</b>	<b>4,079</b>

C/F = Carried Forward

# Summary

## Revenue

- The council is forecasting an overall underspend of £126k against the 2022-23 revenue budget of £11.96m\*.

*\*the budget included planned Tier 2 savings of £202k.*

- Included in the outturn are £917k net contributions from Earmarked Reserves (EMR)
  - The largest contribution from EMRs is £982k to replace the shortfall in the leisure centre management fee income target. (*Approved at Cabinet October 2021*)
  - A contribution to EMR of £110k represents a payment award from a Health & Safety Fatality Court Case.

## Capital

- There is no forecasted variance to the 2022-23 Capital Budget of £4.1m. The budget includes budget carried forward from 2021/22.

## 2022-23 Savings

- Tier 2 savings are largely expected to be achieved within the 2022-23 financial year.











## Reserves agreed through the budget process

<b>Reserves 2022-23</b>	<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>Contributions In</b>	<b>Contributions Out</b>	<b>Closing balance</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>General Fund</b>	6,968	0	0	6,968
<b>Earmarked</b>	26,454	110	(1,027)	25,537
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,422</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>(1,027)</b>	<b>32,505</b>

# 2022-23 Tier 2 Savings

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SERVICE	BUDGET	FORECAST	RISK	RAG
Corporate Service Restructure	62	62	0	
Senior Management Team Review	52	52	0	
Member & Staff Allowances	4	4	0	
Internal Audit	15	15	0	
Dog Warden Service (additional)*	3	3	0	
Planning Development	28	28	0	
Place Service efficiencies	21	21	0	
Technical & Environmental – resource review	17	9	0	
	<b>202</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>0</b>	

The Tier 2 savings are included in the £11,960k – Net Cost of Service; \*post disposal of Dog Warden van

### **Corporate Services - £133k**

Restructure – bring services back from Mendip and restructure Corporate Services £62k

Review and revise skills and resources of Senior Management Team - £52k

Review of member and staff allowances - £4k

Internal Audit £15K - to be achieved through outsourcing of Internal Audit to one provider.

### **Place Service - £52k**

An additional £3k will be achieved through outsourcing of Dog Warden Service

£28k Planning Development by delaying recruitment

£21k to be achieved by efficiencies across the Place Service

### **Technical and Environmental £17k**

To be achieved through staff reduction within the structure

# **2022-23 Savings (narrative)**

# Community Services Revenue variances (£14k overspend)

---

Community Services	2022-23 Budget	Full Year Forecast	Forecast Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Community Safety	161	161	0
Housing Needs Service	331	331	0
Private Sector Housing	171	186	15
Social Inclusion & Partnership	(26)	(40)	(14)
Strategic Housing Services	82	90	8
Lateral Flow Test Centre	0	5	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>14</b>

# Revenue - Community Services (£14k overspend)

---

**Community Services is forecasting an overspend of £14k after the agreed drawdown of £45k contribution from earmarked reserves.**

- Housing Needs Service has a net budget of £330k. This is the largest budget within Community Services and represents 46% of the total budget. There are no forecast variances to this budget.
- Private Sector Housing is forecasting an overspend of £15k by year-end which is mainly related to agency cost. This was because of fire safety issues at a permitted development block of flats. We bought in specialist fire safety expert services, fortunately, because of this action we managed to avoid a Prohibition order being served & 120 plus homes being evacuated
- This overspend was largely off-set by £14k saving in staff costs relating to a vacancy in Social Inclusion.



# Community Services Capital Projects

Community Services	2022-23 Budget	Carry forward 2021-22	Total 2022-23 Budget	Full Year Forecast
	£000	£000	£000	£000
DFG - Mandatory	867	0	867	867
Grants for Affordable Housing	950	0	950	950
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,817</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,817</b>	<b>1,817</b>

# Corporate Services Revenue variances (£24k underspend)

Corporate Services	2022-23 Budget	Full Year Forecast	Forecast Variance
	£000	£000	£000
5 Council Contract - Capita	2,154	2,147	(7)
Hart Election Costs	172	176	4
IT Contract	493	500	7
Leadership Team	673	678	5
Revenues & Benefits Contract	(399)	(400)	(1)
Support To Elected Bodies	392	397	5
Waste Client Team	(599)	(643)	(44)
Waste Contract	1,983	1,983	0
Total Other budgets	1,975	1,982	7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,844</b>	<b>6,820</b>	<b>(24)</b>

# Revenue - Corporate Services (£24k underspend)

---

**Corporate Services is forecasting an underspend of £24k after the agreed drawdown from earmarked reserves.**

- Cabinet has previously agreed that the anticipated shortfall in management fees from the leisure provider (Everyone Active) can be met from Earmarked Reserves. For 2022/23 this is forecast to be £982k.
- The Waste Client Team is forecasting an additional £44k in income from recycling credits.

# Corporate Services Capital Projects

	Carry forward 2021-22	2022- 23 Budget	Total 2022-23 Budget	Full Year Forecast
Corporate Services				
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Website Development	0	90	90	90
Grand Total	0	90	90	90

**Place  
Revenue  
(£64k  
underspend)**

---

PLACE	2022-23 BUDGET	FULL YEAR FORECAST	FORECAST VARIANCE
	£000	£000	£000
Buildings, Repair & Maintenance	316	319	3
Building Control - Fee Earning	(173)	(165)	8
Building Control - Non-Fee	114	114	0
Business Support Staff	769	763	(6)
Economic Development	85	52	(33)
Env Health Commercial	179	169	(10)
Environmental Protection	254	254	0
Local Land Charges	(90)	(90)	0
Planning Development	137	124	(13)
Planning Policy	314	305	(9)
Other budgets	415	411	(4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,320</b>	<b>2,256</b>	<b>(64)</b>



# Revenue - Place Services (£64k underspend)

---

- £110k in costs have been received from a Health & Safety Fatality prosecution. The case has taken 3 years to conclude. It is proposed that this income is transferred to reserves.
- A significant underspend within Economic Development (£33k) is a result of a staff vacancy with no plans for recruitment within this financial year.
- One of the largest budgets in the directorate is Business Support Team £769k (37%) which is forecasting a small favourable variance of £6k. The costs of this team include staffing and the relevant IT systems.
- The largest budget cost in the team is Planning Development where there is an underspend due to a staff vacancy. However, this budget has a large income budget to offset these costs. There is a small £13k underspend in this budget overall.

# Technical & Environmental Revenue (£52k underspend)

---

Technical and Environment	2022-23 Budget	Full Year Forecast	Forecast Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Bramshot Farm	190	189	(1)
CCTV	155	155	(0)
Climate Change	311	310	(1)
Edenbrook Country Park	213	212	(1)
Environment Promotion Strategy	156	157	1
Grounds Mtn Contract	420	420	(0)
Off Street Parking	(299)	(326)	(27)
On Street Parking	83	84	1
Small SANG Sites	164	149	(15)
Street Cleaning	754	754	(0)
Total Other budgets	935	926	(9)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,082</b>	<b>3,030</b>	<b>(52)</b>

## Revenue – Technical and Environmental (£52K underspend)

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- Parking income is forecast to be £37k higher due to increased daily parking activity. This is offset by £10k increase on ticket machine maintenance.
- Expenditure in Small SANGS is forecasting to be £15k lower than budget due to staff vacancies.

# Technical & Environmental Capital Projects

Technical & Environment	Carry forward 2021-22	2022-23 Budget	Total 2022-23 Budget	Total 2022-23 Forecast
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Bramshot Farm	0	340	340	340
Edenbrook CP - Teen Health	170	65	235	235
Edenbrook CP - Visitor Improve	82	158	240	240
Fleet Pond Visitor Enhancement	75	31	106	106
Fleet Pond Green Corridor Ecology	0	25	25	25
Fleet Pond Green Corridor	58	373	431	431
Hazeley Hth Access Improvement	26	30	56	56
Kingsway Flood Alleviation Sch	0	54	54	54
Mill Corner, North Warnborough	0	27	27	27
Phoenix Green, Hartley Wintney	0	70	70	70
Hartley Wintney Access	80		80	80
Electric Service Vehicles	45	70	115	115
Small SANGS Capital Works	0	184	184	184
Countryside Stewardship	0	134	134	134
Cove Road Crossing	0	75	75	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>1,636</b>	<b>2,172</b>	<b>2,172</b>

# Non-Controllable Costs (£0k variance)

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NON-CONTROLLABLE COSTS	2022-23 BUDGET	FULL YEAR FORECAST	FORECAST VARIANCE
	£000	£000	£000
Transfer from Reserves	(1,260)	(1,260)	0
Movement in Reserves (MiRs) <i>Includes: pension, depreciation</i>	160	160	0
Interest Payable	95	95	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>(1,005)</b>	<b>(1,005)</b>	<b>0</b>

Notes:

Transfer from reserves = DFG Grant (within year); SANG running costs



## **CABINET**

**DATE OF MEETING: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022**

**TITLE OF REPORT: TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2021/22**

**Report of: Head of Corporate Services & Section 151 Officer**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Finance**

**Key Decision: No**

**Confidentiality: Non-Exempt**

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To report the Council's Treasury Management activities during the year ended 31 March 2021 for consideration by Cabinet.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

2. To note the Treasury Management Outturn statement.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. This Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2021/22. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).
4. During 2021/22 the minimum reporting requirements were that the Council should receive the following reports:
  - an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (25.02.2021)
  - a mid-year (minimum) treasury update report (06.01.2022.)
  - an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report)
5. The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is, therefore, important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.
6. This Council confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by the Scrutiny Committee before they were reported to the full Council. Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken in December 2020 in order to support members' scrutiny role.

## THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

7. The Council undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:
- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Council's borrowing need; or
  - If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed.

	2020-21	2021-22	2021-22
	Actual	Budget	Actual
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Expenditure	1,334	8,385	21,688
Financed in year	(1,851)	(1,585)	(3,127)
<b>Unfinanced capital expenditure</b>	<b>(517)</b>	<b>6,800</b>	<b>18,561</b>

## THE COUNCIL'S OVERALL BORROWING NEED

8. The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Council's indebtedness. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Council and resources used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2021/22 unfinanced capital expenditure (see above table), and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.
9. Gross borrowing and the CFR - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2020/21) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2021/22) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allowed the Council some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs in 2020/21. The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Council has complied with this prudential indicator.

	2020-21 Actual £'000	2021-22 Budget £'000	2021-22 Actual £'000
Total CFR	22,889	31,194	41,450
Gross borrowing position	11,535	16,554	18,088
<b>(Under) / over funding of CFR</b>	<b>(11,354)</b>	<b>(14,640)</b>	<b>(23,362)</b>

10. The authorised limit - the authorised limit is the “affordable borrowing limit” required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2021/22 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.
11. The operational boundary – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.
12. Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream - this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue stream.

	2021-22 £'000
Authorised limit	30,000
Maximum gross borrowing position during the year	18,088
Operational boundary	25,000
Average gross borrowing position	14,812
Financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream	-5.30%

## TREASURY POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

13. At the beginning and the end of 2021/22 the Council’s treasury (excluding borrowing by PFI and finance leases), position was as follows:

	2020-21 £'000	2021-22 £'000
Short-term Borrowing	(1,382)	(2,439)
Long-term Borrowing	(10,152)	(15,649)
Short-term Investments	17,000	15,000
Cash & Cash Equivalents	16,127	14,844

14. The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

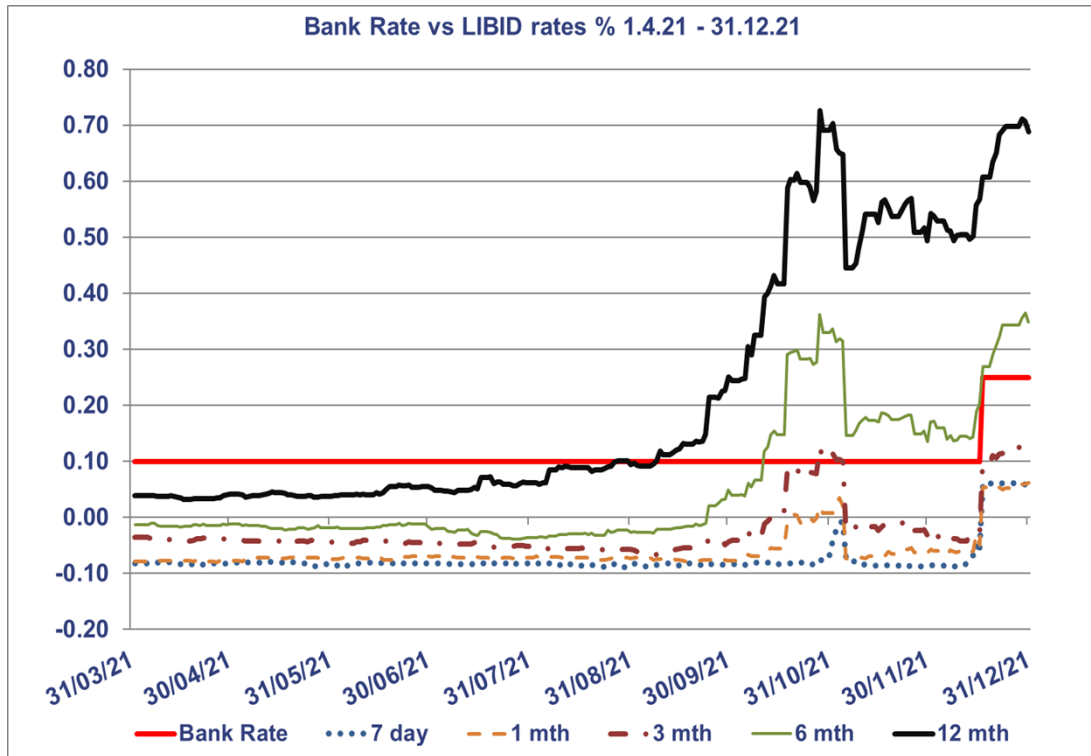
	2020-21	2021-22
	£'000	£'000
Less than one year	1,383	2,439
Between one and two years	1,303	1,314
Between two and five years	2,025	1,085
Between five and ten years	1,955	1,998
Between ten and fifteen years	2,180	2,228
Between fifteen and twenty years	2,431	2,224
More than twenty years	257	6,800

15. Investment portfolio:

	(£) Balance	Interest Rate	Maturity (days)
Standard Chartered	5,000,000	0.28%	162
Qatar National Bank	5,000,000	0.72%	180
Barclays Ltd - Green Account 95 days	5,000,000	0.30%	95 days notice
Bank of New York Mellon - Federated	4,900,000	0.39%	Instant
Insight Liquidity Funds plc	4,000,000	0.39%	Instant
Aberdeen Liquidity- Standard Life	5,000,000	0.40%	Instant
Barclays-FIBCA	746,598	0.00%	Instant
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,646,598</b>		

## THE STRATEGY FOR 2021/22

### 16. Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk



	Bank Rate	7 day	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
<b>High</b>	0.25	0.06	0.06	0.14	0.36	0.73
<b>High Date</b>	17/12/2021	29/12/2021	31/12/2021	31/12/2021	30/12/2021	28/10/2021
<b>Low</b>	0.10	-0.09	-0.08	-0.07	-0.04	0.04
<b>Low Date</b>	01/07/2021	27/08/2021	17/09/2021	08/09/2021	27/07/2021	08/07/2021
<b>Average</b>	0.11	-0.07	-0.05	-0.01	0.09	0.31
<b>Spread</b>	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.20	0.40	0.68

17. Investment returns remained close to zero for much of 2021/22. Most local authority lending managed to avoid negative rates and one feature of the year was the continued growth of inter local authority lending. The expectation for interest rates within the treasury management strategy for 2021/22 was that Bank Rate would remain at 0.1% until it was clear to the Bank of England that the emergency level of rates introduced at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic were no longer necessitated. The Bank of England and the Government also maintained various monetary and fiscal measures, supplying the banking system and the economy with massive amounts of cheap credit so that banks could help cash-starved businesses to survive the various lockdowns/negative impact on their cashflow. The Government also supplied huge amounts of finance to local authorities to pass on to businesses. This meant that for most of the year there was much more liquidity in financial markets than there was



demand to borrow, with the consequent effect that investment earnings rates remained low until towards the turn of the year when inflation concerns indicated central banks, not just the Bank of England, would need to lift interest rates to combat the second-round effects of growing levels of inflation (CPI was 6.2% in February).

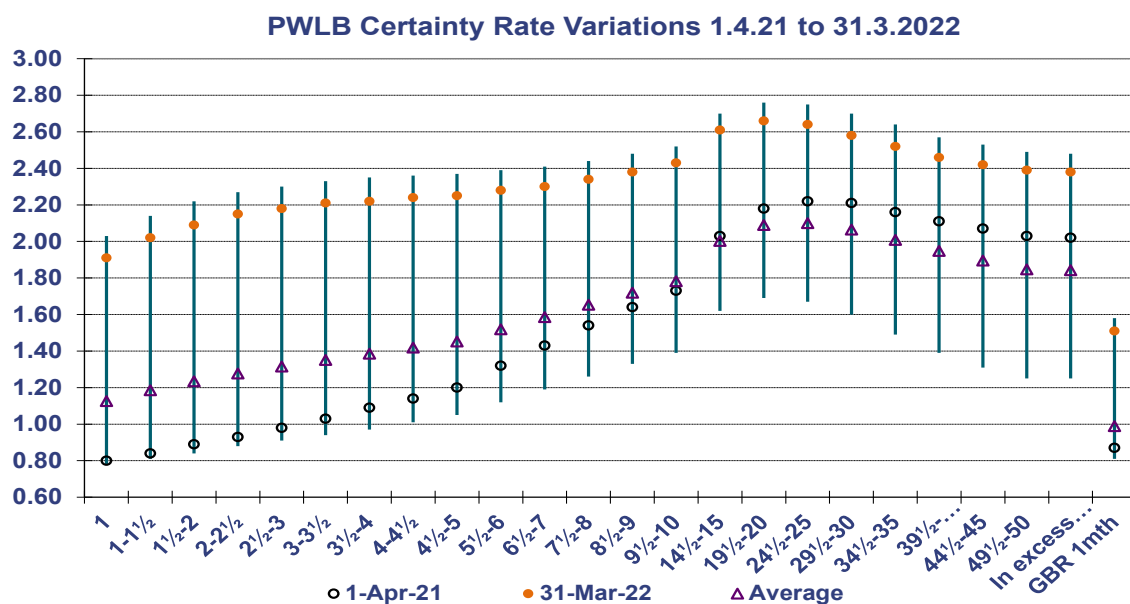
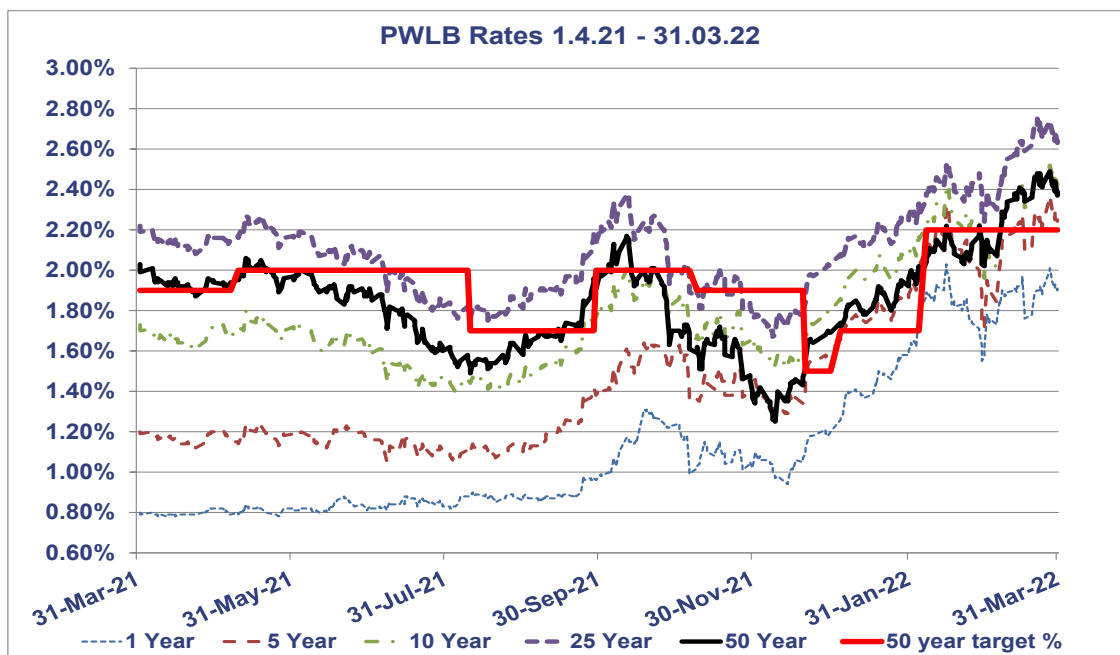
18. While the Council has taken a cautious approach to investing, it is also fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the financial crisis. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions.
19. Investment balances have been kept to a minimum through the agreed strategy of using reserves and balances to support internal borrowing, rather than borrowing externally from the financial markets. External borrowing would have incurred an additional cost, due to the differential between borrowing and investment rates as illustrated in the charts shown above and below. Such an approach has also provided benefits in terms of reducing the counterparty risk exposure, by having fewer investments placed in the financial markets.

## BORROWING STRATEGY AND CONTROL OF INTEREST RATE RISK

20. During 2021-22, the Council maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), was not fully funded with loan debt, as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as investment returns were low and minimising counterparty risk on placing investments also needed to be considered.
21. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by utilising cash balances has been implemented where possible.
22. Interest rate forecasts expected only gradual rises in medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2021/22 and the two subsequent financial years. However inflation concerns increased significantly at the start of 2021/22 and internal, variable, or short-term rates, were expected to be the cheaper form of borrowing until well in to the second half of 2021/22.

Link Group Interest Rate View 7.2.22													
	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25
BANK RATE	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
3 month av. earnings	0.80	1.00	1.00	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
6 month av. earnings	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
12 month av. earnings	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.60	1.60	1.50	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
5 yr PWLB	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30
10 yr PWLB	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40
25 yr PWLB	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60
50 yr PWLB	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40

## 23. PWLB Rates 1.4.21 – 31.03.22

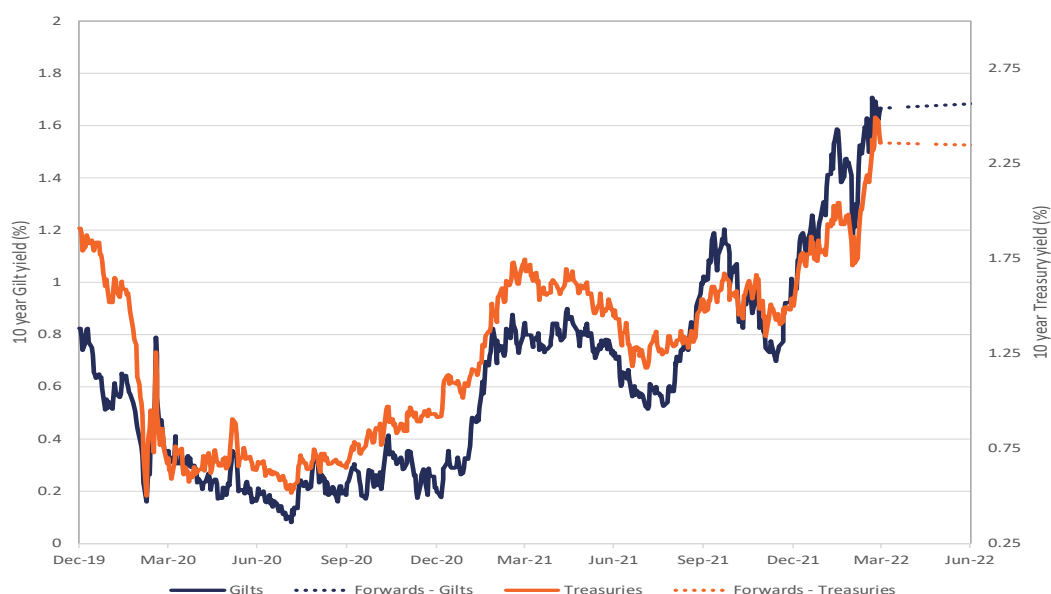


## HIGH/LOW/AVERAGE PWLB RATES FOR 2021/22

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
<b>01/04/2021</b>	0.80%	1.20%	1.73%	2.22%	2.03%
<b>31/03/2022</b>	1.91%	2.25%	2.43%	2.64%	2.39%
<b>Low</b>	0.78%	1.05%	1.39%	1.67%	1.25%
<b>Low date</b>	08/04/2021	08/07/2021	05/08/2021	08/12/2021	09/12/2021
<b>High</b>	2.03%	2.37%	2.52%	2.75%	2.49%
<b>High date</b>	15/02/2022	28/03/2022	28/03/2022	23/03/2022	28/03/2022
<b>Average</b>	1.13%	1.45%	1.78%	2.10%	1.85%
<b>Spread</b>	1.25%	1.32%	1.13%	1.08%	1.24%

24. PWLB rates are based on gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through H.M. Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields are Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields. Inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last 30 years in lowering inflation and the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers: this means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. This has pulled down the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last 30 years. We have seen over the last two years, many bond yields up to 10 years in the Eurozone turn negative on expectations that the EU would struggle to get growth rates and inflation up from low levels. In addition, there has, at times, been an inversion of bond yields in the US whereby 10 year yields have fallen below shorter term yields. In the past, this has been a precursor of a recession. Recently, yields have risen since the turn of the year on the back of global inflation concerns.

**Graph of UK gilt yields v. US treasury yields**



25. There is likely to be a further rise in short dated gilt yields and PWLB rates over the next three years as Bank Rate is forecast to rise from 0.75% in March 2022 to 1.25% later this year, with upside risk likely if the economy proves resilient in the light of the cost-of-living squeeze. Medium to long dated yields are driven primarily by inflation concerns but the Bank of England is also embarking on a process of Quantitative Tightening when Bank Rate hits 1%, whereby the Bank's £895bn stock of gilt and corporate bonds will be sold back into the market over several years. The impact this policy will have on the market pricing of gilts, while issuance is markedly increasing, is an unknown at the time of writing.

## BORROWING OUTTURN

26. Treasury Borrowing – breakdown of borrowing at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:

Lender	Balance (£'000)	Type	Interest Rate	Maturity
PWLB 1	8,338	Fixed Rate	2.19%	25 years
PWLB 2	6,800	Fixed Rate	1.91%	50 years
Hampshire County Council	2,950	Fixed Rate	0.00%	7 years

27. Borrowing – New £6.8mil PWLB loan has been undertaken during the year to finance purchase of Edenbrook apartments with the housing accommodation purpose.
28. Borrowing in advance of need – The Council has not borrowed more than, or in advance of its needs, purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed.

## INVESTMENT OUTTURN

29. Investment Policy – the Council's investment policy is governed by DLUHC investment guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Council on 19/01/2021. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).
30. The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Council had no liquidity difficulties
31. Resources – the Council's cash balances comprise revenue and capital resources and cash flow monies. The Council's core cash resources comprised as follows:

Balance Sheet Resources	2020-21	2021-22
Balances	£'000	£'000
Earmark Reserves	(25,556)	(26,454)
Provisions	(274)	(527)
Usable Capital Receipts	(387)	(382)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(26,216)</b>	<b>(27,363)</b>

32. Investments held by the Council – at the end of the financial year the Council held the funds detailed in 6.3 which were managed internally. The total investment income for 2021/22 was £118k compared to a budget of £100k.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

33. Counter Party Limits. The council permanently extended the counterparty limits for Barclays bank accounts from £5mil to £10mil to accommodate for Barclays green 95 days' notice account.
34. Counter Party limits for Barclays have been authorised for overnight limit breach on two occasions during 2021-22:
- when council received PWLB £6.8mil
  - in preparation for Centenary house £12mil payments

## **EQUALITIES**

35. There are no impacts to equality from the recommendations of this paper

## **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

36. There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations of this paper

## **CONCLUSION**

37. This report provides Members with information on the level of investment and interest earned during the last financial year and demonstrates the council's compliance with the Treasury Management Strategy.

**Contact Details:** Isabel.Brittain@hart.gov.uk

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Treasury Management Strategy Statement (19. January 2021.)

## **APPENDICES**

- 1- Prudential and Treasury Indicators
- 2- Approved countries for investments as at 31.3.22



## **CABINET**

**DATE OF MEETING: 1 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**TITLE OF REPORT: UPDATE ON THE 5 COUNCILS CONTRACT**

**Report of:** Joint Chief Executive

**Cabinet Portfolio:** Corporate

**Key Decision:** No

**Confidentiality: Non Exempt**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. This paper seeks to outline the current position regarding the 5 Councils contract, covering governance, representation and the financial position.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

2. That Cabinet notes and endorses the minor alteration to the proportion of the size of the Hart contribution to the 5 Councils contract and agrees the approach to the 'truing up' mechanisms, making payment as set out in paragraph 15 and 16
3. That Cabinet approves the streamlined governance approach, reflective of the size of the contract, to enable effective oversight and management which includes all the changes as set out in paragraph including Joint Committee to meet annually, providing budgetary and contractual oversight and continuing the spirit of partnership working, whilst keeping Members informed on the contract.
4. That Cabinet delegates to the Joint Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation and Corporate Services, to complete the updated Inter Authority Agreement based on the principles set out in this paper.
5. That Cabinet confirms Cllr Quarterman and Cllr Radley as replacement representatives to the 5 Councils Joint Committee

### **BACKGROUND**

6. Hart District Council, alongside four other Councils (Mendip, Havant, South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse) entered into a contract with Capita in 2017.
7. The governance structure embedded in the Capita contract and the IAA between the authorities reflected the original scope of the contract and provided for a potential future expansion of the contract encompassing other authorities and services. It also provided for the "lot 2 services" to be delivered by Vinci.
8. The Vinci contract was terminated back in 2018 and the Capita contract has reduced in size and scope since its inception in 2016. The contract now consists of Revenues & Benefits, Land Charges and IT for all authorities, and Customer Services for just a few of the authorities.
9. With this in mind
  - a. In 2021 the S151's from each authority agreed to externally commission a forensic analysis of the changes that had occurred to the contract and the impact on the

financial position. The final outcome of which was produced in early summer this year

- b. In 2022, the Chief Executives from each authority agreed to a review of the governance overseeing the contract to ensure that it remained 'fit for purpose'

## FINANCIAL TRUING UP

10. Since the inception of the 5 councils contract, there have been substantial changes in the contract and the relative impacts on the respective authorities. Most notably for Hart, this has included the removal of the HR and Payroll Services, as well as the Finance Services.
11. The Inter Authority Agreement between authorities makes clear that each Council is obligated to pay for the services it receives and would need to reflect in any payment changes, any contract changes made collectively or individually. An important principle was that one authority should not be expected to pay for decisions taken by another authority.
12. Joint Committee considers the budget at its meeting each December. In December 2020, the Joint Committee agreed a change in baseline proportion of payment for the contract from 10.58% to 10.96% for Hart District Council and this was reflected in the budget for the following year.
13. With the larger changes in the contract since that time, the S151's agreed to commission an external forensic analysis of all the changes in the contract, and the impact on the contract both collectively and as individual councils.
14. Hart District Council, on behalf of the 5 Councils then commissioned RSM, the final report was considered by the S151's in July 2022, who then recommended acceptance of the findings to Strategic Management Board, including the Chief Executives of each authority.
15. The outcome of this forensic analysis is that the baseline percentage that Hart District Council should now pay is 11.01%. As this baseline relates to changes which occurred in 2020/2021, there is a need for a 'truing up' payment of £413,406. Full details of the baseline and payments to be made to Councils are shown below

Truing up payments to be made		New Baseline
Mendip	£933,293	22.33%
Hart	£413,406	11.01%
Havant	£917, 552	22.66% +6.15% for East Hants
Vale	(£1,378,050)	16.21%
South	(£886,202)	17.64%

16. Costs associated with the truing up had been anticipated at the point when the Budget was agreed by Council in February 2022 and a figure of £400K was included as a provision. We are in discussions with South Oxfordshire, to make payment of the outstanding sum, via a payment plan, subject to agreement by Cabinet this evening.

## GOVERNANCE

17. The governance of the 5 Councils contract has evolved over time. It was originally created for the purposes of both Lot 1 (Capita) and Lot 2 (Vinci) in mind.
18. As highlighted previously, the Vinci contract was terminated back in 2018 and the Capita contract has reduced in size and scope since its inception in 2016. Most notably, HR and payroll as well as Financial Services have recently been removed from the contract.
19. Following a request from the Chief Executives, a review of the governance was undertaken and recommendations made to streamline the contract management. Appendix 1 sets out the current governance and appendix 2 sets out the proposed governance.
20. The proposed governance has been considered and agreed to be brought forward for the respective Councils to consider by the Chief Executive's and the Monitoring Officers
21. In summary the recommendations are
  - a. Joint Committee to meet annually, down from quarterly currently to continue to provide budgetary and contract oversight and continues the spirit of partnership working whilst keeping Members informed on the contract.
  - b. Strategic Management Board to meet annually or as required during the year, . The process for obtaining Strategic Management Board approval on important strategic matters or agreeing new proposals that cannot wait until the annual meeting will be fully set out in a redrafted IAA.
  - c. Joint Tactical Board and Operational Management Board to meet quarterly, with virtual sign off on change controls as required in between meetings. The mechanism to agree matters in between meetings will also need to be set out in a redrafted IAA
  - d. Service Improvement Group to continue to meet monthly, with the option to also include Five Councils Land Charges in the monthly meetings as the HMLR project moves into its main delivery phase.
  - e. IT Strategy Board and IT Operational Board meetings to continue without change
  - f. Lastly, all the above changes to be incorporated into a redrafted IAA. This will also capture the Section151 officers truing up agreement, the ongoing arrangements regarding the Zellis payroll bureau and software contract and how we accommodate Somerset Council and East Hants generally within the contract or otherwise moving forward.
22. Subject to approval by the respective authorities, a project will commence to fully redraft the current iteration of the IAA. This will capture all governance changes and will also incorporate a number of other key changes that are arising over the coming months. This includes;

- a. subject to approval, the agreement on the revised apportionment figures following the conclusion of the 'Truing Up' exercise,
  - b. the ongoing arrangements regarding the Zellis payroll bureau and
  - c. software contract and the accommodation of EHDC within partnership governance in light of the separation occurring between them and Havant.
- 23. As part of the redrafting, consideration will need to be given as to how Somerset Council (the successor of Mendip District Council) will be represented from vesting day in April 2023, as well as representation from East Hampshire following their separation from Havant Borough Council.
- 24. An External Solicitor well versed in the Capita Contract will lead on the redrafting of the IAA to incorporate the changes listed above.

## **REPRESENTATION BY HART AT THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

- 25. Due to a misunderstanding regarding the roles, at the Annual General Meeting, two Members of Overview and Scrutiny were appointed to the 5 Councils Joint Committee
- 26. Reflecting the updated governance structure proposed within this report, it is further suggested that Cllr Richard Quarterman, Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation and Corporate Services and Cllr James Radley, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, are formally appointed to represent Hart District Council at the 5 Councils Joint Committee.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 27. The Councils could continue with the existing governance, but this is no longer suitable for the size of the contract.

## **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or The Hart Vision 2040**

#### **Service Plan**

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? No
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?  
Yes

#### **Legal and Constitutional Issues**

- 28. In accordance with Harts Constitution, Cabinet has the authority to approve the recommendations of this report.

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

29. This report recommends that a payment of £413,406 is via a payment plan to be agreed with South Oxfordshire Council. It further reflects a minor alteration in the baseline for the contract from 10.96% to 11.01%
30. The costs associated with the contract changes were envisaged and £400K included within the budget set by Members in February 2022. .

### **Risk Management**

31. A project risk register is managed and monitored for the 5 Councils contract as part of the IAA oversight provisions. The change to governance has not been identified as a significant risk.

### **EQUALITIES**

32. No equalities issues arise as a result of this report.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

33. No climate change implications issues arise as a result of this report.

### **ACTION**

34. Subject to approval of the recommendations of this report,
  - a. the External Solicitor will begin work to amend the Inter Authority Agreement.
  - b. Once amended this will be passed back to the Authorities to consider and approve
  - c. A payment plan will be agreement and implemented to enable the payment of the outstanding truing up figure
  - d. Details of the Member representatives will be provided to the 'host' authority for the 5 Councils Joint Committee.

**Contact Details:** Patricia Hughes [patricia.hughes@hart.gov.uk](mailto:patricia.hughes@hart.gov.uk)

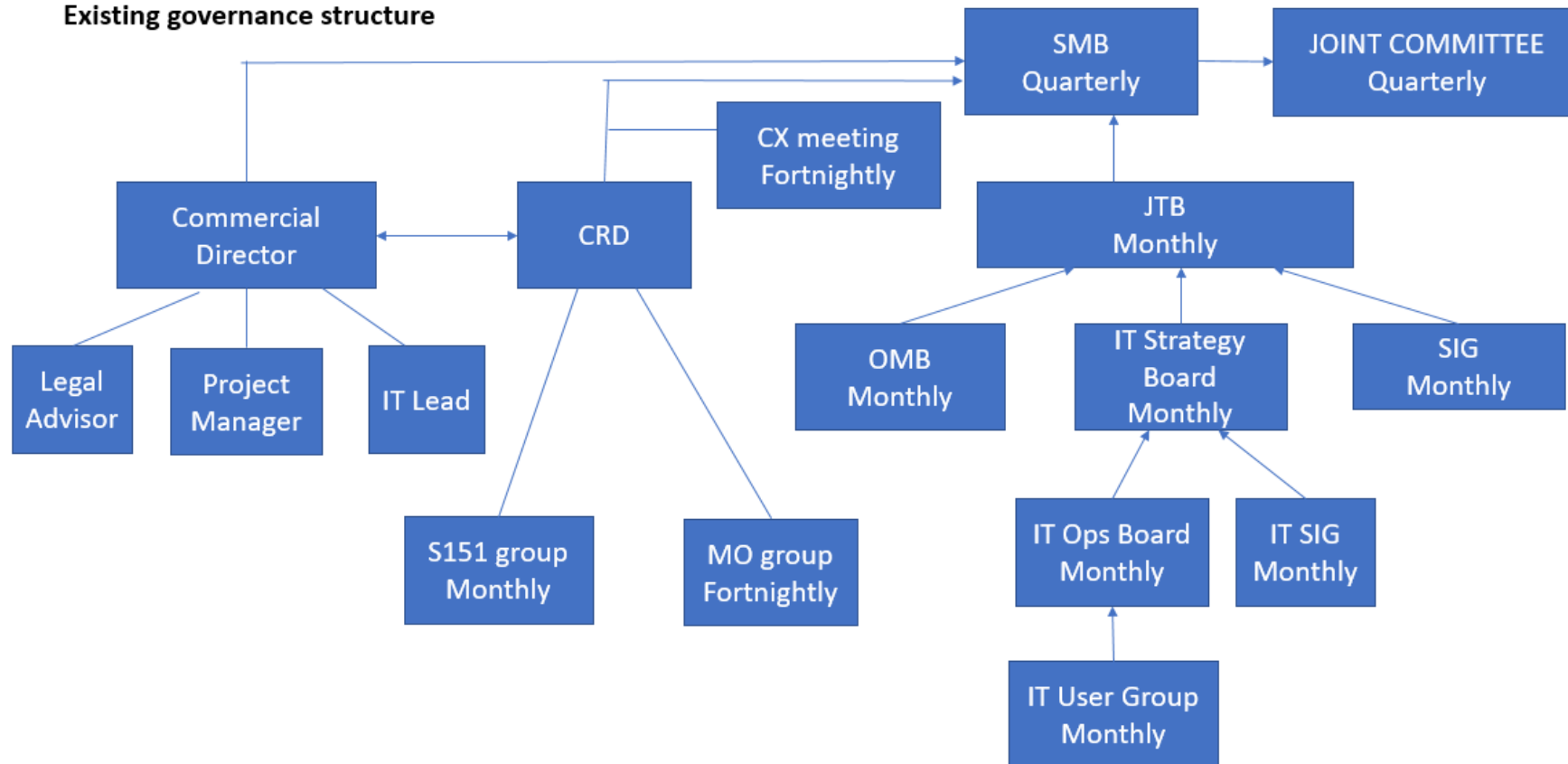
**Appendix 1 – Governance structure at present**

**Appendix 2 – Governance structure as proposed**



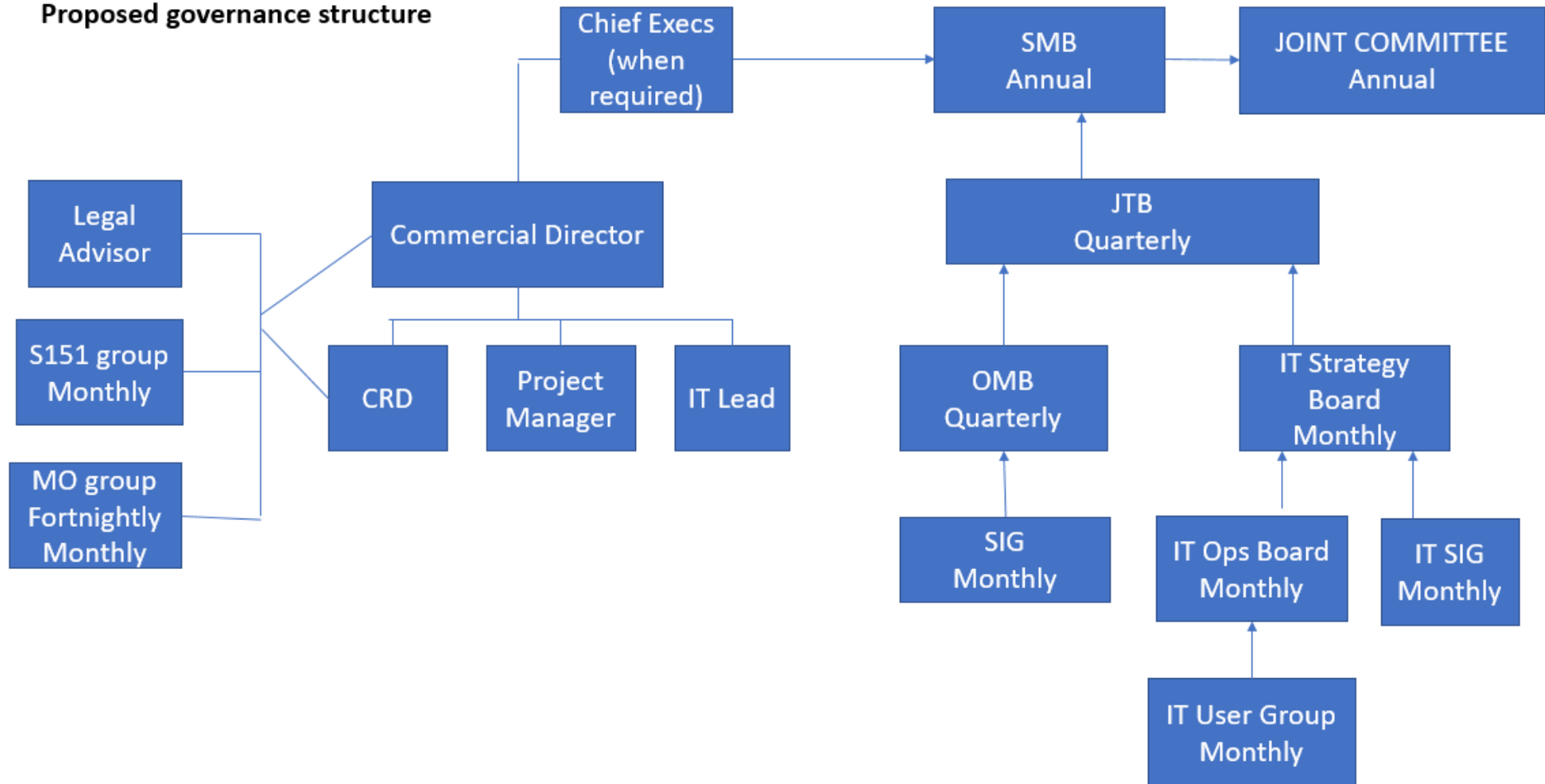
## Appendix 1

### Existing governance structure





# Proposed governance structure



## **CABINET**

**DATE OF MEETING: 1 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**TITLE OF REPORT: EFFICIENCY SAVING: RECOMMENDATION TO MOVE TO A SINGLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OPERATING MODEL**

**Cabinet Portfolio: Leader of the Council**

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To recommend to Full Council that Council should adopt on an interim basis a single CEO model and to bring it into full effect at the earliest opportunity.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

2. Cabinet recommends to Full Council that Council should adopt on an interim basis a single CEO model and bring it into full effect at the earliest opportunity (and that some of the estimated annual revenue budget savings achieved potentially reinvested to create additional capacity in Tier 3 manager posts to increase operational capacity/Monitoring officer provision)

## **CONTEXT**

3. The ongoing challenges on the Council's revenue budget, compounded by growing inflationary pressures, means it is essential that the Council brings forward efficiency measures. We need to be proactive in bringing forward cost savings if the Council is to minimise the impact on Council Tax payers arising from the growing cost of Council services.

## **BACKGROUND**

4. In January 2022 Staffing Committee received from Solace Enterprise a report recommending options for a possible appropriate Senior Management Structure for the future (a confidential report which is available to all Members via Mod.gov).
5. Staffing Committee recommended to Cabinet that Council should:
  - Move to a three Heads of Service model by the end of June 2022 following consideration of the practicalities of remodelling the service areas and management capacity.
  - To progress to a shared CEO with the timeframe being the end of the Municipal year 2022/2023 subject to finding a suitable partner authority.
  - To move to a single CEO model if a suitable partner authority isn't a viable or sustainable option, in the timeframe of the Municipal year 2022/2023.
6. The recommendations made by Staffing Committee were accepted by Cabinet.
7. More recently in July 2022, Cabinet received a further report on the potential for Hart District Council and Rushmoor Borough Council to work more closely together. In summary Cabinet agreed to
  - Approve a *Joint Working Together Statement*
  - note the report of the independent consultant on sharing a Chief Executive, and agreed to proceed with further work to produce a business case to consider a shared Chief Executive, including obtaining relevant HR and Legal advice.

- to undertake work to assess services which may be suitable to be delivered as shared services.
  - agree a budget of £27,500 (50% of the overall cost) to undertake the work identified.
8. The decision to move to a three Heads of Service (now Executive Director) model has been implemented. The Council is also already exploring the potential of a shared Chief Executive with Rushmoor, and the findings of the latest independent consultant's work are awaited.

## PROPOSAL

9. In parallel with the independent consultant's work, it is intended to bring forward the move to a single Chief Executive Officer (CEO) model even if only as an interim measure pending the conclusion of the exploration work with Rushmoor.
10. This is consistent with the preferred option that was recommended by the independent January 2022 Solace Enterprise review of the Senior Management Structure. The Solace Enterprise recommendation was:

**The Council should adopt a single CEO and 3 Heads of Service model (option 3) (but with some of the £254k savings achieved reinvested to create additional capacity in Tier 3 manager posts to increase operational capacity/Monitoring officer provision) based upon a requirement to deliver a business case and transformation plan for the Council to progress to a shared CEO model (option 4) in a 2 year timescale.**

11. This approach would better position the Council to react to the Rushmoor exploration work as envisaged by the independent Solace Enterprise recommendation should the shared CEO option offer a beneficial outcome. More importantly, it would give greater certainty for staff, councillors and the public, including stakeholders, about the future senior officer leadership direction of the Council. It would also assist us in our 2023/24 budget formulation processes.
12. Due to the need for consistency and stability in the face of on-going restructuring it is the intention to seek to fill the interim single CEO position internally with the opportunity ring fenced to one of the two current Joint Chief Executives.

## EQUALITIES

13. No issues of equality are anticipated arising from any operational decision to move to a single Chief Executive model.

## CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

14. No climate change implications will arise from operational decision to move to a single Chief Executive model.

## ACTION

15. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the proposal is that it be recommended to Full Council that Hart should adopt a single CEO model on an interim basis.
16. Should Council accept the proposal, the intention is to follow the Council's own employment procedures and to bring the interim single CEO element of the model into effect at the earliest opportunity.



**Background paper**

Staffing Committee reports January and February 2022.  
Cabinet reports February 2022 and July 2022

**Contact:** Leader of the Council, [david.neighbour@hart.gov.uk](mailto:david.neighbour@hart.gov.uk)

## CABINET

### KEY DECISIONS/ WORK PROGRAMME, AND EXECUTIVE DECISIONS MADE

September 2022

Cabinet is required to publish its Key Decisions and forward work programme to inform the public of issues on which it intends to make policy or decisions. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also notes the Programme, which is subject to regular revision.

Report Title	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Due Date	Key Decision Y? Note 1	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)	* This item may contain Exempt Information
Green Grid Signage and Wayfinding	To consider options for Green Grid Signage and Wayfinding	Sep 22		DN	TS	
Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Asset Management Plan	Post consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny, to consider the Council's medium term financial strategy position and future capital strategy, treasury management strategy statement and asset management plan	Sep 22		JR	F	
Odiham Common Management Plan	Quarterly Update on budget position and management plan	Sep 22		AO	TS	
Shapley Heath Audit Review Report	To receive the request from the Audit Committee to provide a response to the management recommendations contained within the Shapley Heath Audit Review report, and to review the application of project governance, financial controls, and reporting for the Shapley Heath	Sep 22		DN	JCX	

Report Title	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Due Date	Key Decision Y? Note 1	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)	* This item may contain Exempt Information
	project and to provide a response to Audit Committee on lessons learnt					
5 Councils Governance Joint Committee and Representation	To agree membership of the Joint Committee and agree a streamlined governance approach	Sep 22		DN	JCX	
The Swan Inn, North Warnborough	To seek Cabinet approval for cost projection and next steps	Oct 22		DN	JCX	
Civic Regen Project	To receive the minutes of the Civic Regen Working Group and agree any actions	Oct 22		DN	JCX	
Quarterly Performance Plans	To seek Cabinet approval for reports on performance data	Oct 22 Jan 23 Apr 23		DN	ALL	
Risk Register Review	To review the Risk Register and agree recommended amendments	Oct 22		RQ	CS	
Review of Finance Regs and Contract Standing Orders	Post consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Oct 22		JR	F	

Report Title	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Due Date	Key Decision Y? Note 1	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)	* This item may contain Exempt Information
Odiham and North Warnborough Conservation Area Appraisal	To endorse the CA appraisal for planning/development management purposes	Nov 22		GC	P	
Potential for a Shared Chief Executive with Rushmoor Borough Council	Consideration of a business case for a Shared Chief Executive between Hart District Council and Rushmoor Borough Council	Nov 22		DN	JCX	
Housing Capital Projects	To consider the report on Project 2 of 4 – Mortgage Assistance Scheme	Nov 22		SB	H	
Revised Medium Term Financial Strategy and Emerging 2023/24 Budget	Post consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Nov 22		JR	F	

Report Title	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Due Date	Key Decision Y? Note 1	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)	* This item may contain Exempt Information
Waste Strategy and Contract Change	To look at the efficiency of SERCO	Dec 22		AO	TS	
Q2 Review and Capital Outturn to September 2022	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Jan 23		JR	F	
TM Strategy – Mid Year Review	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Jan 23		JR	F	
Forecast 2022/23 Capital and Revenue Outturn	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Jan 23		JR	F	



Report Title	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Due Date	Key Decision Y? Note 1	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)	* This item may contain Exempt Information
Budget Report for 2023/24	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Feb 23		JR	F	
Draft Budget Book	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Feb 23		JR	F	
Fees and Charges for 2023/24	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Feb 23		JR	F	
Draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Feb 23		JR	F	

Report Title	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Due Date	Key Decision Y? Note 1	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)	* This item may contain Exempt Information
Q3 Capital & Revenue	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Mar 23		JR	F	
Forecast 2022/23 Capital and Revenue Outturn	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Mar 23		JR	F	
Bad Debt Write Offs	Post Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny	Mar 23		JR	F	
Draft Service Plans 2023/24	To consider the draft service plans for 2023/24	Mar 23		DN	ALL	



**Note 1**

A “key decision” means an executive decision which, is likely to -

- a) result in Council incurring expenditure or the making of savings which amount to £30,000 or 25% (whichever is the larger) of the budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards within the area of the district of Hart.

**Note 2****Cabinet Members**

DN	Leader	TCI	Digital	RQ	Commercialisation (Cn) and Corporate Services	SB	Community (Cy)
TCo	Regulatory	AO	Environment	JR	Finance	GC	Place

**Note 3****Service:**

JCX	Joint Chief Executive	CS	Corporate Services	P	Place Services
CSF	Community Safety	PP	Planning Policy	TS	Environmental & Technical Services
F	Finance	H	Community Services		
SLS	Shared Legal Services	MO	Monitoring Officer		

**Note 4**

\* **This item may contain Exempt Information** - Regulation 5 of the Local Authority (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

**EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**