

Bourton Meadow - Buckingham

VISION STATEMENT

01 Introduction and Vision

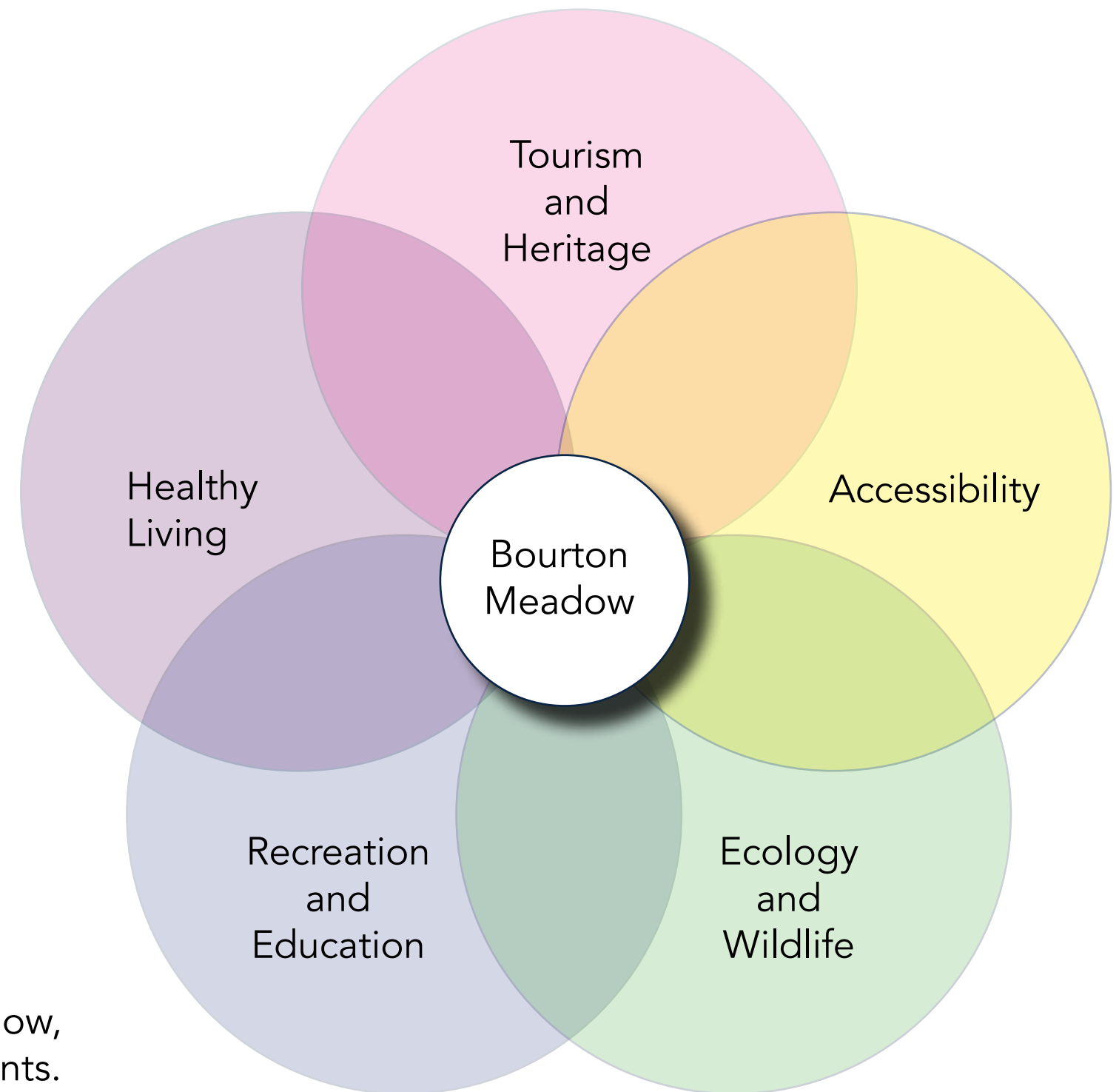
The Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan identifies Bourton Meadow as an area of opportunity in terms of tourism, enhancement of the historic Canal arm that crosses the site, the provision of green space, and recreational use.

This document sets out our initial Vision as to how these various opportunities could be delivered, as part of a comprehensive scheme that will provide a range of benefits to residents and visitors to the town alike, that will enhance the benefits of the site to wildlife and the environment, and which will celebrate and complement the previous work undertaken by the Buckingham Canal Society.

The key themes of our Vision, which are discussed further on the following pages, are:

- Tourism and Heritage - Page 2
- Accessibility - Page 6
- Ecology and Wildlife - Page 8
- Recreation and Education - Page 10
- Healthy Living - Page 12

This document sets out our initial ideas for Bourton Meadow, please let us know if you have any suggestions or comments.

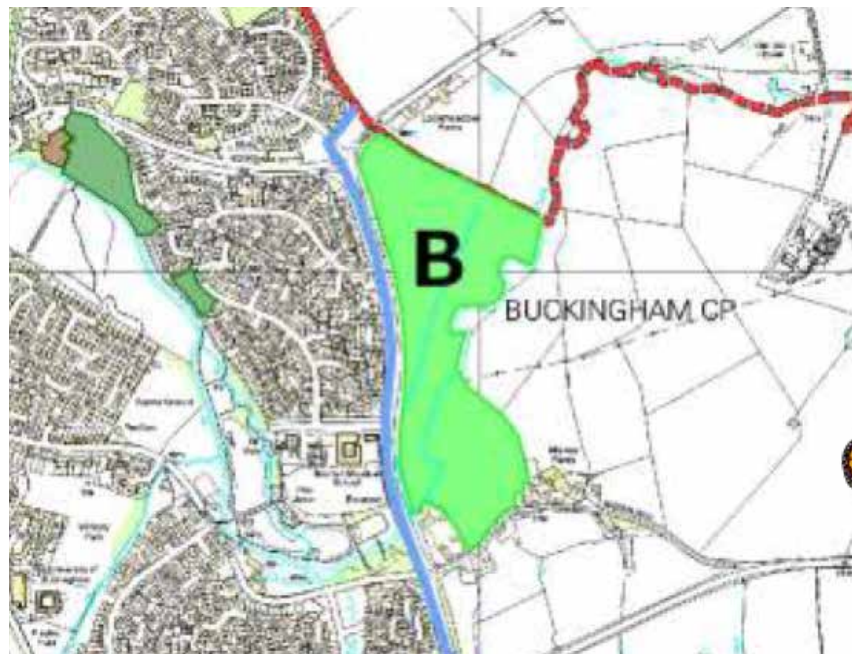


This diagram shows how the five key themes in this document overlap and create the Vision for Bourton Meadow

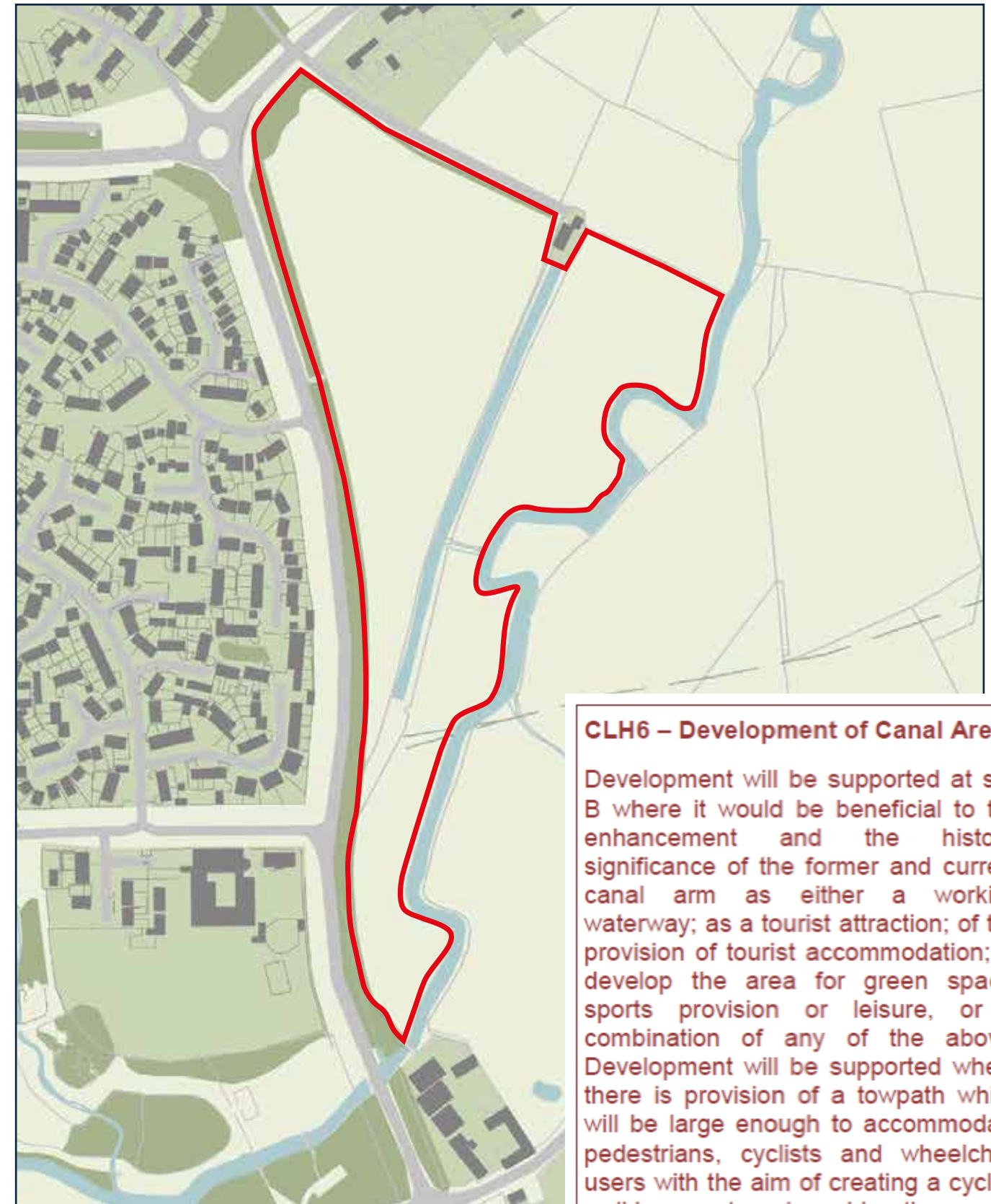
02 Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan

Bourton Meadows is identified as site 'B' in the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan, to which Policy CLH 6 applies.

The purpose of Policy CLH 6 is to support the development of the site in a way that enhances the historic environment of the Canal, and supports tourism, recreation and leisure. Our Vision seeks to develop the framework set by the Neighbourhood Plan and to explore in practice how the objectives of the policy can be implemented on the ground.



In developing our Vision, we have undertaken initial discussions with the Buckingham Canal Society, to assist us in developing proposals that will genuinely complement and expand upon the restoration work that has already taken place.



CLH6 – Development of Canal Area

Development will be supported at site B where it would be beneficial to the enhancement and the historic significance of the former and current canal arm as either a working waterway; as a tourist attraction; of the provision of tourist accommodation; to develop the area for green space, sports provision or leisure, or a combination of any of the above. Development will be supported where there is provision of a towpath which will be large enough to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users with the aim of creating a cycle / walking route alongside the canal towards Cosgrove.

03 Tourism and Heritage

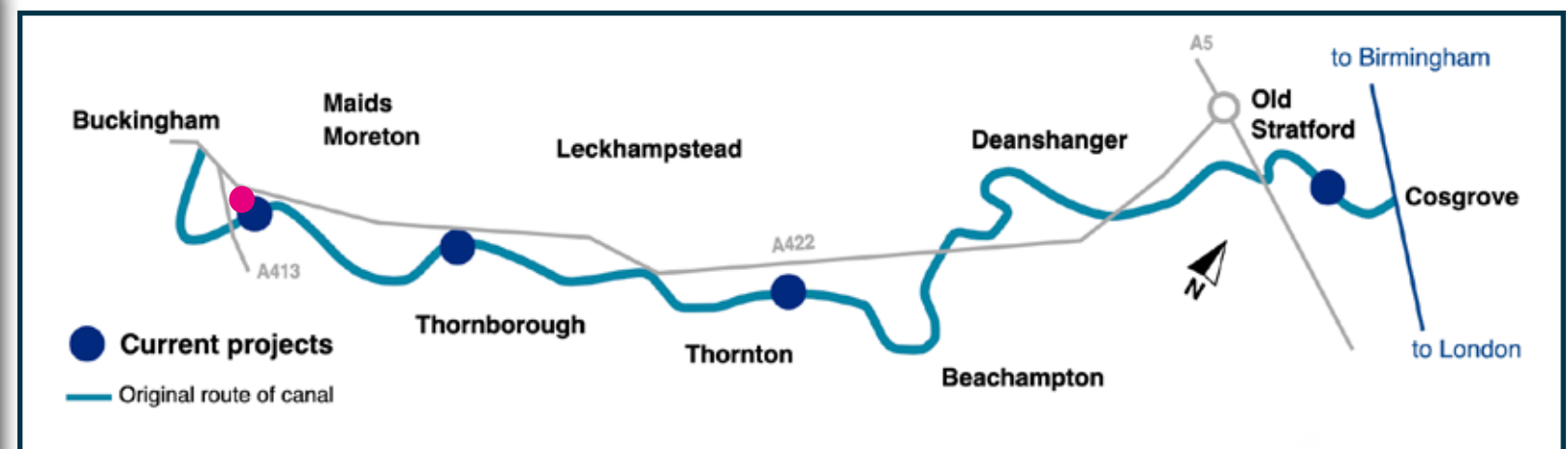
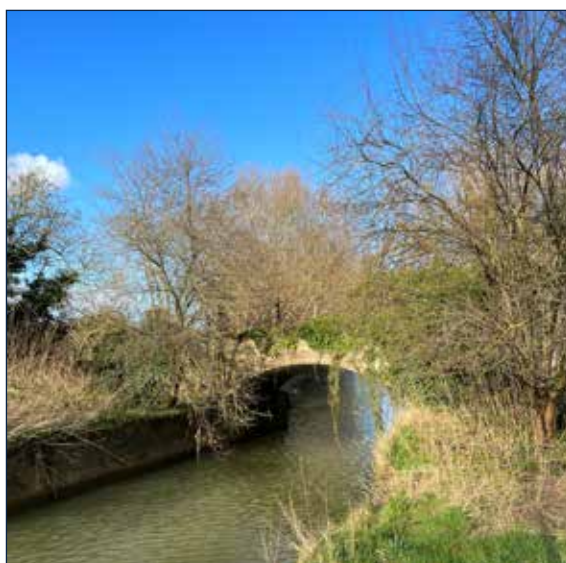
Buckingham Town Council's Tourism Strategy seeks to deliver a quality visitor experience for the town, with specific elements of the strategy including that Buckingham should become known for its heritage and local attractions, that visitors should be able to access a range of information about the town and its heritage, and that the area should have national recognition for outstanding walking and cycling.

The Buckingham arm of the Canal, as it exists at the present, it is an asset with great potential to attract visitors, both for interest in the Canal itself, and because The Ouse Valley Way already provides an attractive and interesting walk alongside the line of the old Canal route.

The original terminus of the Canal was of course within Buckingham itself, but that is no longer apparent. Bourton Meadows therefore forms the effective western terminus of the Canal arm, but other than the single interpretation board, there is little to identify the significance of the Canal or mark it as an attraction in its own right, and the site is relatively inaccessible.



The full restoration of the Cosgrove to Buckingham arm of the Canal, is an aim of the Buckingham Canal Society and would be a major tourist attraction to the benefit of Bourton Meadow and beyond. The extent of the restoration is highlighted in the plan below from the Buckingham Canal Society Website. (The pink dot has been added to show the location of Bourton Meadow)



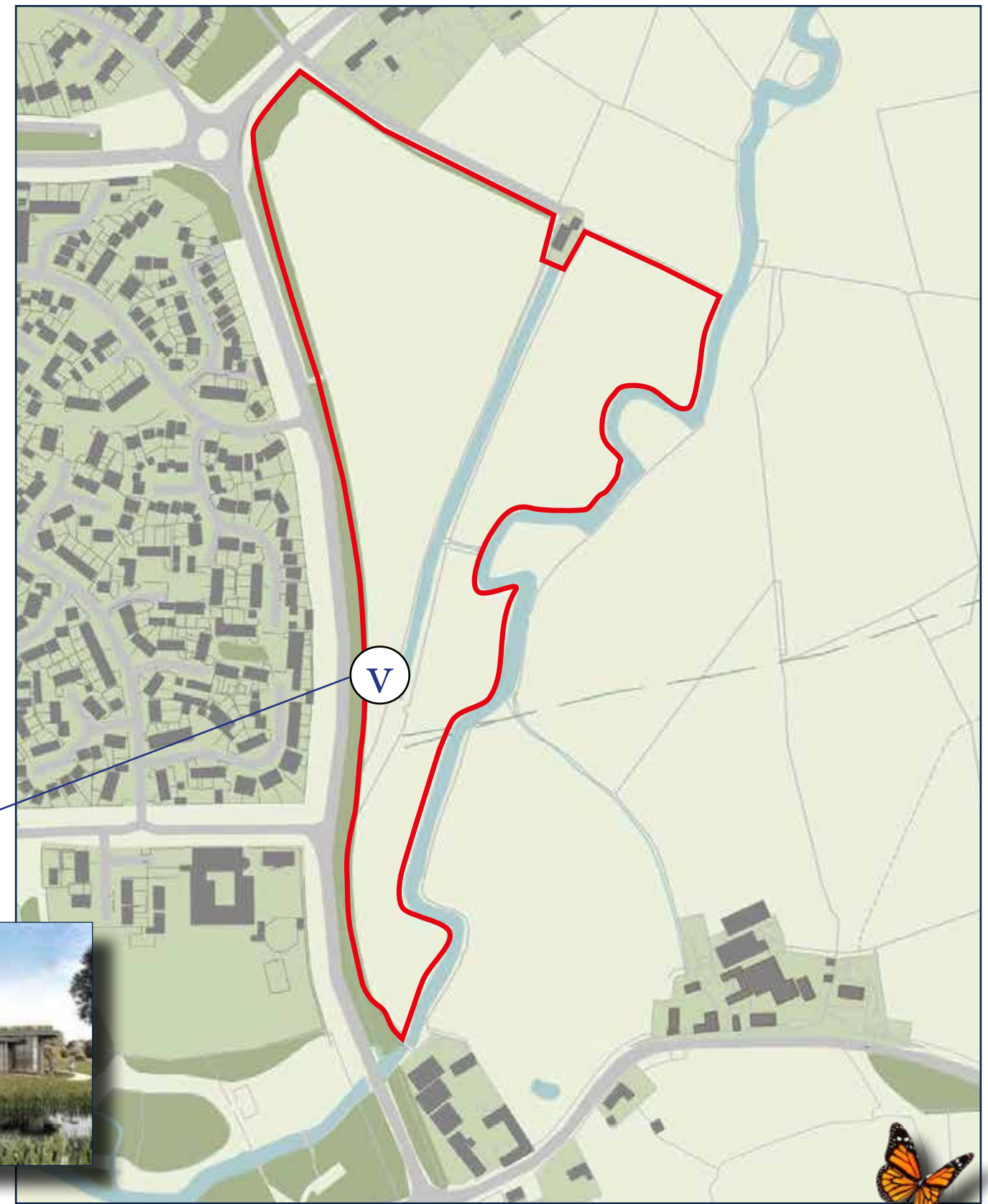
03 Tourism and Heritage

Our Vision is therefore to create an appropriate scaled visitor attraction at Bourton Meadows, including a small visitor information/education centre and micro museum hosting artefacts related to the history of the canal.

Improved pedestrian access for residents alongside a small car park (for example for disabled visitors) would help to attract visitors, as would our proposals to create additional wildlife areas, walking routes, and interpretation facilities.

Bourton Meadows would be a local attraction in its own right, as well as forming a key gateway for accessing the wider countryside via The Ouse Valley Way.

The visitor centre building could have a number of additional uses such as a cafe, small plant nursery or perhaps a community hall. The function and design of the building could be agreed through public consultation.



Examples of successful visitor centres in the UK



04 Accessibility

Bourton Meadows is a potentially valuable local attraction for both residents and visitors, but the A413 acts as a barrier to easy access, and there are no ready opportunities for parking for the disabled (or potential visitors).

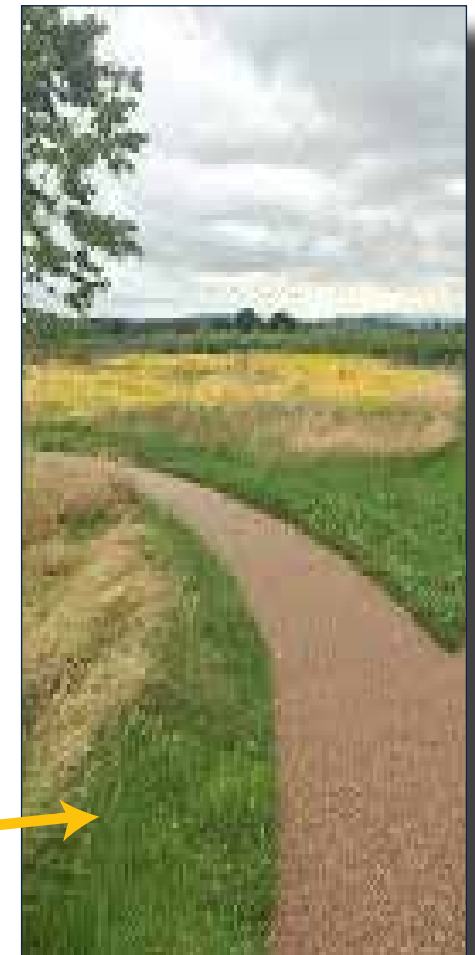
Our Vision is to improve connectivity for existing residents by:

- Providing access information at the start of the Buckingham Arm of the canal and beyond the site to the Hyde Lane Nature Reserve in the north, with information boards and signage to aid visitors;
- Installing appropriate crossing points, potentially in the vicinity of Ouse Valley Way and/or Burleigh Piece, to provide safe and convenient locations to cross the road to access the proposed facilities and open space;
- Providing an appropriately surfaced route (such as hoggin self binding surface) into the site suitable for pushchairs and those with mobility issues, to make the land more accessible to all, and
- Adopting a similar approach to the towpath of the rewatered Canal arm, to enable easier access for cyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users, as proposed in Policy CLH 6 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- These measures would be complementary to the Canal Society's longer term aim of additionally improving access to pedestrians under the A413.

Cycle parking would be provided as part of the Town Council's wider strategy for creating a renowned location for cycling and walking. Electric vehicle charging points can be installed, providing an additional source of revenue for the Visitor centre.



Photograph showing the towpath along the Buckingham Arm section of canal



Photograph showing a bonded gravel surface that could be provided on the towpath to improve accessibility

04 Accessibility



Retained Bridleway

To Hyde Lane
Nature Reserve

Towpath Enhancement

Potential new
pelican crossings

New Vehicular Access

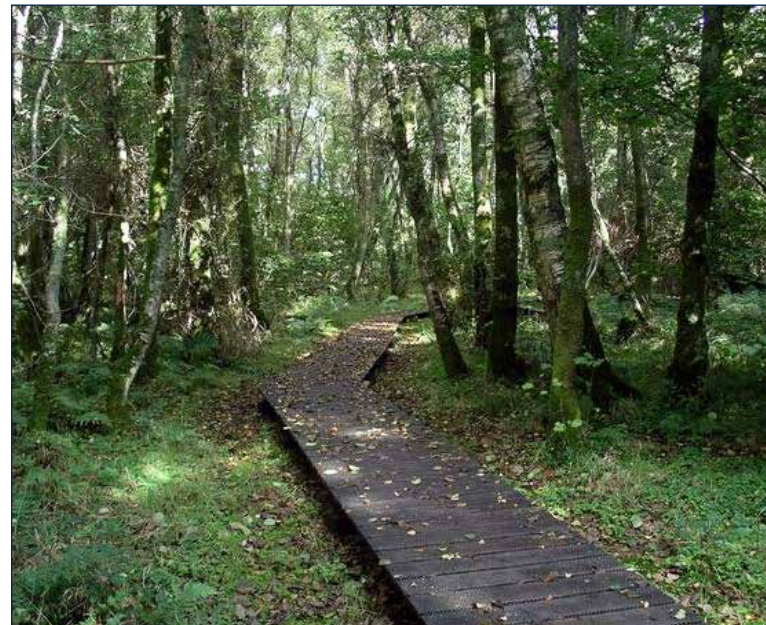
Improved Footpath Surfacing



05 Ecology and Wildlife

Woodland

New areas of native woodland (including species such as hazel, hornbeam, plum and oak) can be provided to widen the existing tree and hedgerow belts that already existing, provide new sources of food and habitat for wildlife, and create wildlife corridors).



Wet woodland and carr

New areas of wet woodland and carr (wetland scrub) can provide cover and nesting opportunities for a range of birds, including the rarer marsh tit, and a refuge for the secretive otter, next to existing riparian habitats. Planting would comprise species such as willow, native black poplar, alder and guelder rose, undersown with wetland wildflower seed mixes. Boardwalks would provide access through areas under permanent waterlogging.

Wetlands and Water Quality

Wetland habitats can be established within the flood plain adjacent to the River Great Ouse through excavation, varying between shallow marsh and fen to deeper reedbed and open water.

Wetlands provide opportunities to improve water quality through filtration of run-off, reed leaching, and trapping of nutrient rich silt, and can also increase flood water capacity.

These features would also benefit a wide range of flora and fauna, particularly aquatic invertebrates, water vole, kingfisher and otter, as well as nesting warblers and reed bunting.

Wildlife ponds

The provision of new wet and semi-wet drainage features for surface water attenuation can provide ponds to provide important breeding opportunities for amphibians, such as common toad and great crested newt, as well as for a range of aquatic invertebrates.



05 Ecology and Wildlife

Channels and backwaters

Opportunities exist to create new braided channels and backwaters, to further increase riparian habitats for a wider range of species, including both freshwater invertebrates and fish, as well as more amphibious species such as water vole. A wider diversity of water depths and velocities allow for a wider range of aquatic and marginal plants to establish naturally.



Wildflower meadow

Areas of wildflower meadow can be created within the drier parts of the Site, and on the poorer quality soils. The meadows will incorporate a wide variety of species which are beneficial to pollinators, such as yellow rattle, common bird's foot trefoil, common knapweed, agrimony, red clover and ox-eye daisy



06 Recreation and Education

Open Space, Recreation and Health

New footpaths are proposed to lead through the nature areas, and some of these will be surfaced to allow access to wheelchairs and children's pushchairs. Some of the paths may include sections of boardwalk, to bring walkers closer to the river and its habitats.

Access to open space and the countryside has been proven to support physical and mental health. The proposals aim to improve access and provide quality open spaces, include areas for natural play, walking, places to meet and greet, and places to enjoy nature. Elements such as bird hides and information boards could be incorporated near undisturbed areas, to allow people to appreciate and understand the wildlife and landscape, but from a distance.

Educational facilities

There is an opportunity to develop educational facilities focussing on ecology, wildlife, biodiversity and the natural environment, as well as local heritage, for local schools and nurseries to enjoy. This could be in the form of information boards, nature hides and observation areas as well as the proposed visitor centre.



06 Recreation and Education

Connected Walks and Tourism Strategy

Bourton Meadow is the gateway to The Ouse Valley Way and the rights of way network to the west of Buckingham. With improved accessibility and facilities, Bourton Meadow will make a significant positive contribution to meeting the objective in the Buckingham Tourism Strategy to create a nationally renowned destination for walkers and cyclists.

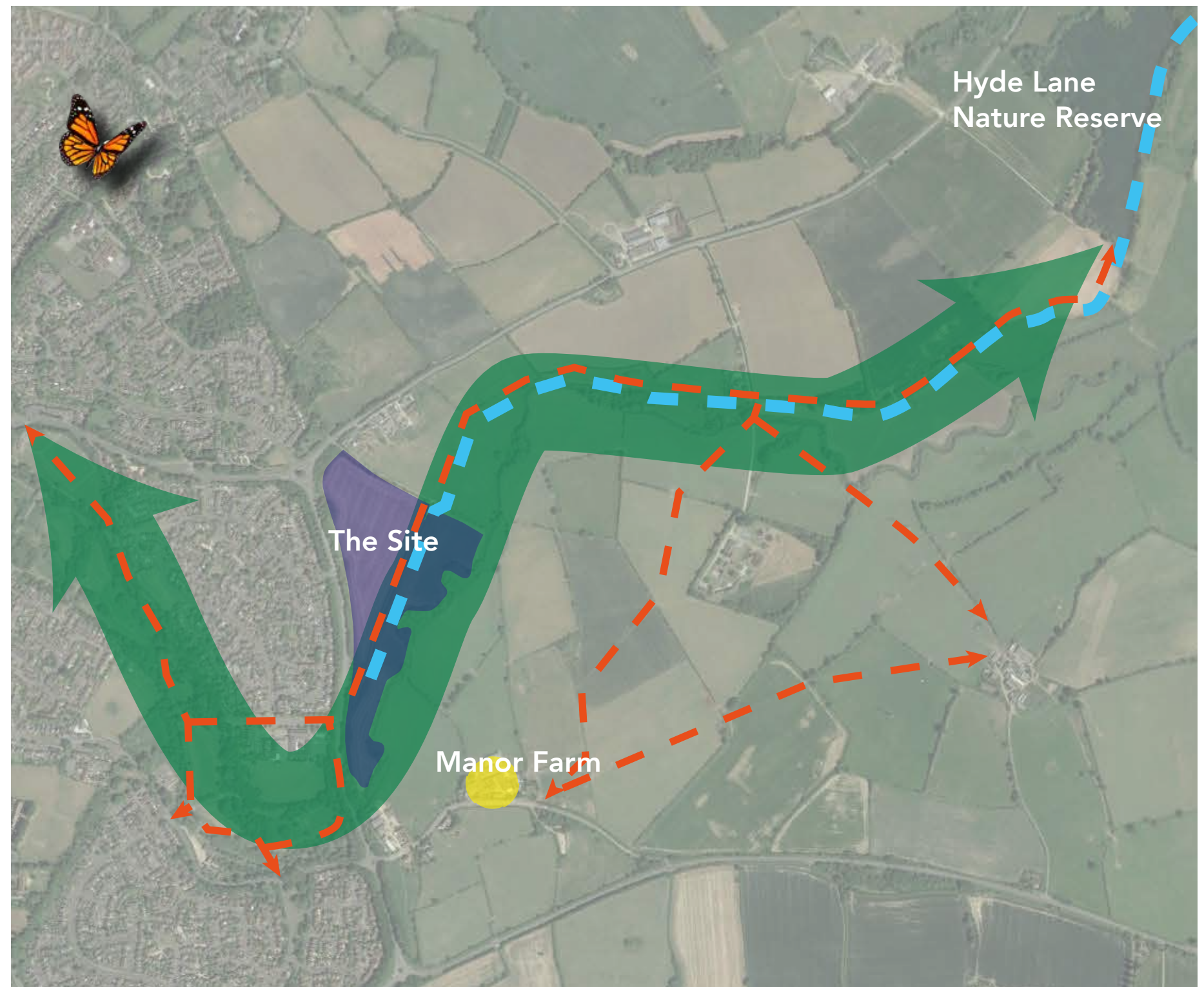
The proposal offers a connected 'blue-green route' from the heart of Buckingham through Bourton Meadow from the Buckingham Arm section of the canal then north eastward along the canal to Hyde Lane Nature Reserve. The network of Rights of Way offer a choice of circular routes taking in points of interest along the way, including the The River Ouse and perhaps ending south east of the site at the Manor Farm shop and Tea Rooms.

The Health Benefits of Walking in Nature

There are many benefits to walking in nature including:

- improve your mood.
- get a better night's sleep.
- reduce stress and anxiety.
- increase your energy.
- help you to cope during difficult times.
- improve your confidence and self-esteem.
- reduce your risk of depression.

BUPA May 2021



Aerial photograph showing the Rights of Way (orange dashed line) Bourton Meadow site (purple), original canal alignment (blue dashed line) and the green connection from Buckingham into the site and out to the north (green arrow).

07 Healthy Living

The residential element of the Vision is an important component, both because it provides the necessary funding to enable the other elements to be delivered, and because the site provides an opportunity to deliver additional housing to help meet local need in a sustainable location.

The adopted Aylesbury Vale Local Plan requires 35% of new homes to be affordable, and the Neighbourhood Plan identified an unmet need for affordable housing for local people. Further consultation would take place in advance of any planning application, but previous analysis from the Council's Housing Needs Assessment suggested the greatest area of need for affordable housing was for 2 and 3 bedroom properties, which can be accommodated.

The tenure of the affordable housing would comprise a mixture of rented and intermediate tenures, including potentially First Homes, in accordance with the latest Government policy advice.

The market homes on the site would comprise a variety of sizes, ranging from smaller properties for younger families and individuals, to larger family housing.

The homes will be traditional in style and carefully designed to reflect the architecture, details and materials found locally. Wherever possible materials will be locally sourced. The new homes will be designed and constructed to the highest standards.

The scheme could also include a small element of properties aimed at retired persons, subject to local need.



Conclusion

The proposals for Bourton Meadow set out in this document will provide the following lasting benefits:

Tourism and heritage – promoting the importance of the Canal and creating a local visitor attraction.

Accessibility – improving access to open space and the countryside for local residents, walkers and cyclists.

Ecology and wildlife – creating new habitats that maximise the benefits of the site for wildlife and the environment.

Recreation and Education – creating an educational resource for the town, and a gateway to the Ouse Valley for healthy recreation.

Healthy Living – providing high quality new homes that meet the needs of local people in a quality landscaped setting, close to nature.

