



Banbury Country Park Masterplan

Masterplan Summary Report

Cherwell District Council

Prepared by Ryder Landscape Consultants

May 2017

Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

RYDER
LANDSCAPE CONSULTANTS



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Further information

Considerable information has been collated during the development of these proposals. It is contained in Appendices and other documents held on disc by Cherwell District Council, the list of documents is set below:

1. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0001 Parish Regions & Listed Buildings General Arrangement;
2. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0002 Waterways and Surface Water General Arrangement;
3. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0003 Access and Circulation General Arrangement;
4. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0004 Agricultural Land and Woodland General Arrangement;
5. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0005 Flood Warnings, General Arrangement;
6. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0006 Land Assemblies General Arrangement;
7. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0007 Country Parks General Arrangement;
8. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-0008 Parks and Gardens General Arrangement;
9. 234-RYD-XX-XX-DR-L-2000 Banbury Country Park Masterplan
10. Design Workshop 17th December - presentation;
11. Design Workshop 28th January - presentation; and
12. Costings - Provisional Estimate

Introduction

This report has been prepared as part of the Banbury Country Park Masterplan proposals. Its function is to explain:

- The process undertaken to develop proposals for the country park to the north of Banbury;
- The proposals;
- Estimated costs; and
- How to proceed to deliver the country park.

Process to arrive at these proposals

A unique set of circumstances has come to pass to allow Cherwell District Council to assemble land of sufficient scale, public accessibility and connectivity to form a large enough area for a country park to be formed. The different blocks of land have included:

- **Gateway Meadow**
Strategic purchase by Cherwell District Council.
- **Land to the north of the M40**
Negotiated sale of land by the Environment Agency after construction of the Banbury Flood Alleviation Scheme.
- **Hardwick Fields**
Section 106 negotiation with housing developers Bellway Homes.

The design process to define the preliminary proposals for the park has been a collaborative process led by Cherwell District Council with 18 partner organisations working together to:

- Define what is important about the area at the moment;
- Suggest proposals that could be included in the Country Park Masterplan; and
- Identify ways the Country Park could be funded and managed.

Two design workshops were held on 17th December 2015 and 28th January 2016 facilitated by Ryder Landscape Consultants who were commissioned to develop the masterplan proposals.

The first workshop considered the character and benefits of the assembled site. As a result a SWOT analysis was prepared. The second workshop a preliminary Masterplan and Access and Movement Strategy has been prepared to provide an overview to more detailed proposals.

Further sheets have been produced to develop proposals for the 6 individual character areas. These outline short, medium and long-term proposals.

A cost estimate has been prepared to indicate likely costings for the short, medium and long term development of the country park.

Overall Objectives

The following have been defined as the overall objectives for the Banbury Country Park;

- Be a fun, safe place to visit and also provide quiet relaxation for its users;
- Encourage as many different users into the Country Park;
- Be as accessible as possible for users with different mobility levels;
- Promote linkages between the different areas for recreation and traffic free commuting;
- Retain existing areas of ecological interest and create new habitat;
- Be straight-forward and cost efficient to manage and maintain; and
- Continue to be developed and managed with the aid of national and local partner organisations.



A place for exercise and fun



A place for all levels of accessibility



A place that respects existing wildlife



A place that forms new habitats

Preliminary Masterplan

The preliminary masterplan shows six different character areas that reflect existing site qualities. They are entered from current and proposed access points and are connected by mixture of existing routes such as the Oxford Canal Towpath and new links such a footbridge crossing from Banbury Gateway.

Six Character Areas

The character areas have been given the following working names;

- Area 1 – **Wildmere Woodland**
- Area 2 – **Gateway Meadow**
- Area 3 – **Hardwick Meadow**
- Area 4 – **Embankment Park**
- Area 5 – **Roman Meadow**
- Area 6 – **Railway Arboretum**

Pages 7 -12 explain a little about each area and the preliminary proposals for them.



Footnote
*1 - Planning application - 15/00066/50

Overall Access and Movement Strategy

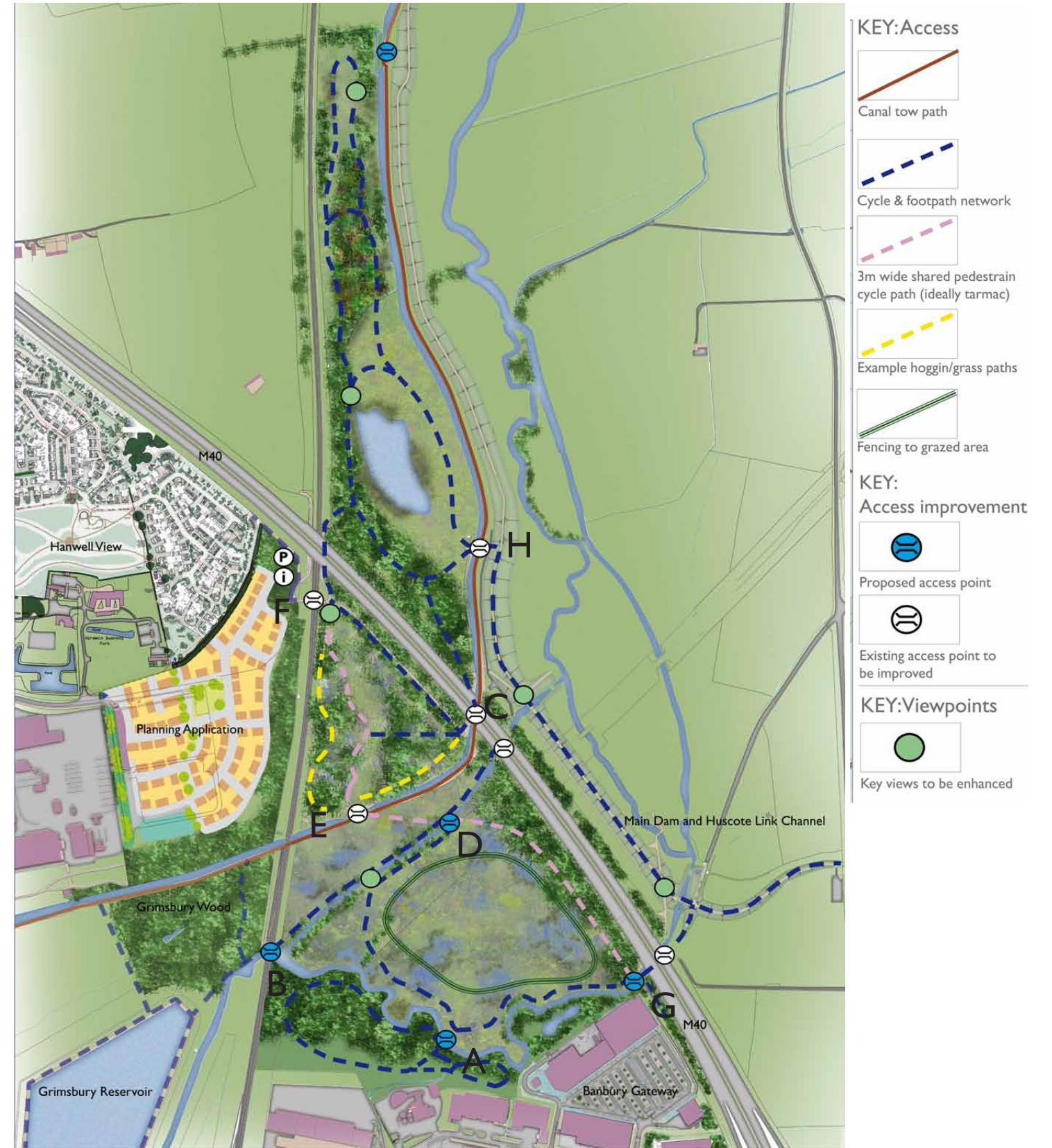
Following the preliminary masterplan an access and movement strategy was developed for the country park. This illustrates the main footpath network to allow movement through the site, alongside key access points. In addition it illustrates connection points to adjacent housing area, the Banbury Gateway Retail Park and parking provision.

Pathways and access points will form a large part of the cost of developing the park but an incremental approach with a hierarchy of paths is proposed.

For example;

Only invest in metalled or bound paths (e.g. Tarmac) where high demand can be anticipated e.g. Hanwell View to the Banbury Gateway Retail Park.

Where moderate demand can be foreseen unbound stone (hoggin) paths could be formed. If these routes become more popular and budgets allow they can be upgraded to a bound path. Where light or season demand is expected mown grass paths are considered appropriate. This is a country park and informal paths and desire lines (as long as they are safe to use) should be utilised.



Tarmac Path



Bound Gravel Path



Mown Grass Path

Character Area I Wildmere Woodland

Overall Character

Established wet woodland.

Access points

Currently no public access. Requires a new bridge from Gateway Meadow (A). Long-term aspiration to link to Grimsbury Wood but requires further feasibility study to investigate access under or over the railway.(B)

Circulation

Bound stone path already in existence.

Recreation

Passive recreation walking around mature woodland.

Ecology

Diversification of woodland to include a greater variety of native woodland ground flora and tree species.

Features

None proposed other than bridge into site.

Negatives

Short lived nature of poplars that make up most of the wood.

Interpretation

The ecology of a wet woodland.

Management

Ongoing woodland management and planting other wetland trees in the future.

Phasing

Short term -
New Footbridge with car loading
Link to existing path

Medium term -
Enhanced planting and diversification of woodland

Long term -
Link to Grimbury Wood



Diversifying ground flora.



School and volunteer opportunities.

Site photos



Enhanced tree planting.



Creation of access into the wood.



Achieving ready access into wood.

Character Area 2 Gateway Meadow

Overall character

Wet meadow.

Access points

Existing but complicated access from Area 4 (Embankment Park) or from the Oxford Canal Towpath. Improved ready access from Banbury Gateway proposed via a new footbridge. (C)

Circulation

A tarmac shared cycle/ pedestrian route connecting Hanwell View and Banbury Gateway is priority, with a further grass circular path round the meadow (as shown in yellow).

Recreation

Walking through meadow, dogs to be kept on leads with grazed management of meadow by sheep or beef cattle kept at low numbers. Bird watching in quiet areas.

Ecology

Improvement as a wet meadow for ground nesting birds and meadow flora and fauna. Use of further native woodland to screen greater part of M40 embankment.

Features

Circular path around drier part of the meadow and possible creation of framed views from the M40 and artwork to act as a positive marker for Banbury.

Negative

Screen out views to M40 if possible.

Interpretation

Wet meadow and its fauna and flora and historic rail route to Daventry.

Management

Primarily managed by low intensity grazing. Manage existing planting to turn it into a thriving woodland to help screen M40. Management access to M40 to be retained.

Phasing

Short term -

Footpath network and access points

Tarmac path (Oxfordshire County Council)

Fencing to protect wet meadow area and keep stock in.

New bridge at C and D

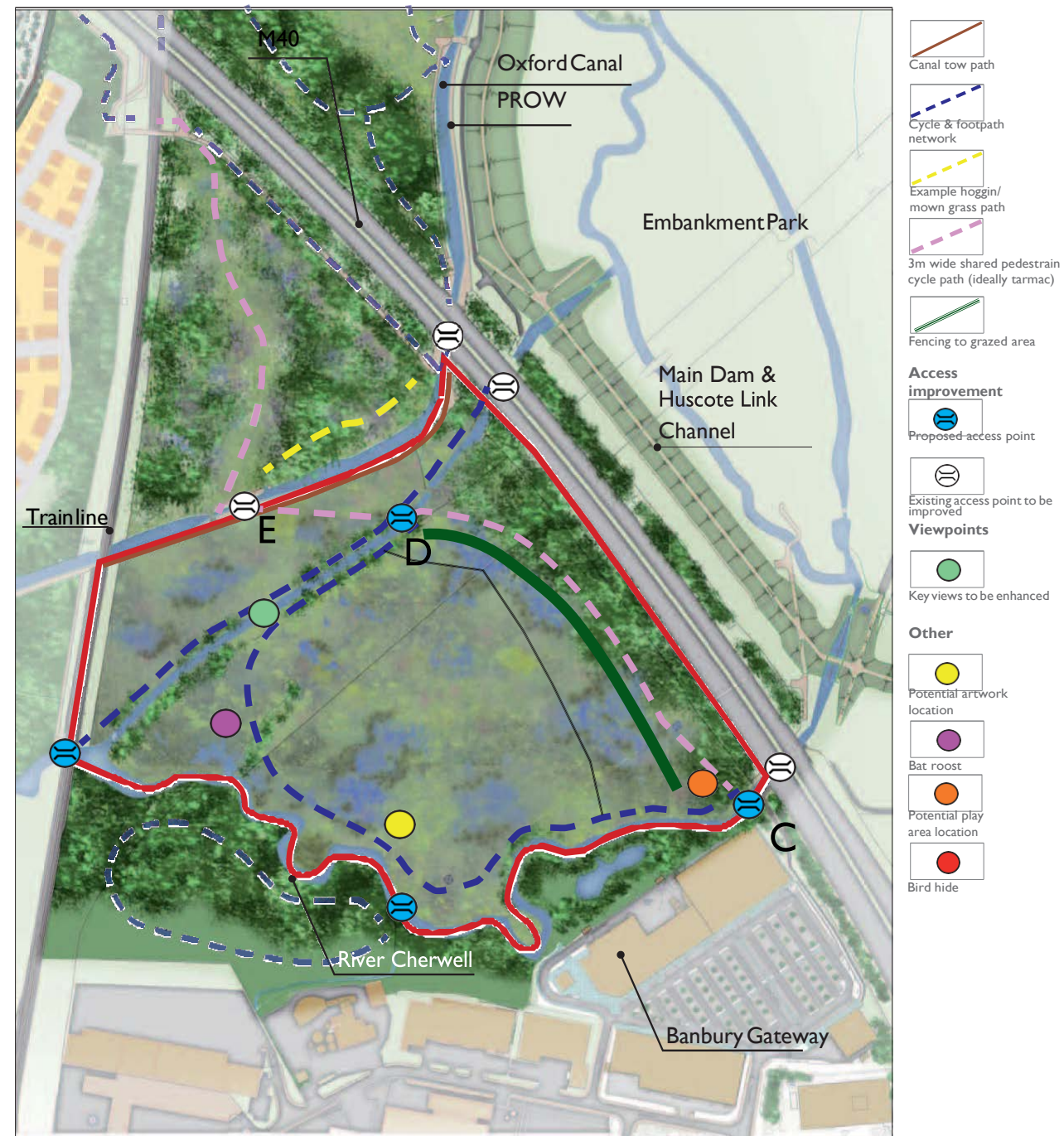
Medium term -

Bat roost

Enhanced Planting

Long term -

Play area and artwork



Site photos



Screen less attractive buildings & M40.



Diversifying of grass sward.



Appropriate grazing for wet meadow required.



Habitats for grazing and wetland species e.g Snipe.



Allow localised flooding on site.

Character Area 3 Hardwick New Wood

Overall character
New woodland with glades

Access points
Existing ones over Oxford Canal (E) to south and over railway bridge (F) to the north west leading from new houses at Hanwell View. Also existing access under the M40 from embankment parking (G).

Parking
A small parking area will be provided by the developer in the Hanwell View development.

Circulation
Flow of people to and from Hanwell View new housing area and around the proposed woodland. A route parallel to the M40 would provide a good traffic-free link to Banbury Gateway helping to reduce congestion on Southam Road.

Recreation
Walking, particularly dog walking near major new residential area. Woodland games when the wood has established. Planting of 'incredible-edible' trail and possible formation of an adventure play area or trail.

Ecology
Native woodland species but also concentrating on seasonal ground flora e.g. aconites, ransomes and bluebells.

Features
No major features proposed but incidental artwork could be promoted on establishment.

Negative
Screening of views to the railway and M40 embankment would enhance the experience within the new wood.

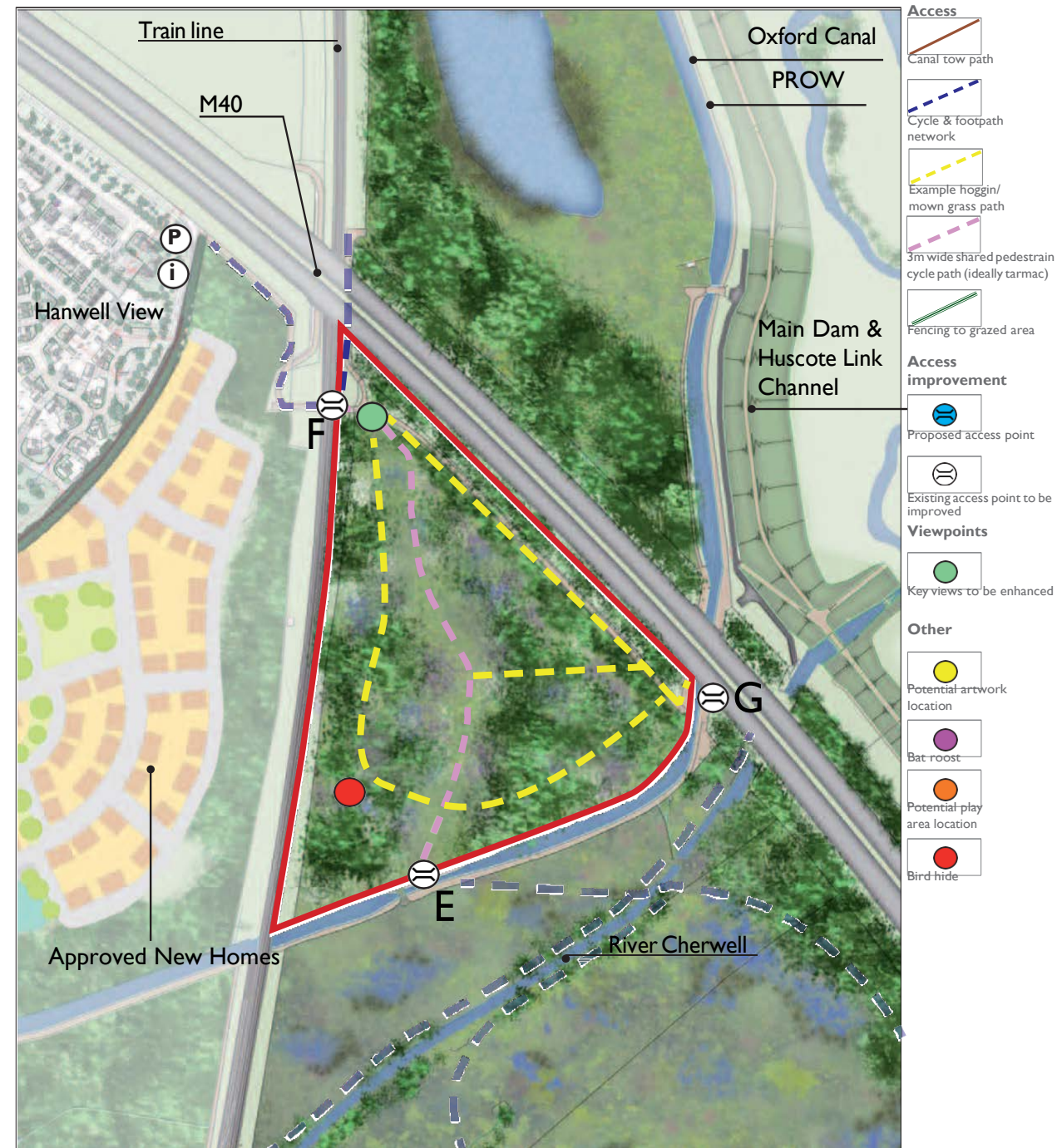
Interpretation
Developing woodland and Oxford Canal's history and engineering.

Management
Establishment management of planting to turn it into a thriving woodland. Dogs off leads is recommended. Management access to M40 to be retained.

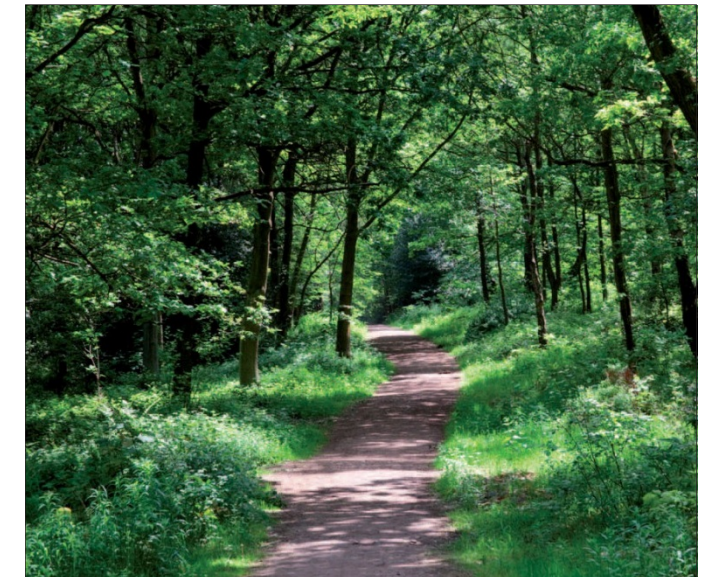
Phasing
Short term -
Footpath network and access points
Tarmac path
Grass mown path

Medium term -
Bird hide (funded by Banbury Ornithological Society)
Enhanced planting and diversification of woodland

Long term -
None proposed



Approved translocation of species.



Woodland walks.



Family access.

Site photos



Oxford Canal to south side.



Current view across Hardwick Meadow.

Character Area 4 Embankment Park

Overall character

Grass embankment affording views across the Cherwell Valley.

Access points

Off the A361, from the Oxford Canal Towpath and from the cycle way to Chacombe.

Circulation

Linear, transition route to link to the rest of the Country Park.

Recreation

Walking, cycling and dog walking.

Ecology

Limited along the grass embankment but ecological interest along Cherwell river corridor is visible from the embankment.

Features

No new features proposed but existing flow control structures of the flood alleviation scheme provide some interest.

Negative

Proximity, noise and visibility of M40.

Interpretation

Flood alleviation scheme control structures, reformation of Huscote Link Channel and Huscote Water Mill.

Management

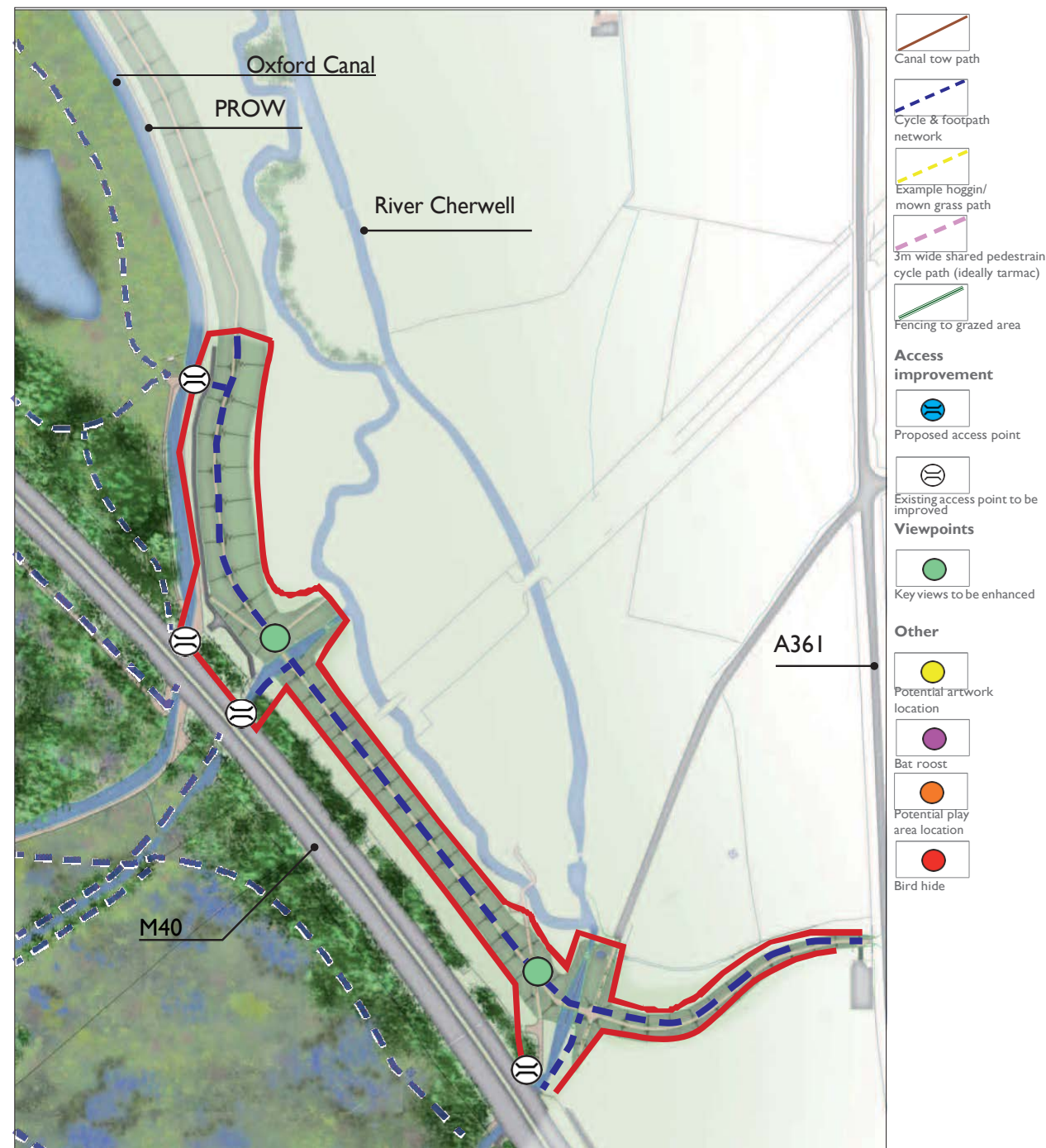
The embankment to remain the responsibility of the Environment Agency as a functioning flood defence.

Phasing (with potential funding sources)

Short term -
Footpath network and access points (Already provided)

Medium term -
Vegetation management (introduced through changed maintenance programme)
Interpretation of flood alleviation scheme
Improved access under M40

Long term -
None proposed



Site photos



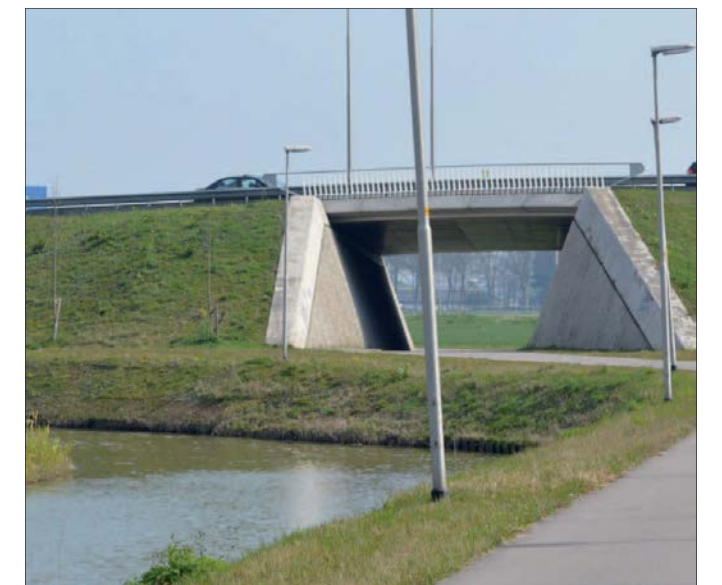
Maximise new link to Oxford Canal towpath.



Rural car park with tarmac surface.



Mix of habitats.



Improving routes under M40.

Character Area 5

Roman Meadow

Overall character

Grassland area around a large lake.

Access points

There is a direct link from the new housing at Hanwell View (F). An access is over Canal Bridge 159 (H) and from Area 6 (Railway Arboretum) to the north.

Circulation

Circular route around lake with two linkage points into Area 6 (Railway Arboretum) to the north.

Recreation

Walking and potentially fishing on the lake or kayaking and paddle boarding as more active pursuits.

Ecology

Primary interest is the lake margins which may lead to conflict with a potential fishing use. Soil is nutrient depleted after excavation so could host diverse ground flora profile.

Features

Maximising the existing lake and views across it.

Negative

Presence of M40 to south but this is being screened out by developing woodland planting on the motorway embankment.

Interpretation

Roman archaeology found in the field during its excavation for the flood alleviation scheme.

Management

Continue establishment maintenance of the Environment Agency planted woodland and diversification of grassland sward around lake.

Phasing

Short term -
Footpath network and access points

Medium term -
Fishing pegs
Interpretation of Roman archaeology
Secondary access to railway arboretum
Enhanced planting and diversification of woodland

Long term -
Potential improvement to rail bridge

The lake at the centre of the Roman Meadow



Site photos





Kayak usage of the lake may be appropriate.

Fishing club management of the lake is a possibility.

Triathlon club usage is another potential active pursuit.



Character Area 6 Railway Arboretum

Overall character

Proposed arboretum with a mix of attractive native and non-native trees.

Access points

From Area 5 (Roman Meadow) and via an improved crossing of the Oxford Canal at Bourton Lock.

Circulation

Circular route on mown grass paths to take in the length of this north to south orientated narrow field.

Recreation

Walking and appreciation of trees through tree trail.

Ecology

Likely quieter part of site as it is the furthest from accesses. Possibly of greatest interest to songbirds. Summer flower meadow also a habitat possibility.

Features

Trees themselves will be the greatest features and chosen to provide all-year round seasonal interest. Trees will be of UK provenance. Frame key views into the arboretum to help mark entrance to Banbury for rail users.

Negative

View to the railway.

Interpretation

Tree species and their origins from around the world.

Management

Low key with occasional grass mowing of summer meadows and cutting of verges by side of grass paths.

Phasing

Short term -

Mown grass paths (introduced through changed maintenance programme)

Tree planting or sponsorship

Medium term -

Access point near Bourton Lock

Interpretation of Arboretum

Long term -

Ongoing management



Arboretum in autumn.



Arboretum in spring.



Trees with aesthetic value all year around.

Site photos



Maximise presence of existing trees on site.



Screen neighbouring railway.

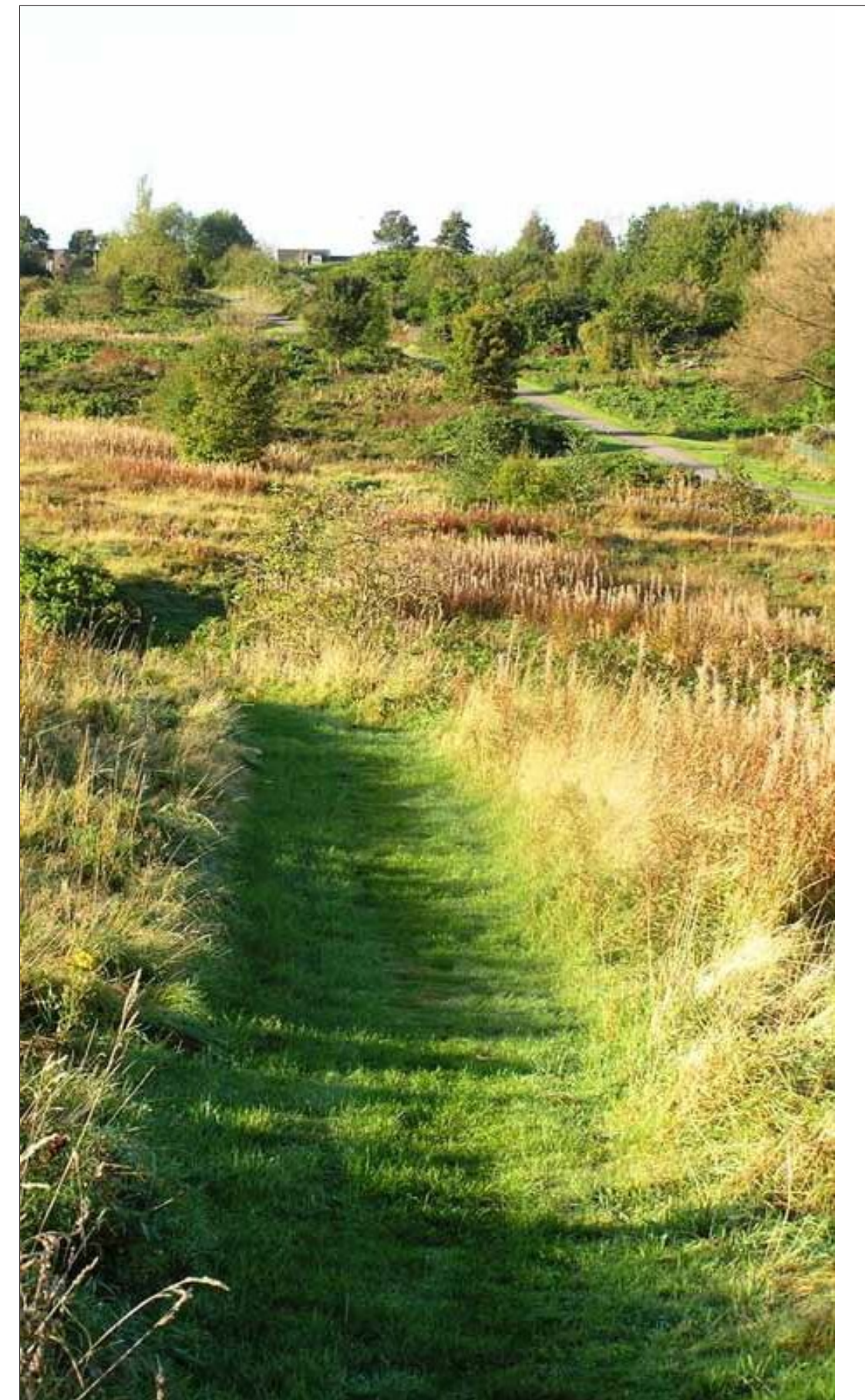
Action Plan, Cost Estimate & Funding

PHASE 1 - SHORT TERM (YEAR 1)	Cost	Funding Method	Organisation
Complete land purchase	£35,000	Capital Reserve	CDC
Structural Surveys on Bridges	£10,000	Revenue	CDC
Bridge supply and construction	£45,000	Capital Reserve	CDC
Stock Proof Fencing	£8,500	Revenue	CDC
Signage/Interpretation Supply and installation	£20,000	Capital Reserve	CDC
Footpath construction works	£95,000	S106	CDC
Park Furniture Supply and installation	£15,500	Revenue	CDC
Fishing platforms installation	£11,000	Revenue	CDC
Total	£240,000		

PHASE 2 - MEDIUM TERM (YEARS 2-3)	Cost	Potential Funding	Organisation
Woodland Planting	£60,000	Woodland Grant	Forestry Commision
Bird Hide	£15,000	Partner	RSPB
Bat Roost	£5,000	Volunteers	BOS
River corridor habitat and water improvements	£12,000	Volunteers	EA/BBOWT
Car Park Construction - West of the Park	£50,000	S106	Developer
Cycle way link Southam Road to the Gateway Retail Outlet	£75,000	Partner	OCC
Total	£217,000		

PHASE 3 - LONG TERM (YEARS 3-10)	Cost	Potential Funding	Organisation
Childrens Play Area	£60,000	CIL/S106	CDC
Public Art	£20,000	CIL/S106	CDC
Improved access into the park from the canal	£20,000	Partner	Canal & River Trust
Improved access into the park from Grimsbury Wood	£5,000	Revenue	CDC/BOS
Habitat improvement works	Time	Volunteers	BBOWT
Community Planting initiatives	Time	Volunteers	CDC/Quadron
Car Park Construction - East of the Park	£70,000	S106	Developer
Total	£175,000		

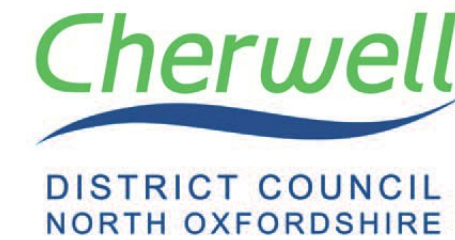
LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE	Cost	Funding	Organisation
Mowing along side footpaths	£3,008	Revenue	CDC
Weed treatment of paths	£317	Revenue	CDC
Meadow Grazing	£2,000	Revenue	CDC
Bin Emptying	£1,320	Revenue	CDC
Litter Picking	£1,053	Revenue	CDC
Plant Material	£5,000	Revenue	CDC
Furniture Maintenance	£2,500	Revenue	CDC
Total	£15,198		



Funding

There is no single funding stream that will provide sufficient funds to develop the country park in totality as an individual project. However there are a number of smaller individual funds that could be targeted to support different elements of the project. The table below is an initial suggestion of potential funding sources.

Potential funder	Area of interest	Focus of funding
Oxfordshire County Council	Cycle path from Hanwell View to Wildmere Industrial Estate.	Safer, traffic free routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
WREN Landfill Tax Credit Award	Broad ranging community, bio-diversity and heritage projects.	Habitat creation, community linkage to site.
Section 106 Monies	Directed to projects of community benefit.	Footpaths and linkages such as bridge connections.
Cherwell District Council capital budget	All of country park.	Professional support and part adoption.
Heritage Lottery Fund	Matters of heritage interest.	Interpretation and training, Huscote Water Mill.
Thames Water Environmental Investment Fund	Environmental improvement on or near to their facilities.	Grimsbury Wood and improvement to reservoir.
Corporate sponsorship	Banbury benefits from large corporate businesses who may be willing to sponsor items.	Individual projects such as bridges down to smaller elements such as signs.
Environment Agency	Riparian habitats and flood risk management.	Ecological and landscape improvements near river.
Woodland Trust	Woodland creation	Planting of new wood such as Hardwick New Wood
Individual sponsorship	Something close to their individuals area of interest	Park furniture and arboretum trees.
Banbury Ornithological Trust	Birds and their habitat.	Screen hides and interpretation
Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust	All environmental aspects.	Management & maintenance support e.g. grazing flock.
RSPB	Birds and their habitat.	Habitat creation and interpretation.



Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Oxfordshire



What next?

Now that land acquisitions have been assembled and funding is in place for Phase 1, the following is an outline of the journey ahead to develop a new country park for Banbury:

- Complete transfer of land from Environmental Agency
- Share the proposals with project partners
- Make planning application for change of use
- Raise public awareness of new country park
- Complete Phase 1 works by 31st March 2018
- Firm up commitments/funding bids with partners for Phase 2 works
- Build a friends of group - to assist with the parks management decisions, volunteering and fund raising that public bodies cannot access
- Start to celebrate success, park opening, good news stories – Partner and community involvement
- Implement low key maintenance of the site
- Work with partners to deliver Phase 2 Medium Term
- Submit bids for funding when opportunities arise to find funding for Phase 3 delivery

Country Parks are similar to town parks in that they will change over time and adapt to reflect the interests and needs of their users. The park must remain adaptable and work with the river valley in which it sits instead of against it to be truly sustainable.

All the strands of a wonderful community asset are ready to be pulled together to create a place of real value where people can enjoy themselves surprisingly close to home.



Project Partners

The following groups have supported the development of a Country Park to the north of Banbury and its design process to date. We thank them all and plan to continue to work together so the park has the best chance of establishment and long term sustainability.



DESIGN MEETING ORGANISATIONS