

West Berkshire Living Landscape

the last stronghold of internationally
threatened lowland heaths in the South
East

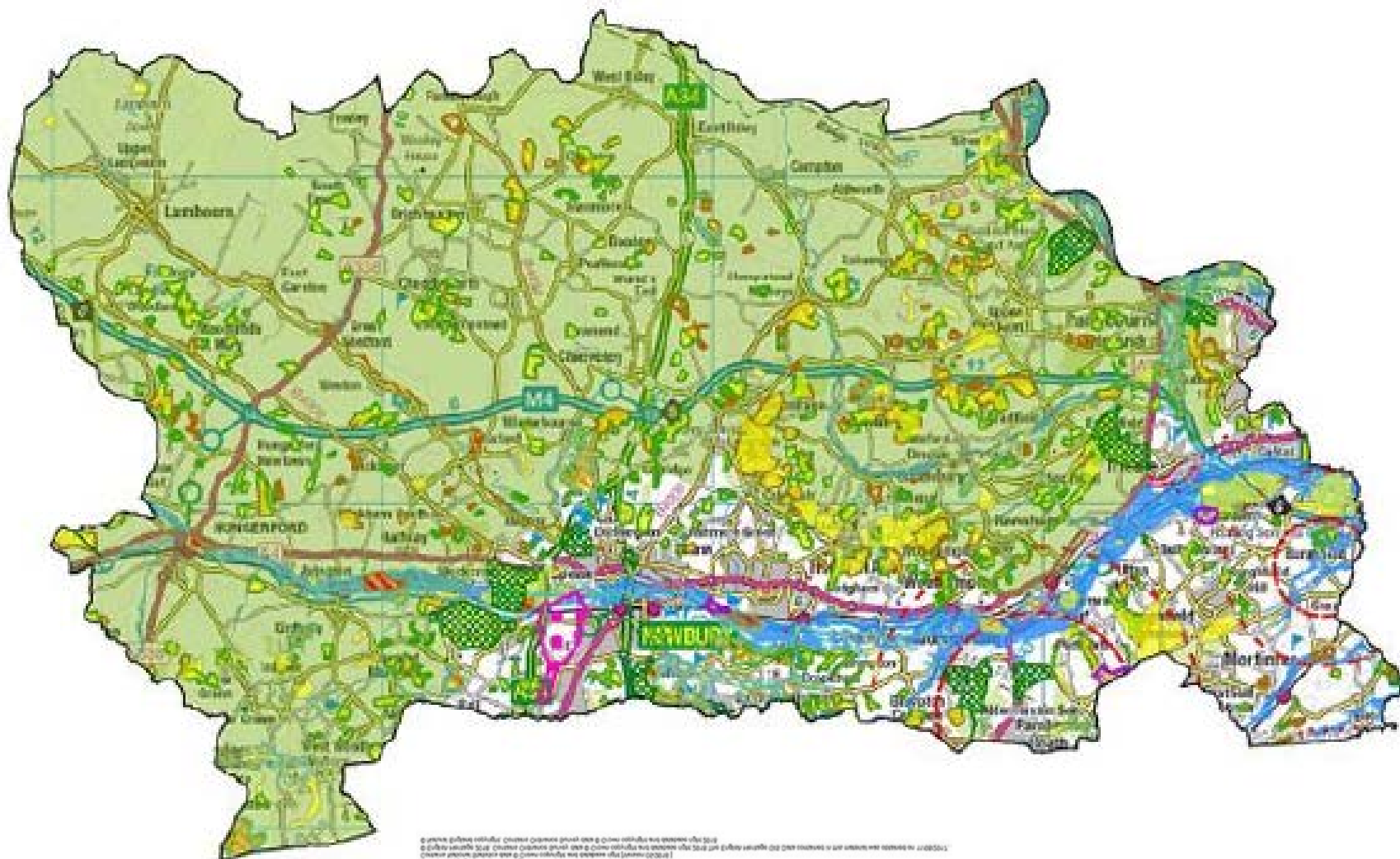
Strategic Planning for
Landscape – Scale Conservation
Symposium

11th October 2018

West Berkshire



West Berkshire
COUNCIL



Purpose

“To create a Living Landscape where people and wildlife can thrive”.

The project area covers more than 27km² of lowland heathland, ancient woodland, reedbeds, rivers and streams with Greenham and Crookham Commons at the heart.

A 5 – year project (2013-2018) to connect local people with the extraordinary natural heritage of the West Berkshire Living Landscape, and to link up and strengthen its threatened wildlife habitats.



Supported by

The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

25% project area is designated as important for wildlife (L /N / IN)

97 threatened or endangered species

Largest single area of lowland heathland remaining in Berks/Bucks/Oxon

30 species of butterflies – including small blue and grayling

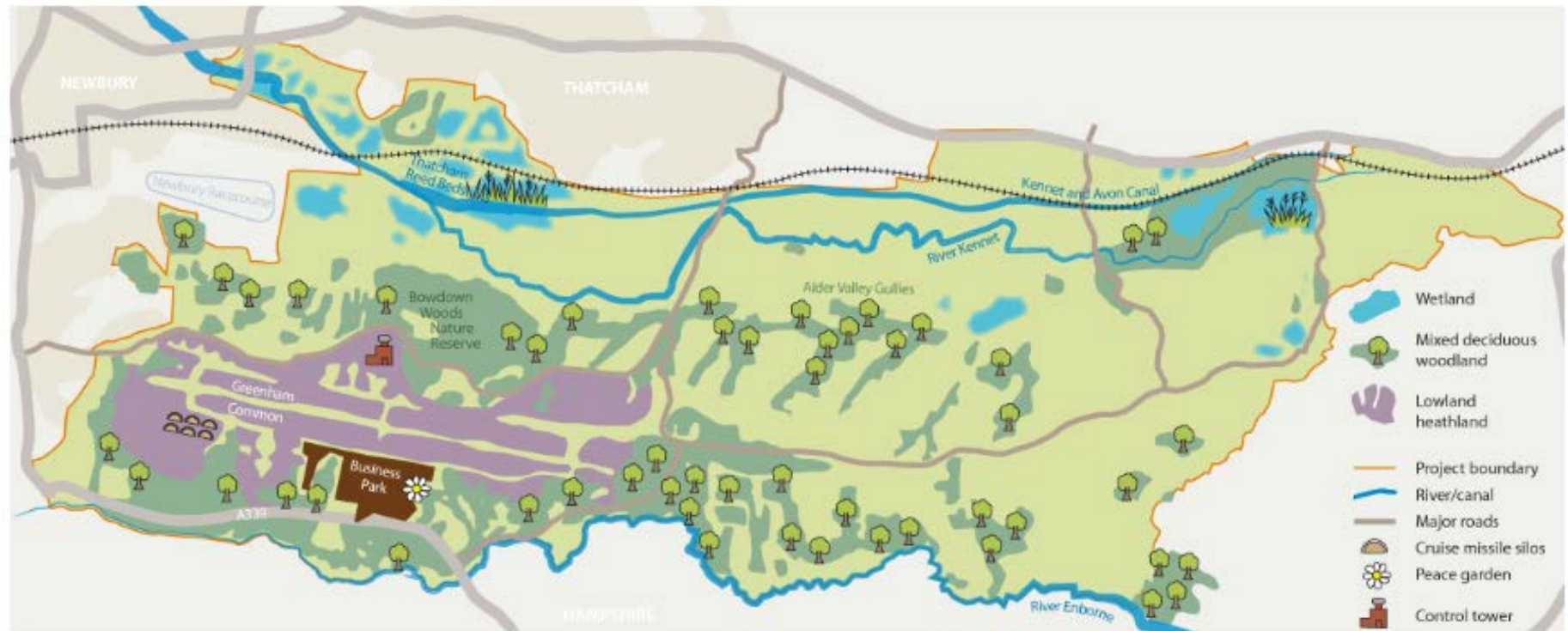


Lapwing chick and Stonechat
by Margaret Holland



Dartford Warbler by Richard Steel





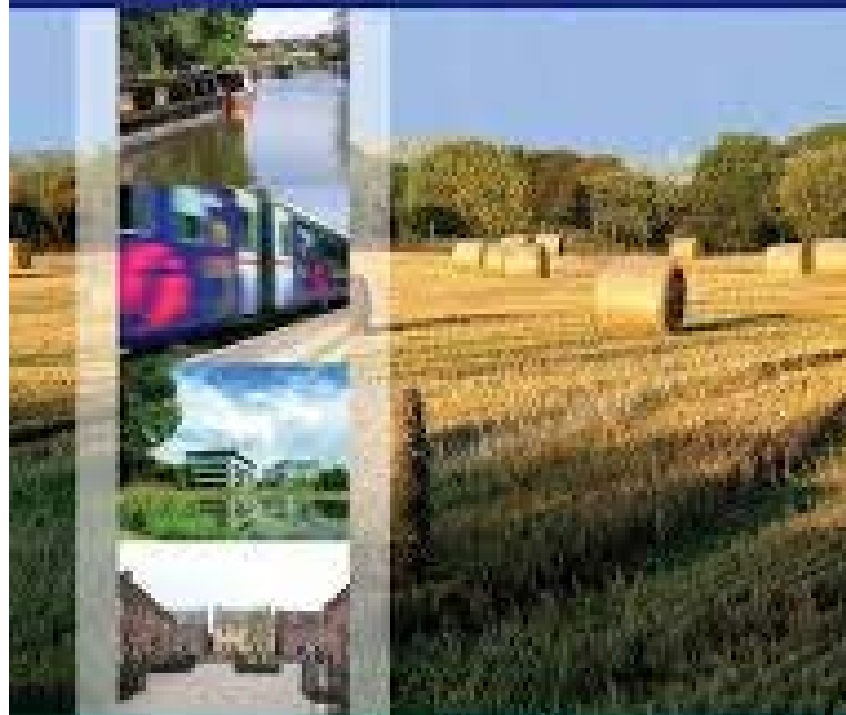
<http://www.bbowt.org.uk/reserves/greenham-crookham-commons>

Timeline

- 2006 – BBOWT identified West Berkshire Living Landscape
- 2008 – Partnership BBOWT and WBDC
- 2010/12 – West Berkshire District Council Core Strategy EIP
- 2013 – 9 WBDC owned reserves/common and a visitor centre management transferred to BBOWT
- 2014 – SPD and Transfer of day to day management to BBOWT
- 2015 – CIL
- 2017 – WBDC Housing Sites DPD
- 2018 – Greenham Business Park Local Development Order

West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006 - 2026)
Development Plan Document
Adopted July 2012

West Berkshire Local Plan



Policy CS 17

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Biodiversity and geodiversity assets across West Berkshire will be conserved and enhanced.

Habitats designated or proposed for designation as important for biodiversity or geodiversity at an international or national level or which support protected, rare or endangered species, will be protected and enhanced. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site or species in terms of its international or national importance.

Development which may harm, either directly or indirectly,

- locally designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites), or
- habitats or species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, or
- the integrity or continuity of landscape features of major importance for wild flora and fauna

will only be permitted if there are no reasonable alternatives and there are clear demonstrable social or economic benefits of regional or national importance that outweigh the need to safeguard the site or species and that adequate compensation and mitigation measures are provided when damage to biodiversity/geodiversity interests are unavoidable.

In order to conserve and enhance the environmental capacity of the District, all new development should maximise opportunities to achieve net gains in biodiversity and geodiversity in accordance with the Berkshire Biodiversity Action Plan and the Berkshire Local Geodiversity Action Plan. Opportunities will be taken to create links between natural habitats and, in particular, strategic opportunities for biodiversity improvement will be actively pursued within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas identified on the Proposals Map in accordance with the Berkshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

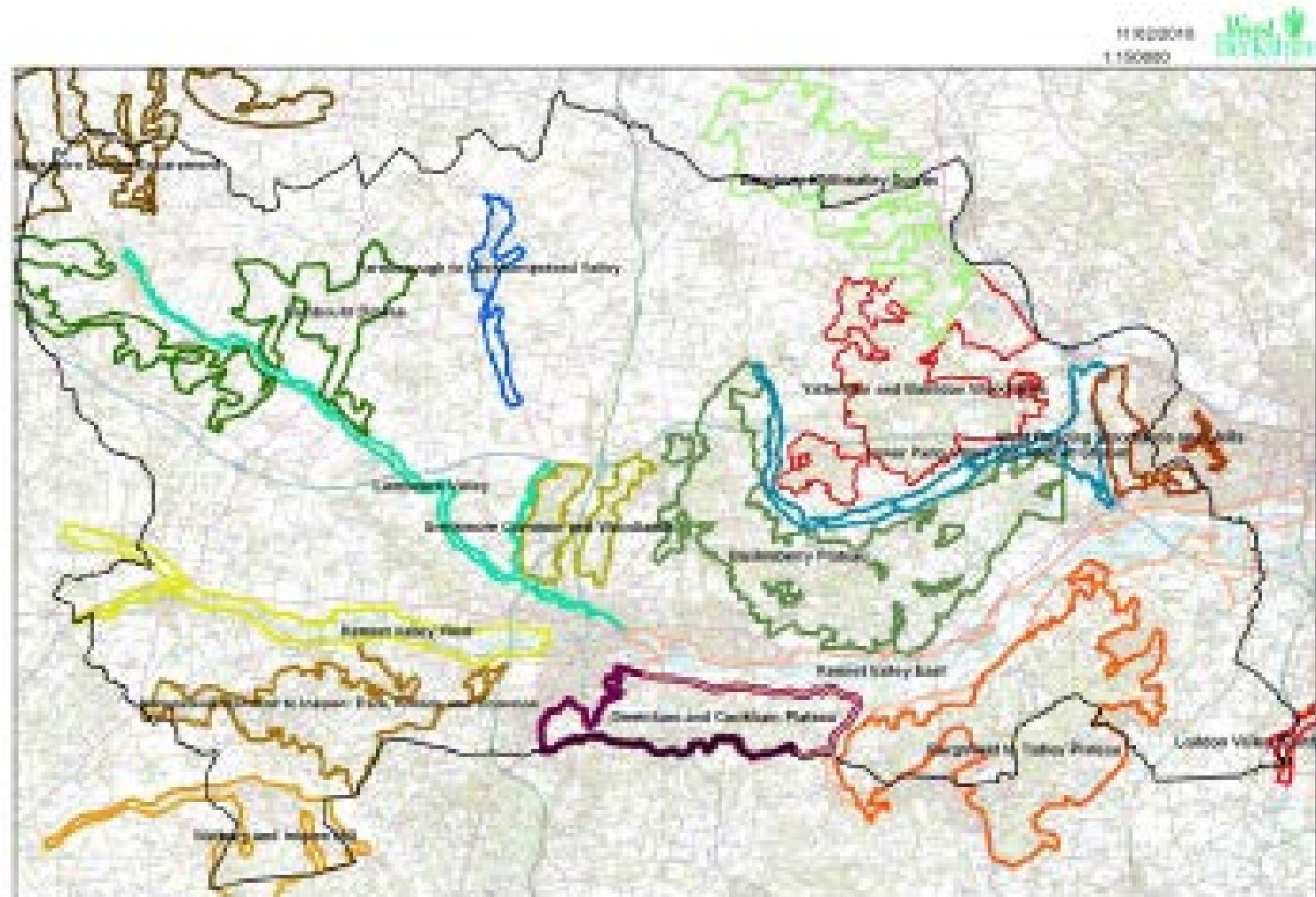
5.121 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) have been identified by the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum and agreed by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF)⁽⁹⁰⁾. There are 17 which have currently been identified, either whole or in part, across the District (see 'Appendix E: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas'). BOAs do not represent a statutory designation or a constraint upon development, rather, they are the areas where biodiversity improvements are likely to have the most beneficial results at a strategic scale. The Council will therefore pursue net gains for biodiversity in and around BOAs and projects which seek to enhance biodiversity within West Berkshire, particularly based on Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, will be supported.

5.122 The West Berkshire Living Landscape project is one example of where the Council is actively working to implement strategic biodiversity enhancements in partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). There are other areas across the District where there may be the potential for similar projects at a landscape scale, such as the Kennet Valley East BOA to the south of Reading⁽⁹¹⁾.

Greenham Common



Figure 9 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas



Map data provided by Ordnance Survey. Map data is the copyright of the Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved.

Timeline

- 2006 – BBOWT identified West Berkshire Living Landscape
- 2008 – Partnership BBOWT and WBDC
- 2010/12 – West Berkshire District Council Core Strategy EIP
- 2013 – 9 WBDC owned reserves/common and a visitor centre management transferred to BBOWT
- 2014 – SPD and Transfer of day to day management to BBOWT
- 2015 – CIL
- 2017 – WBDC Housing Sites DPD
- 2018 – Greenham Business Park Local Development Order

It was all going so well



Planning Inspectorate



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

Policy CS17 seeks, amongst other things, to conserve and enhance biodiversity assets, to restrict development that would harm important sites, and to maximise opportunities for biodiversity gains. Although RR4 does not identify any particular part of the NPPF, paragraph 109 states that the planning system should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible. Paragraph 118 states that if significant harm cannot be avoided or compensated for, permission should be refused; and that development likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) should not normally be permitted.

The Council argues that the impacts on these areas could only be mitigated by the payment of a financial contribution of £29,025, towards the West Berkshire Living Landscape Project,

This intangibility would not be an obstacle if there were a clear policy basis for the Council's approach. However, the Council relies primarily on Policy CS17, and although that policy applies to indirect as well as direct impacts, it contains no provision for seeking financial contributions. The SPD4 states that contributions may be sought towards environmental mitigation in certain circumstances, but it does not explicitly refer to any situations directly comparable to the appeal proposal, where the impact is notional rather than demonstrable. Any policies for off-setting contributions within the SPA do not apply here. Consequently, none of the available policies seems to me to provide the necessary clear development plan basis for seeking a financial contribution in the present case.

Land South of Lower Farm Hambridge Lane Newbury PINS Ref 2216837 Allowed 23.92014

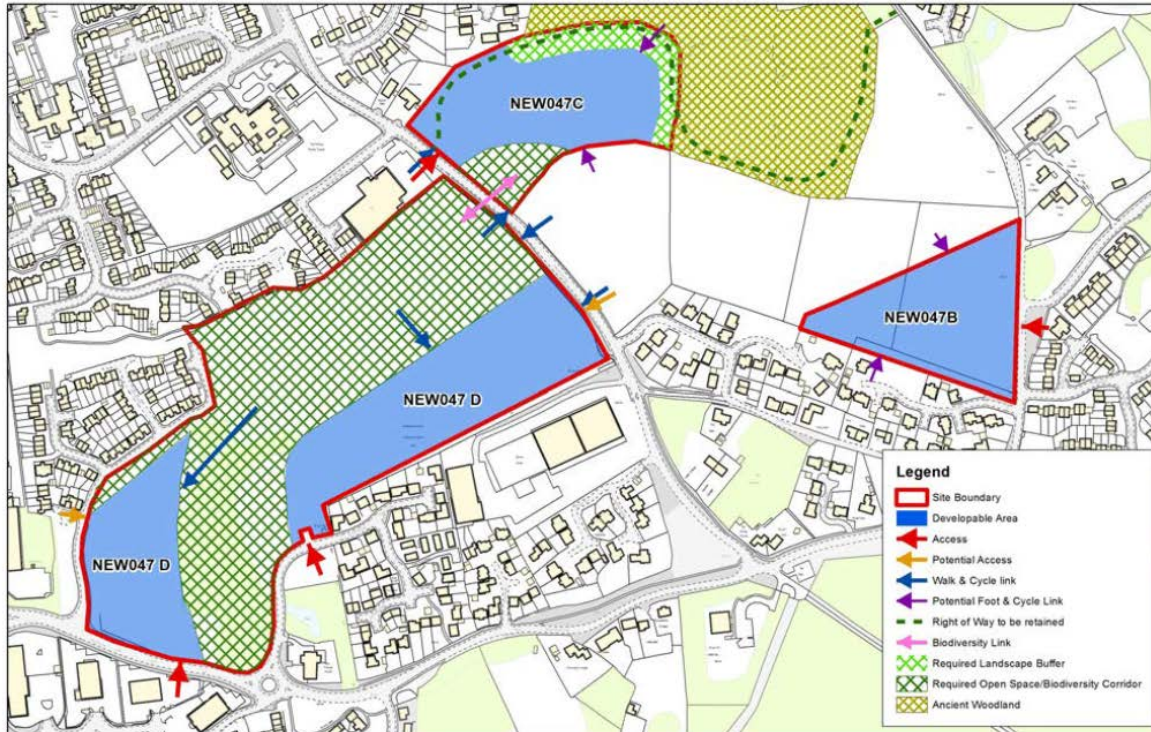
Timeline

- 2006 – BBOWT identified West Berkshire Living Landscape
- 2008 – Partnership BBOWT and WBDC
- 2010/12 – West Berkshire District Council Core Strategy EIP
- 2013 – 9 WBDC owned reserves/common and a visitor centre management transferred to BBOWT
- 2014 – SPD and Transfer of day to day management to BBOWT
- 2015 – CIL
- 2017 – WBDC Housing Sites DPD
- 2018 – Greenham Business Park Local Development Order

Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document



Adopted December 2014
due to introduction of CIL



- The scheme will support and make a positive contribution to the West Berkshire Living Landscape project.

Timeline

- 2006 – BBOWT identified West Berkshire Living Landscape
- 2008 – Partnership BBOWT and WBDC
- 2010/12 – West Berkshire District Council Core Strategy EIP
- 2013 – 9 WBDC owned reserves/common and a visitor centre management transferred to BBOWT
- 2014 – SPD and Transfer of day to day management to BBOWT
- 2015 – CIL
- 2017 – WBDC Housing Sites DPD
- 2018 – Greenham Business Park Local Development Order

Lessons learnt

Good

Partnership between the Council / BBOWT and residents

Visitor numbers are up and actively managed

Clear hooks on which to seek contributions for mitigation measures

Clearer understanding of how policies be worded

Message is getting out there

NPPF 2 whole site viability so ask must be up front

Greater habitat connectivity

Bad

The policy ground keeps shifting

More resources will be needed

Education education education

NPPF 2 constant merry go round does not leave time for evidence