

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OR OFFICER

This form can be used for any decision but **MUST** be used to record:

- any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Councillor
- a key decision taken by a Council Officer

In these circumstances the form must be completed and passed to the Head of Members' Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Head of Members' Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

To approve the adoption of the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council landholdings

2. Date of decision

26 February 2014

3. Reasons for decision

The Masterplan is required to enable the Council and its partners to take forward the BRVP vision, as set out in the adopted 2008 Framework Plan, on the Council's landholdings within BRVP, as resources and opportunities allow. The Council is the principal landowner within BRVP. The Masterplan identifies a number of proposed delivery projects to improve public access, promote education and recreation, facilitate water quality improvement, generate power, restore habitats and encourage people to participate in the management of the park. The Council will use the Masterplan to engage partners in the detailed planning, investment and delivery of these and other suitable projects. The Masterplan is also required to support the implementation of Policy AD26 'Bedford River Valley Park' within the adopted Bedford Development Framework: Allocations and Designations Plan.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

An option not to produce the Masterplan for the Council's landholdings within BRVP was considered and rejected, as it was felt such a Plan was needed to kick start the identification and development of projects, and thereby, take forward the delivery of the BRVP high level vision and development (as set out in the 2008 Framework Plan).

5. How decision is to be funded

The delivery of the Masterplan and its associated projects will be covered from external funding sources.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (if yes give details and date of dispensation)

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

[Signature]

Signed *[Signature]* Date *26/2/14*
Name of Decision Taker ... Portfolio Holder for Community & Regulatory Services

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Head of Members' Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: *28th February 2014*

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: *10th March 2014*

Bedford Borough Council – Report to Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder

Report by: Assistant Director, Environment and Communities

Date: February 2014

Subject: Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council Landholdings

1. Executive Summary

Background

- 1.1 In February 2013, the Council approved the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) Masterplan for the Council's landholdings within BRVP for the purposes of public consultation. The approved Plan, which identified a number of proposed access, conservation and green energy projects, was submitted for public consultation over a 10 week period, 23 June - 23 August 2013.
- 1.2 This report outlines the public consultation process followed, the representations received and the Council's proposed responses, including any recommended amendments to the Plan, prior to its final adoption.
- 1.3 The adopted Masterplan will be used by the Council to engage external project partners in the detailed planning, development and delivery of proposed access, conservation and green energy projects on the Council's landholdings within BRVP, as resources and opportunities allow.

2. Recommendation

That the Portfolio Holder considers and, if satisfied, approves the adoption of the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council's landholdings

3. Reasons For Recommendation

- 3.1 The proposed Masterplan for the Council's landholdings is required to provide the Council and its partners with a programme of shortlisted projects, which take forward the BRVP Framework Plan 2008 on land owned by the Council. The shortlisted projects range from projects to improve public access, promote education and recreation, facilitate water quality improvement and generate power, restore habitats and encourage people to participate in the management of the site.
- 3.2 The Council, as the principal landowner within the BRVP designated area, will use the Masterplan to help develop and deliver the shortlisted projects as resources and opportunities allow; and to engage external project partners in the process. Given the pressure on public finances, the Council will also use the plan to support external funding bids and secure external investment; and to develop viable and sustainable business plans to cover the projects' ongoing revenue costs.
- 3.3 The Masterplan also supports implementation of the Local Development Framework's (LDF) Allocations and Designations Plan, Policy AD26 'Bedford River Valley Park'.

4. Key Implications

- 4.1 The Council, as the principal landowner within the BRVP designated area and the local planning authority, has the lead role to play in working with partners to ensure that its own landholdings, and that of others, contributes to the delivery of the 2008 Framework Plan and associated Masterplan.

Legal Issues

- 4.2 Local planning authorities must prepare a local plan which sets planning policies in a local authority area. Local plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework. LDF Policy AD26 sets out the Council's commitment to secure developer contributions towards the creation of BRVP. The proposed Masterplan identifies a programme of projects, including where adequate information is available, the costs and benefits of various projects to support and justify their implementation.

Policy Issues

- 4.4 A list of the key local policy documents of relevance to the Masterplan are included below:
- Bedford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 - 21
 - Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2012 - 16
 - Bedford Development Framework 2001 - 21
 - Borough of Bedford Green Space Strategy 2012 - 21
 - Bedford Borough Green Infrastructure Plan (2009)
 - Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan (2001)
 - Healthy Bedford Strategy (2010)
 - Forest of Marston Vale Forest Plan (2000)
 - Bedford Waterspace Study (2011)

Resource Implications

- 4.5 Where adequate information is available, the Masterplan includes the associated capital costs and revenue needs of individual projects. Given the pressure on Council finances, any required capital investment (and ongoing additional revenue needs which can't be met from within existing revenue budgets), will need to be met from external sources and would only proceed if such funds were secured.
- 4.6 To ensure that each project is financially viable and sustainable, its delivery will **only** be embarked on if it can clearly demonstrate how any associated ongoing revenue costs will be met.

Risk Implications

- 4.7 Any failure to produce and adopt the proposed Masterplan will leave the LDF with a gap in its supporting delivery plans, in terms of identifying and defining the investment needs of specific projects to deliver BRVP. This would make it more difficult for the Council to secure the necessary developer contributions, in accordance with Policy AD26. It would also weaken the Council's ability to plan for and use its estate within BRVP to take forward and deliver the park's 2008 Framework Plan.

Environmental Implications

- 4.8 When implemented the proposed Masterplan will deliver the following environmental benefits:
- Increased visitor accessibility from adjoining communities by foot, cycle, canoe and horse, thereby reducing the need for car borne access;
 - Environmentally sustainable use of floodplain forest and associated wetland features to improve water quality, through treating sewage works effluent and urban and agricultural run off;
 - Low carbon energy production through development of short rotation coppice/ woodfuel and installation of micro-hydro turbines, wind turbines and photovoltaic installations;
 - Conservation and enhancement of the site's nature conservation and landscape features.

Equalities Impact

- 4.9 An Equalities Assessment to Level 1 was undertaken to ensure that the proposed Masterplan satisfied the legal obligations required of the Council. This Assessment took into consideration both positive and negative impacts of the service delivery on the following 'protected characteristics' held with the Equality Act 2010.
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex (gender)
 - Sexual orientation
 - Marriage and civil partnership
- 4.10 The analysis shows that the Masterplan has no identified adverse equality impact on any of the Protected Groups and contributes positively to each of the 5 positive equality objectives.

5. Details

- 5.1 The following section outlines the public consultation process undertaken on the draft Masterplan for the Borough Council's landholdings within BRVP (appendix 1), summarises the responses received and, for each one, the Council's response and any recommended amendments. For further details of the recommended amendments to the Masterplan arising from the public consultation process, please refer to the full report (section 3) in appendix 2.

Public Consultation

- 5.2 Following Portfolio Holder approval of the Consultation Draft Masterplan in February 2013, the Council embarked on a 10 week period (23 June to 23 August 2013) of public consultation to seek public and other stakeholder views. The methods of consultation used included direct mailing to key stakeholders (e.g. user/ interest groups, government agencies and parish councils); promotional displays in Council libraries and other public outlets and use of social media to share information and gather responses. Feedback and comments were captured through the receipt of both online and hard copy response forms.
- 5.3 The consultation representations were analysed, in terms of their validity, and the results were used to inform the Council's response and any recommended amendments to the draft Masterplan. A copy of the consultation report, detailing both the attributable (organisational only) and non-attributable (private individuals) consultee responses and the Council's response to each of these, including any recommended amendments is included in Appendix 2.
- 5.4 In summary, the public consultation generated 35 formal representations, of which, 25 were received via the response forms and 10 via letter/email. Responses were received from both individuals including local residents, naturalists and dog walkers; and the following organisational stakeholders:
- Bedford Borough Council (Planning, Property and Heritage)
 - Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire
 - English Heritage
 - Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA)
 - Marston Vale Trust
 - Sharnbrook Upper School
 - The Environment Agency

- The Wildlife Trust
- Viking Kayak Club
- Canoe Trail

5.5 The consultation report (Appendix 2) shows that there was near universal support from all respondents for each of the proposed Masterplan projects. Indeed, the only project which generated a substantive negative response, was the proposed camping and caravanning facility, which attracted a response rate split of 7 (30%) 'Against' and 16 (70%) 'For'. From the additional comments submitted against this project, the main area of concern would appear to be one of potential scale and the associated physical impact on peoples ability to enjoy the park, including increased visual intrusion, litter and vehicle activity.

5.6 Based on the Council's response to all the consultation comments received, the only recommended amendments required to the draft Masterplan relate to a small number of relatively minor factual corrections. To aid referencing, these recommended amendments are shown in bold text in Appendix 2.

5.7 Subject to the approval of this report, the draft Masterplan will be amended as per the recommendations in Appendix 2 and published as an adopted Masterplan. The adopted Masterplan, together with the supporting full consultation report (Appendix 2), will be made publicly available as a '.pdf' document on the Council website and a limited number of printed copies will also be produced, with hard copies available at Borough Hall Reception and all public libraries.

6. **Summary of Consultations and Outcome**

6.1 The following parties have been consulted in the production of the proposed Masterplan:

- Internal: Corporate Management Group, Executive Director of Environment and Sustainable Communities, Assistant Director Environment and Communities, Parks and Countryside Manager, Senior Countryside Officer, Senior Land and Property, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, Head of Leisure and Culture, Planning Policy Team Leader, Legal and Finance
- External: Government agencies, user/ interest/ community groups, landowners, mineral companies, environmental charities, parish councils

7. **Ward Councillor Views**

- 7.1 The proposed Masterplan sets out a programme of projects which collectively are located within the following Wards: Great Barford, Cardington, Cople, Cauldwell and Newnham. Ward Councillor's views were sought as part of the public consultation process, as outlined in 5.2 above.

Report Contact Officer:	Joel Carré, Head of Communities, tel: 01234 718322 (internal: 47322)
File Reference:	BRVPMasterplan/0114
Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	Bedford River Valley Park Framework Plan 2008 (previously published) Bedford River Valley Park Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council Landholdings: Issues and Opportunities (March 2012)
Appendices:	1. BRVP Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council Landholdings: Consultation Draft (May 2013) 2. Report on Public Consultation Results and Council Response (May 2013)

The Appendices have not been printed as a hard copy, this is available on the Bedford Borough Council website, www.bedford.gov.uk



Bedford River Valley Park

Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council Landholdings
Consultation Draft May 2013



This document was prepared by Gary Grant & Lani Leuthvilay with assistance from Marianna Magklara

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Appendix 1:
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Appendix 3:
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Executive Summary

This document reports on coordinated plans for a number of proposals for initiatives and projects within the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) with special attention paid to land owned by Bedford Borough Council (BBC). BRVP is a 868 hectares (2145 acres) multi-functional regional park being created to the east of Bedford. This work has been commissioned by the Marston Vale Trust (MVT), on behalf of Bedford Borough Council, with funding from the Government's Growth Areas Fund.

The purpose of this document is to provide a greater level of detail than that provided in the BRVP Framework document (which was issued in 2008 and is supported by the Local Plan), with, where adequate information is available, the costs and benefits of the various projects. The intention is to provide evidence to support and justify implementation. The selection and evaluation of projects has been guided by BBC officers and MVT staff, with due regard to the Key Principles in the BRVP Framework, the public consultations that took place when the Framework was prepared and a workshop organised as part of this work, held in March 2012 and attended by a wide range of stakeholders.

Analysis of issues and opportunities associated with BRVP has shown that much of the area lies within the floodplain of the River Great Ouse, which places a constraint on some activities, and opportunities for others, including wetland and woodland habitat creation. Public access has been improved by the National Cycle Network (NCN) 51 cycle route and there are a number of connecting paths including a network within Priory Country Park and a riverside loop in the Grange Estate.

BRVP has a fascinating archaeological and historical record, including many scheduled monuments and listed buildings, standing remains, earthwork sites and the evidence from numerous archaeological investigations. The river valley within BRVP has been inhabited for millennia, as demonstrated by the survival of a pre-historic funerary and ritual archaeological landscape including bowl barrows, mortuary enclosures and a cursus. These Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments were replaced during the Iron Age and Roman periods by agriculture and settlement including farmsteads and a villa. Many of the villages within BRVP are thought to have originated in the Saxon period. In the medieval period, the landscape was dominated by earthwork castles, moats, expansion of the villages and Newnham Priory. The latter, which gives Priory Country Park its name, was founded in the 12th century and demolished during the Reformation by Henry VIII. There are many listed buildings of post-medieval date in the area and recent history is demonstrated by the 17th century Great Ouse navigation, and the trackbed and bridges of the 19th century Bedford to Sandy railway.

The landscape of the area has been heavily modified by gravel extraction and restoration which has created attractive lakes and tree belts. The lakes are important for wintering wildfowl and the Great Ouse and Elstow Brook attract wetland wildlife including Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Action Plan species like the otter, spined loach and bullhead. The area is crossed by many utilities including water mains, sewers, overhead electricity lines, gas mains and a fuel pipeline. The Bedford Sewage Treatment Works are within the BRVP. Much of the land is owned by Bedford Borough Council, with the Grange Estate to the east owned by the Marston Vale Trust, so there is excellent scope for cooperation and coordination of management.

Following a key stakeholder workshop in March 2012, a 'long list' of all project options suggested was subsequently refined to create the shortlist described here. The shortlisted projects include:

- Access improvements including gateway features, interpretation trails and extensions to the path network
- A new café and visitor centre in Priory Country Park
- New river moorings and access improvements for canoeists
- Refurbishment of the Kayak Slalom Course in Priory Country Park
- An inland beach
- A camping & caravanning site

There may also be an opportunity to polish treated effluent from the sewage treatment plant by using reedbeds or wet woodlands and this possibility will be explored with Anglian Water. Energy production could be increased by short-rotation coppice. Other low carbon energy generation options include photo-voltaic panels, wind turbines and small scale hydro-electric turbines installed by locks and weirs. Habitat will be restored and created to provide a network that will make the area more permeable to wildlife. A site-wide corps of volunteers can build on the excellent work that volunteers continue to do. Consultation has shown that the most popular activity sought within BRVP is quiet enjoyment of the landscape and its wildlife and further efforts will be required to improve the area for this purpose.

To ensure that each project is financially viable and sustainable, it will only be embarked on if there is sufficient funding available for both its delivery and maintenance. Given the pressures on the public finances, any required capital investment will need to come from external sources and the various proposed projects will need to cover their ongoing revenue costs. BBC and MVT will continue to work together with other partners to help develop and deliver the shortlist of proposed projects in this document as resources and opportunities allow.



1 Introduction & Scope

The following document considers coordinated plans for a number of proposed projects and initiatives within the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) with special attention paid to opportunities on land owned by Bedford Borough Council (BBC). BRVP is a 868 hectares (2145 acres) multi-functional regional park being created to the east of Bedford. This work has been commissioned by the Marston Vale Trust (MVT) on behalf of Bedford Borough Council, with support from the Government's Growth Areas Fund.

The consultant team was comprised of Gary Grant (ecologist and environmental planner) and Lani Leuthvilay (landscape architect), Olaf Bierfreund, Tony Batten and others at URS (engineers and economists) and Colin Ashwood at Currie & Brown (cost consultants).

The purpose of this document is to provide a greater level of detail than that provided in the BRVP Framework document (which was issued in 2008), with, and where available and appropriate, information on the costs and benefits of the various proposed projects. The intention is to provide justification and supporting information to facilitate implementation. The selection and evaluation of projects has been guided by the Key Principles in the BRVP Framework and the public consultations that took place at that time, as well as a workshop organised as part of this work, held in March 2012, which was attended by a wide range of stakeholders and the advice of BBC officers and MVT staff (see Appendix 1).

2 Background

2.1 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The government has recently (March 2012) issued new guidance, which



Volunteers planting trees in Bedford River Valley Park

has been prepared with the intention of reforming the planning system to make it less complicated and more accessible. The NPPF includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and includes a number of themes which are especially relevant to BRVP including:

- Promoting sustainable transport
- Promoting healthy communities
- Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

In addition the NPPF includes a number of specific recommendations which support the BRVP, including:

- Moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature (para. 9)
- Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding (paras. 94, 96)
- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services (para. 109)
- Strategic approaches that plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure (para.114)
- Considering the role of undesignated nature conservation sites as components of local ecological networks such as wildlife corridors and stepping stones (para. 117)
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape (para. 156)

The NPPF replaces a number of policy documents including Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements. The full text of the NPPF can be viewed at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

East of England Plan and Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy

The government has announced its intention to revoke both the East of England Plan and the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, however these documents have served a useful purpose in recognising and describing in some depth the importance of providing strategic green infrastructure as part of well-designed sustainable communities where people want to live, with jobs, facilities, services, and strong community spirit.

Bedford Development Framework

The Bedford Development Framework (BDF) is currently in preparation. The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan and the Town Centre Area Action Plan were adopted in 2008 and an Allocations and Designations Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in May 2012. Adoption is anticipated in spring 2013. The BDF will replace the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2002), however a number of policies, which were adopted as part of the Local Plan have been saved and several of these relate to the BRVP, notably Policy NE23, which states:

'When development opportunities arise, within the area defined on the Proposals, the Borough Council will seek the creation of the Bedford River Valley Park as an area where opportunities exist for landscape enhancement, nature conservation, recreation and increased public access whilst protecting sites of acknowledged archaeological importance.'

This Policy will be replaced by Policy AD26 'Bedford River Valley Park' when the Allocations and Designations Plan is adopted.

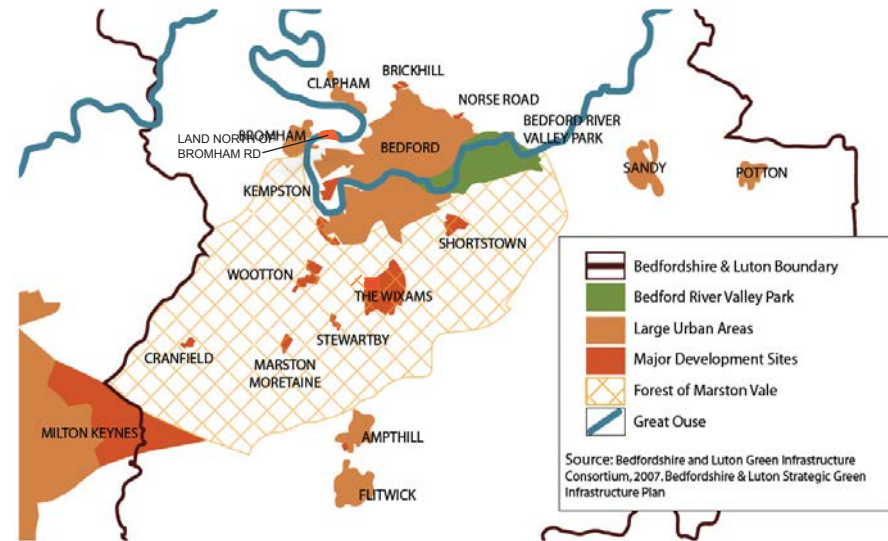
A number of other saved Local Plan 2002 policies directly or indirectly support the BRVP. These include:

- LR4 - Rowing course on land west of Willington
- NE3 - Sites of Local Importance
- NE4 - Trees and Hedges
- NE6 - Woodland
- NE7 - Wildlife Corridors
- NE9 - Conservation Management
- NE10 - Contributions to nature conservation
- NE12 - Landscaping in association with development
- NE13 - Landscape management and protection
- NE16 - Flooding
- NE20 - Landscape and environmental improvements
- NE21 - Forest of Marston Vale
- NE24 - Protection and enhancement of water resources
- BE16-22 - Listed Buildings
- BE23, BE24 & BE25 - Archaeology

Technical studies cited by the Council as evidence that will inform the BDF, which are particularly relevant to the planning of the BRVP include:

- Bedford River Valley Park Framework
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1 and Level 2)
- Bedford Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study
- Landscape Character Assessment
- Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan
- Borough of Bedford Green Wheel Master Plan (draft)
- Greenspace Strategy for Bedford Borough (draft)

Documents which relate to the BDF can be seen at http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_town_and_country/what_



BRVP and existing and proposed development

[is_planning_policy/documents_of_the_bdf.aspx](#)

2.2 Population Growth

The population of the Bedford area is predicted to grow. An additional 19,500 dwellings are expected to be constructed in various locations in the Bedford/ Kempston and the northern Marston Vale Growth Area to 2021 (see figure above). The Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan has observed that there is a strong case for the provision of accessible greenspace within the county and that this needs to be located close to where people will be living and working.

2.3 Initiatives & Developments

Watersports Lake and Enabling Development

In 2006, planning permission (Reference BC/CM/2003/33 and 30/2006) was granted, subject to various conditions, for the excavation of a watersports lake in the BRVP near Willington (see plan on page 10 overleaf). In February 2011, Bedford Borough Council extended the permission for a further 2 years (Reference 10/02907/EXT). The pre-commencement conditions were discharged in 2012 and some works are expected to commence before the permission expires. The approval is for a lake 2.3 km in length and approximately 100m wide, which will be on a southwest-northeast alignment from existing gravel pits close to Meadow Lane to a point just north of the confluence of the River Great Ouse and Elstow Brook. The construction of the lake will also require a re-alignment of the Elstow Brook, with a new section established to the south of the present course.

A consortium of landowners is looking at the technical and financial feasibility of undertaking a development to the south of the proposed watersports lake and north of the A603 Cambridge Road as part of the emerging Allocations and Designations Plan, with adoption anticipated in spring 2013. The intention is for the development to fund the construction and initial maintenance of the watersports lake, with the operation of the lake eventually generating the required income to pay for continuing upkeep. Elements of the scheme which are currently being considered include a residential care village, a science & technology park, university campus facilities, a sports hall, hotel and conference centre and boat house for the lake. The enabling development is being pursued by others and further consideration of its form is outside of the scope of this document, however this study acknowledges that an enabling development will have implications for the BRVP and has the potential to improve access to the central section of BRVP, especially the area which will be to the north of the watersports lake.

Minerals

Quarrying for sands and gravels within the BRVP area has been continuing for decades, beginning with the area that is now Priory Country Park and continuing towards the east. Restoration of arable land and wildlife habitat in former quarries is nearing completion. With the exception of a few remaining pockets of unexploited land, the focus for quarrying has now moved to Dairy Farm, downstream and largely to the east of BRVP. The Lafarge processing plant will continue to operate within the Grange Estate for some years to come and is connected to new quarries to the east by a haul road and Bailey bridge which crosses the River Great Ouse.

2.4 Grange Estate

The Marston Vale Trust has a continuing programme of access improvements and habitat creation and restoration projects on the Grange Estate. Projects already completed include a new multi-user path following the river, a new bridge over the Elstow Brook, backwaters for spawning fish and other wildlife, tree planting and a scrape for wetland birds.

2.5 BRVP Framework

In 2008 a broad coalition of organisations, led by Bedford Borough Council (which is the planning authority and the owner of substantial parts of the park), endorsed the production of a BRVP Framework document and plan, which was prepared by the Marston Vale Trust (which owns and manages the 121 hectares (300 acres) Grange Estate at the eastern section of the BRVP). The Framework provides a vision of how the Bedford River Valley Park will develop. It indicates that around 240 hectares will be converted to 'floodplain forest' (a mosaic of woodlands,



Approved watersports lake scheme



New bridge taking multi-user path over Elstow Brook on the Grange Estate

wetlands and grasslands), within which networks of access routes will provide for quiet recreation. The proposed watersports lake is identified as a major potential asset and the existing, well-used NCN Route 51 cycle way is identified as a key feature to which additional access routes within BRVP will connect.

The Framework reviewed the policy context, analysed the existing condition of the park, reported on the results of consultations and identified key design constraints and opportunities. Informed by this, it made broad prescriptions for what BRVP could and should be, and established 'key principles' to guide all future work. The Framework established the following key principles, which are summarised here for easy reference:

Place Making

The BRVP forms the largest contiguous area of publicly accessible

greenspace in Bedfordshire and links the heart of the town with the wider countryside. The project plays a key role in creating an attractive, high quality regionally important, natural facility that will support wider regeneration objectives and transform the image and setting of Bedford.

Creating Floodplain Forest

The intention is for the BRVP to be one of lowland England's largest interconnected complexes of woodland, marsh, pools and channels, re-connecting the River Great Ouse with its floodplain and linking together existing habitats. The floodplain forest will become a woodland and wetland habitat of national importance for people to enjoy, and provide the enhanced landscape setting for other elements of the BRVP.

Multi-functionality

The BRVP will be multi-functional and must meet all the aspirations of the original local planning policy (NE23) namely, landscape enhancements, recreational opportunities, nature conservation improvements and improved access whilst respecting archaeology and the built heritage - an exemplary green infrastructure asset.

Accessibility

BRVP will be for people of all abilities and backgrounds. Physical access will be developed to a high standard. Building on the existing excellent east-west National Cycle Route 51, further links and routes for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders will be created. Special efforts will be made to link with communities to the north and south, with BRVP being part of an upgraded access loop around Bedford for cyclists and pedestrians (the Bedford Green Wheel). People of all ages will be encouraged to walk and cycle to the park. Intellectual access will be improved through educational materials, information and opportunities.

Promoting Sport & Recreation

The BRVP will provide opportunities for people to pursue sporting and

recreational activities, and could become a 'Centre of Excellence' for sport. The construction of a purpose-built lake will provide a major facility for Bedford (a traditional rowing town), and allow for the development of other popular local sports such as canoeing, kayaking and triathlon. The relatively large size and careful zoning will allow solitary and quiet activities to coexist with those that can be noisy and gregarious.

Environmental Sustainability

Exemplary standards of environmental sustainability are being sought. Projects will be undertaken to reduce the production of atmospheric carbon through renewable energy schemes, for example growing energy crops (e.g. densely planted, high-yielding varieties of willow or poplar) or harnessing the power of flowing water and wind. Woodland and wetland habitats could be used to improve the quality of treated effluent from the local sewage works, cleaning it far beyond the current required standards. The floodplain forest will absorb atmospheric carbon as it grows and as sediments are trapped. Materials used within BRVP will be high quality, sustainable and from appropriate local sources wherever possible.

Financial Sustainability

To ensure that each project is financially viable and sustainable, it will only be embarked on if there is sufficient funding available for both its delivery and maintenance. Given the pressures on the public finances, any required capital investment will need to come from external sources and the various proposed projects will need to cover their ongoing revenue costs.

Enhancing Existing Value

BRVP will seek to conserve and, where possible, enhance existing features of landscape, archaeological, heritage and ecological value. These include Priory Country Park and the adjacent Fenlake Meadows, the River Great Ouse and the meadows to the north, the village of Willington with its important buildings (including the Church and Dovecote), scheduled

archaeological sites and some of the more recently created water bodies on the Grange Estate, which are already valuable habitats for birds and other wildlife.

A Functional Floodplain

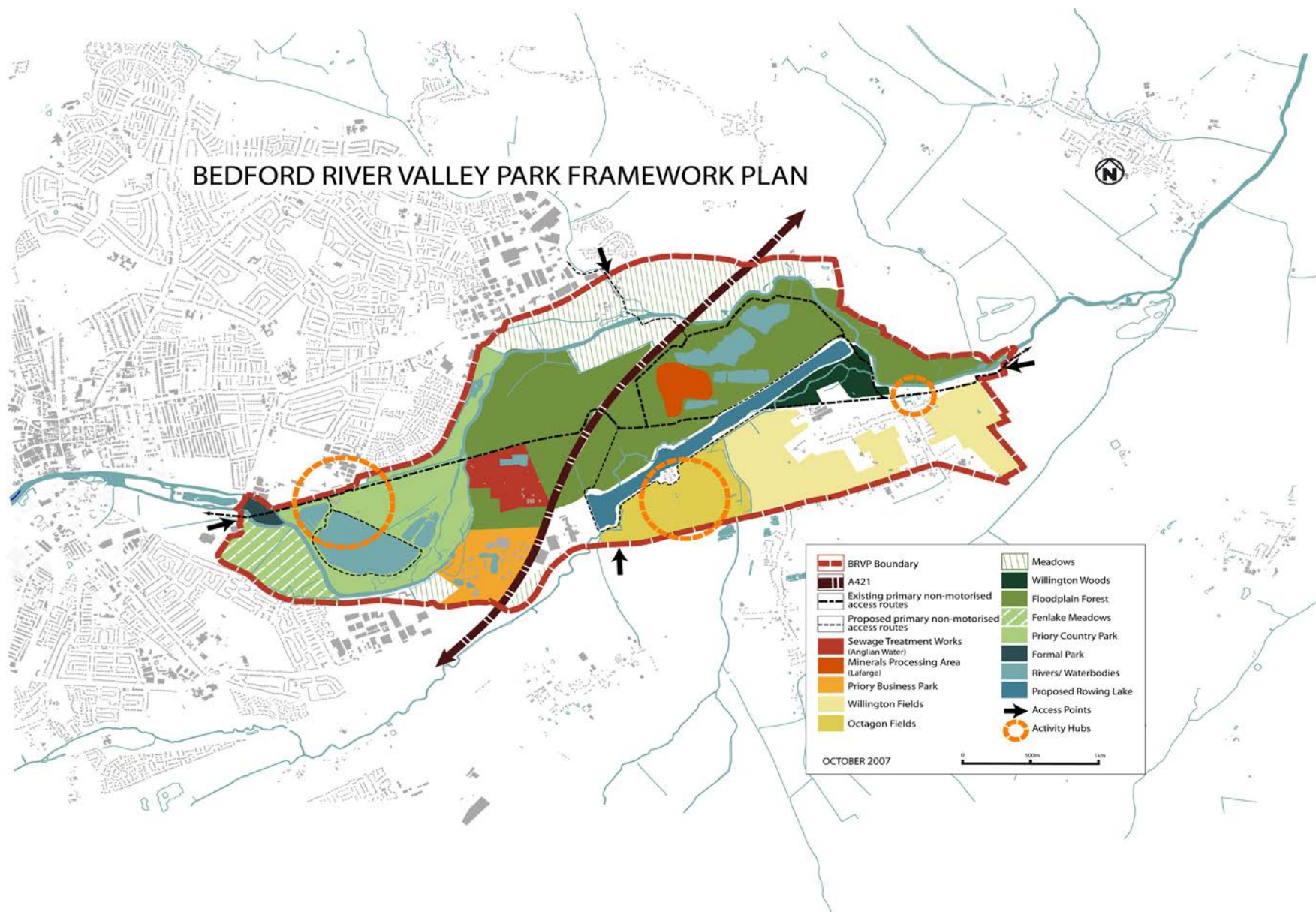
The floodplain within BRVP will be used to help improve water quality in the River Great Ouse by filtering and absorbing discharges, surface and groundwater and river flows. The park will be designed to store and channel floodwaters to help reduce flood risk locally and downstream, part of bringing the floodplain back into more active use for water management.

Involving People & Partnerships

Effective partnerships will be central to the success of BRVP. A whole range of people, businesses, government and non-government organisations will be actively engaged in designing, creating, operating and enjoying the park.

The full version of the BRVP Framework can be viewed at <http://www.marstonvale.org/brvp/index.html>

BEDFORD RIVER VALLEY PARK FRAMEWORK PLAN



BRVP Boundary	Meadows
A421	Willington Woods
Existing primary non-motorised access routes	Floodplain Forest
Proposed primary non-motorised access routes	Fenlake Meadows
Sewage Treatment Works (Anglian Water)	Priory Country Park
Minerals Processing Area (Lafarge)	Formal Park
Priory Business Park	Rivers/ Waterbodies
Willington Fields	Proposed Rowing Lake
Octagon Fields	Access Points
	Activity Hubs

OCTOBER 2007

0 500m 1km

3 Site Constraints & Opportunities

3.1 Water & Flood

The River Great Ouse enters the BRVP at its western boundary and curves around the south of the Priory Country Park before heading north and east, leaving the area to the north east of the village of Willington, by Danish Camp. The Elstow Brook and the Wilstead Brook enter the BRVP from the south, join together and then join the Great Ouse to the north of Willington. The Renhold Brook joins the Great Ouse to the south east of Castle Dairy Farm. The Gadsey Brook is a northern diversion of the Great Ouse, running along the north-eastern boundary of the site.

The many gravel pits are largely supplied by groundwater, which is subject to seasonal fluctuations. In general, groundwater is encountered between 2 or 3 metres below ground level. None of the monitoring boreholes on site have ever been recorded as being dry. The River Great Ouse floodplain is usually at the highest risk of flooding in winter following extended periods of rainfall in the upper catchment, however flooding can also occur due to short high intensity local storms, which may occur in summer. Clay is the dominant underlying formation in the catchment, and surface runoff provides a substantial part of the flow received by the river. The figures over the page show the extent of flood during various conditions.

There are 18 active water abstraction licences within the vicinity of the BRVP and the preferred Environment Agency option for future management of the sub-catchment is to maintain the current resource availability status of 'No water available'.

In dry weather a significant proportion of the base flow of the Great Ouse is provided by the consented discharge of treated wastewater from Anglian Water's Bedford sewage treatment works, which lies within the BRVP, however the EA has rated water quality in the Great Ouse and the Elstow Brook as B (good) and A (very good) respectively.

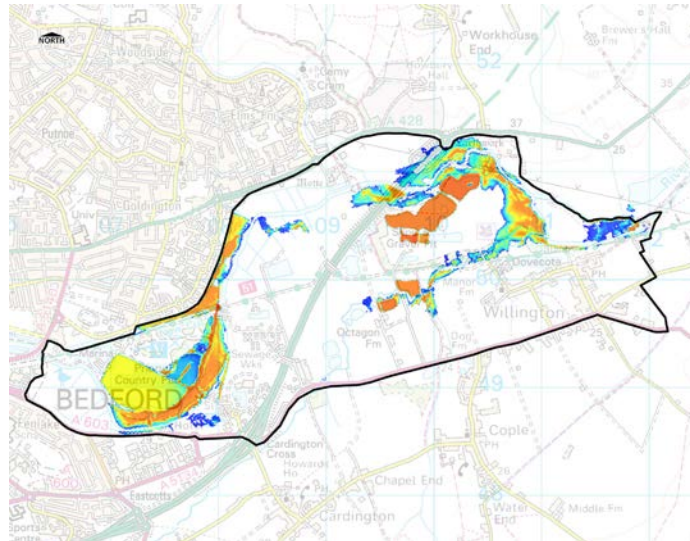
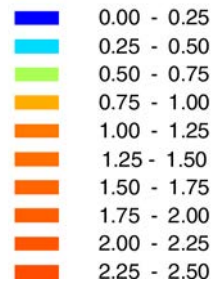
For the UK, it is predicted that climate change will mean warmer temperatures, wetter winters and drier summers. The frequency of extreme weather episodes may increase. There may be a greater threat of flooding following rainstorms and the number of flood events affecting the BRVP may increase. The role of the BRVP in conserving water and helping to manage flood risk is likely to become more important. Vegetation and soils may become increasingly stressed and the flora and fauna of the area will change, with an increase in the numbers of species normally associated with warmer, more southerly climates.



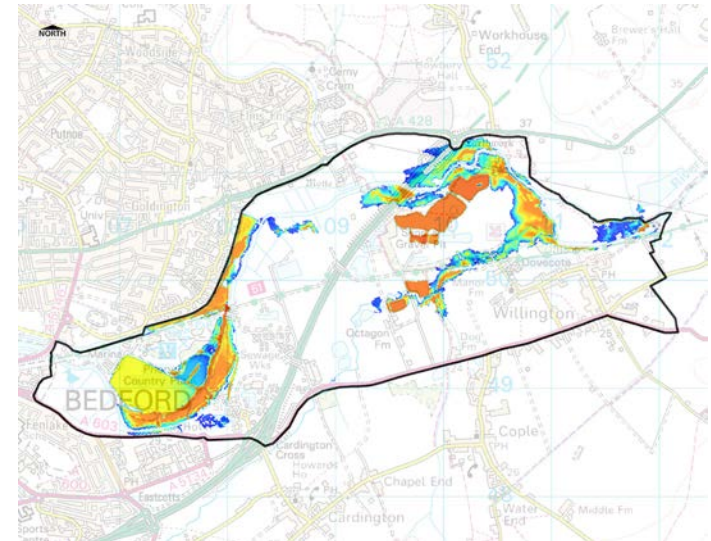
River Great Ouse in the BRVP near Willington

BRVP Floodplain

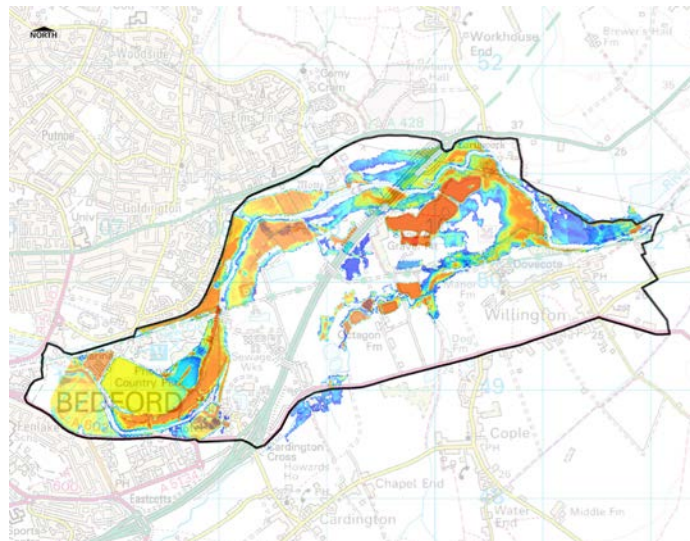
Water Depth (metres)



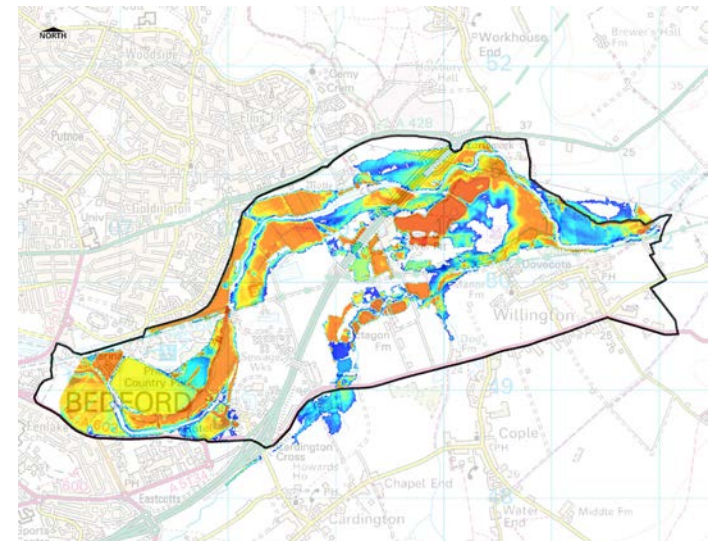
2-Year Storm Event



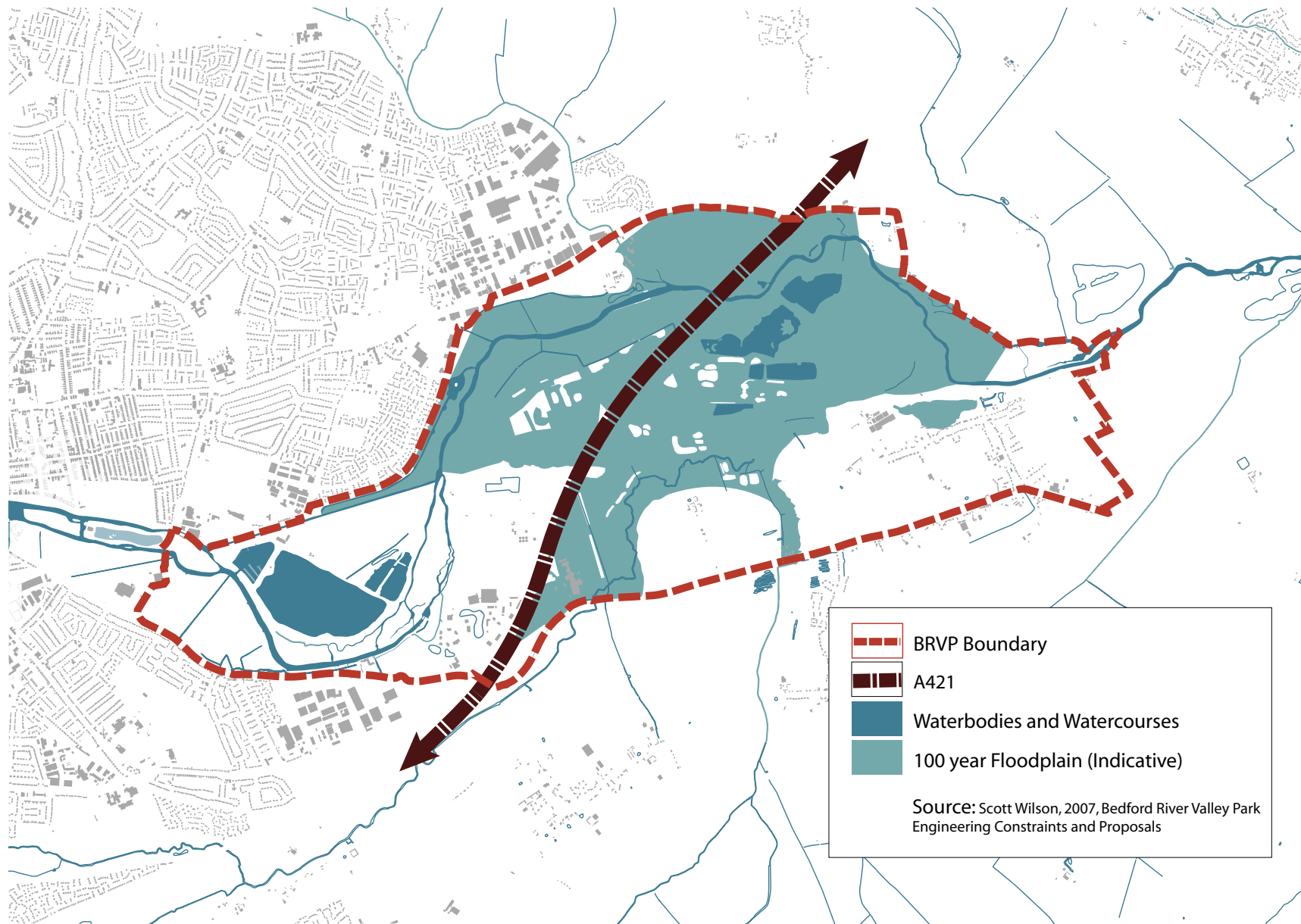
5-Year Storm Event



10-Year Storm Event



25-Year Storm Event



FLOODPLAIN AND SURFACE WATER

3.2 Access

The site is crossed or bounded by a number of public rights of way, including river, roads, bridleways and footpaths. These include:

- The Great Ouse (Bedford to St Neots and beyond) which is a strategic waterway
- A421 Bedford Bypass (links Bedford to the A1) – crosses the site
- A603 (Bedford to Sandy) forms the southern boundary
- Private haul road serving the Lafarge Quarry and providing emergency access to the Castle Mill Weir for the EA
- Country Way forming part of National Cycle Route 51: Oxford to Cambridge
- Cople Bridleway No. 6
- Willington Bridleway No.1
- Cople Footpath No. 16 (currently unusable).

The BRVP area already has two existing hubs of activity, namely:

Priory Country Park, (a 'Green Flag' award winning site) with walks, angling, cycle hire, wildlife observation and a small visitor centre with educational facilities. There is an adjacent marina with 200 moorings, a sailing lake, hotel and restaurant and car parking.

Danish Camp (a licenced café and function venue) by the River Great Ouse at Willington. Car parking is adjacent to the cycle path and cycles and boats are available for hire.

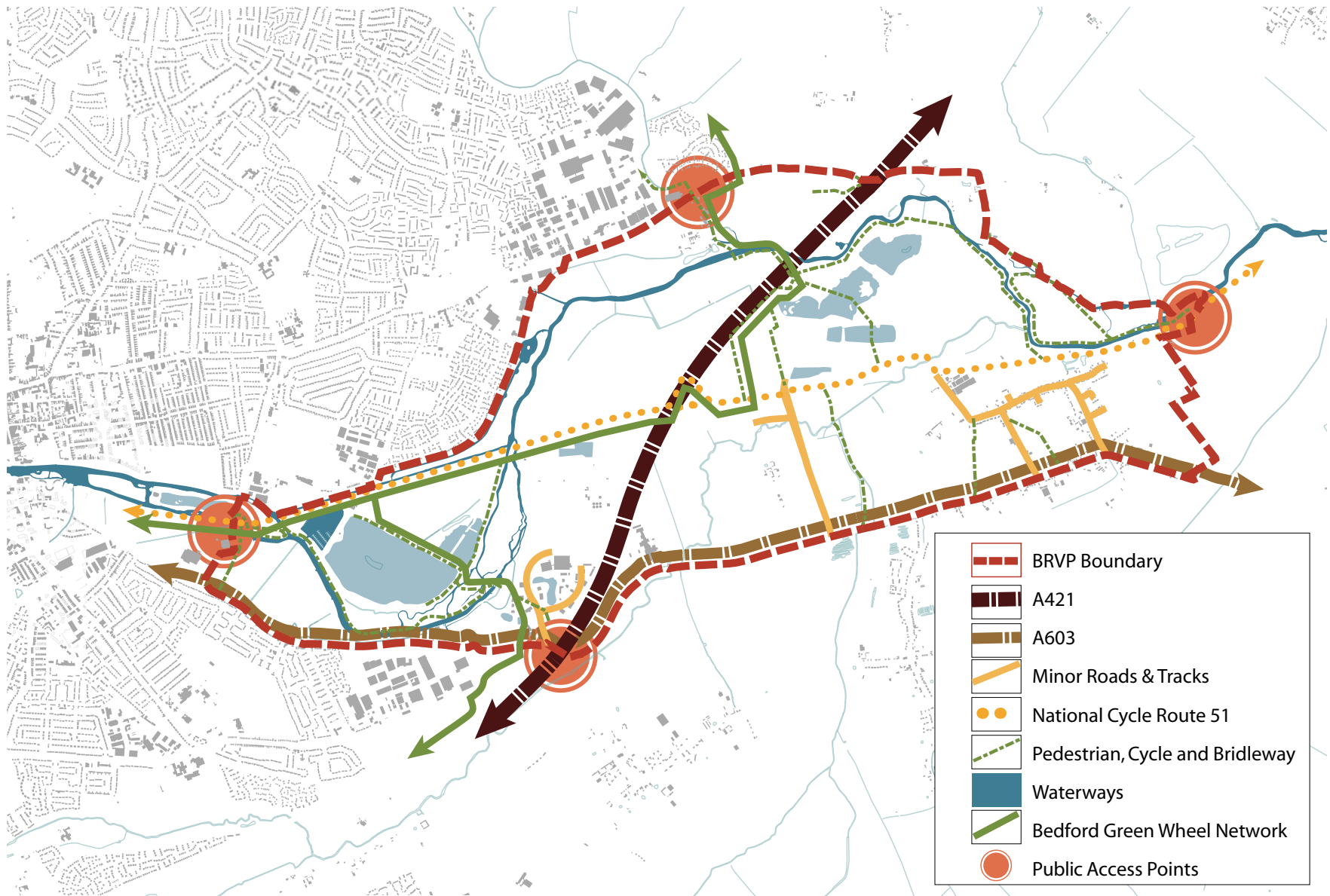
Since its creation in 2003, National Cycle Network Route 51 has become a popular route linking Sandy, via Willington to Bedford. The new surfaced path which follows the river and circles the Grange Estate is also popular with walkers and cyclists. The Bedford Bypass and the River Great Ouse both act as major barriers.

3.3 Heritage

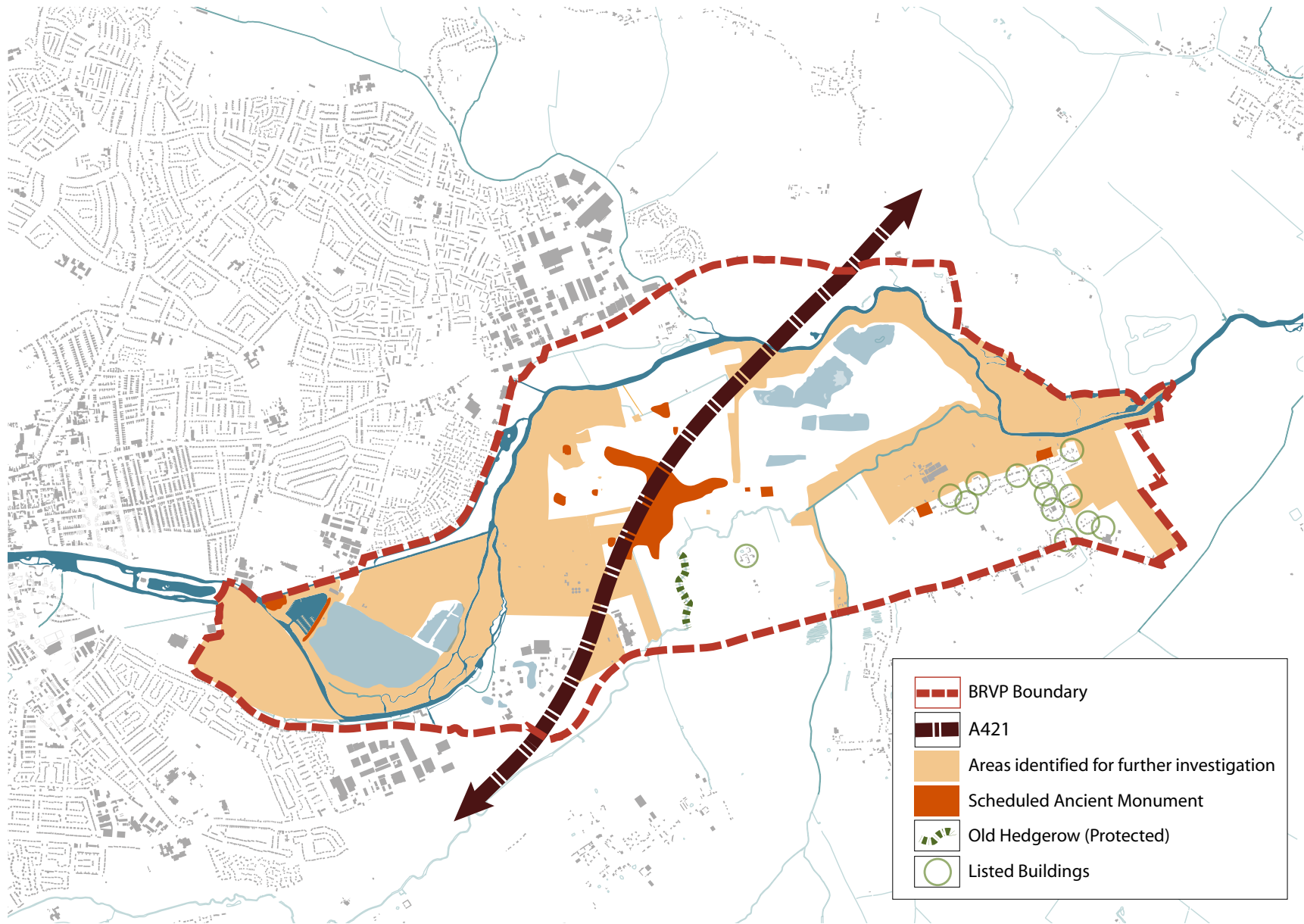
BRVP has a fascinating archaeological and historical record, including many scheduled monuments and listed buildings, standing remains, earthwork sites and the evidence from numerous archaeological investigations.

The river valley within BRVP has been inhabited for millennia, as demonstrated by the survival of a prehistoric funerary and ritual archaeological landscape including bowl barrows, mortuary enclosures and a cursus. These Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments are one of the most important groups in the region, recognised by their legal protection as scheduled monuments and have strong comparative links with internationally important sites such as Stonehenge. Excavation has shown that these Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments and the surrounding marshy landscape were gradually replaced during the Iron Age and Roman periods by agriculture and settlement, including farmsteads and a villa.

Many of the villages within BRVP are thought to have originated in the Saxon period. The transition from Saxon to Norman England is represented by the earthwork castle sites of Risinghoe Castle and Howbury Ringwork, a scheduled monument, which still overlook the park from the north bank of the River Great Ouse. These would have dominated the landscape in the medieval period, alongside a number of moated manorial sites, expanding villages and the religious site of Newnham Priory. The latter, which gives Priory Country Park its name, was founded in the 12th century and demolished during the Reformation by Henry VIII, to be replaced by a Tudor Mansion. Archaeological investigation at Aspects Leisure Centre, where the priory and later mansion remains are located, has identified the church, cloister and cemetery and two outer courtyards containing workshops and agricultural buildings. Parts of the surrounding monastic precinct wall are still visible above ground, as well as the fishponds which survive as earthworks, and sections of the later Tudor Mansion garden walls. At the eastern end of BRVP, at Willing-



ROADS AND ACCESS



HERITAGE SITES



Tudor dovecote in Willington

ton, the medieval moated and scheduled site of Danish Camp, and the surviving 16th century dovecote and stables of Willington Manor can be visited. There are many other listed buildings of post-medieval date in the area.

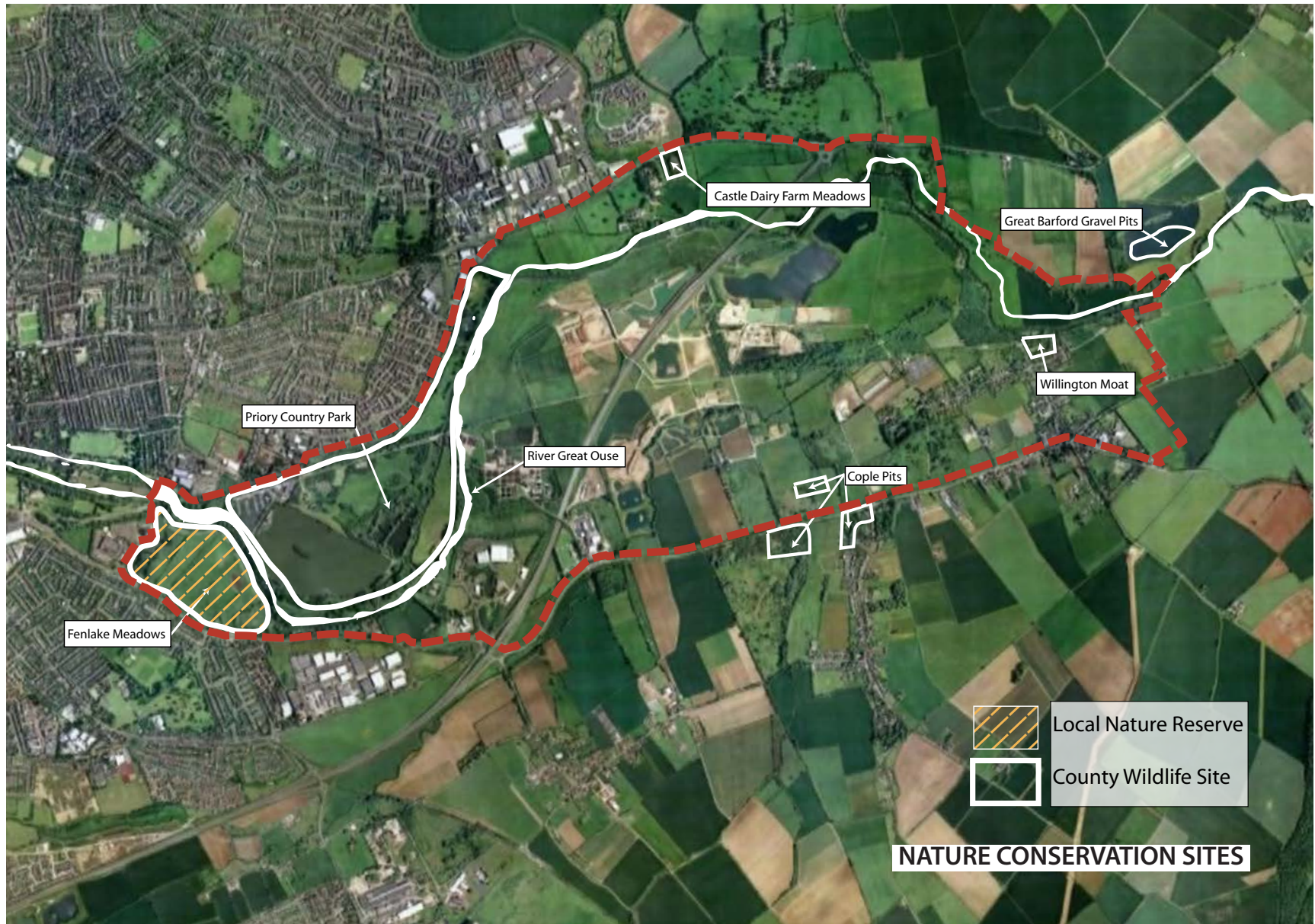
The River Great Ouse was made navigable in the 17th century which would have led to an increase in trade and traffic on the watercourse. It fell into disuse after the coming of the railway but was restored for use by pleasure craft in the 1970s. The railway line which was constructed in 1862 but closed in 1967 survives as the NCN 51 cycle route. A number of 18th and 19th century gravel pits, brick works and brick kilns, spread throughout the area of BRVP, attest to the early quarrying and processing of clays and gravels. Field names like 'Claypit Close' to the east of Octagon Farm serve to remind us of this aspect of the park's history. Modern large scale extraction continues to this day and has resulted in the identification of many archaeological sites and finds.



Fenlake Meadows Local Nature Reserve in BRVP

3.4 Landscape

Bedford Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment Final Report (2007) has identified five landscape character units in the area. The first is Priory Country Park. The second, at the centre of the site associated with the river valley is the Ouse Valley Restored Farmland, which includes restored gravel pits, plantations and pasture. To the south around the village of Willington is an area named as the 'Willington Farmland and Paddocks'. To the north of the Great Ouse are meadows which have been named as the 'Risinghoe Castle Farmland with Parkland'. Finally at the extreme east of the site are the Ouse Valley Meadows, pastures that



are now being exploited for gravel extraction. The site does have some scenery which is industrial and urban including gravel extraction works, an abattoir, the sewage treatment plant and the A421 Bedford Bypass. Trees on the site are largely associated with linear or boundary features such as the two principal watercourses, the Great Ouse and Elstow Brook, as well as tracks and plantations associated with mineral workings or restoration schemes. The Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment rated the BRVP landscape as low to moderate condition and sensitivity and therefore suitable for large scale enhancements.

The flat topography of the area means that the BRVP is visually discrete. Limited views across the site are possible from the most elevated section of the A421 Bedford Bypass and the bridge for NCN Route 51. In a few locations there are important long-range views to the Cardington Airship Hangars and the Greensand Ridge to the south and there is a recommendation to preserve these.

3.5 Biodiversity

The County Biodiversity Action Plan identifies the BRVP as an area that presents good opportunities to create floodplain habitats. The Great Ouse with its associated bankside vegetation is a County Wildlife Site (CWS). Two fish, the spined loach *Cobitis taenia* and bullhead *Cottus gobio* occur in the Great Ouse. They are both bottom-dwelling species, and are threatened in Europe and listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive (Conservation [Natural habitats, &c.] Regulations 1994). The spined loach is also protected under Schedule 5 of the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and is a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species in Bedfordshire and Luton.

The area is visited by otter (a European protected species), kingfisher (a Schedule 1 listed bird). The mature trees and wetlands attract several species of bat (protected under European legislation). There is habitat suitable for water vole, a declining UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority

species. However a survey undertaken for the Bedfordshire and Luton Species Action Plan: Water Vole (2009) failed to find this species, which may have been displaced by mink. Fenlake Meadows Local Nature reserve (LNR) is a County Wildlife Site, which contains grazed floodplain grassland and marshy grassland. Floodplain grazing marsh is a UK BAP priority habitat. Cople Pits CWS support great crested newt (a European protected species) and an area of marshy grassland also occurs within the Willington Moat CWS. Badgers regularly cross the site with an active main sett, outlier setts and latrines in the locality.

Existing water bodies in the area attract wintering waterfowl. Several species of duck are joined by cormorant, herons, grebes and waders. In addition, a number of notable wetland birds breed around the waterbodies in the area, including little grebe, sedge warbler, reed warbler, reed bunting and kingfisher.

3.6 Utilities















A number of utilities affect the study area. Most notable are overhead electricity lines, foul water sewers and rising mains, gas mains, water mains and surface water sewers. Dairy Farm, to the east of BRVP, is crossed by overhead electricity lines, as well as a number of buried gas mains. Running broadly parallel to NCN Route 51 is a foul water rising main as well as a gas main. A number of utility lines converge on an area around the Anglian Water sewage treatment plant.

A large number of services are also located at Priory Country Park and Priory Business Park.

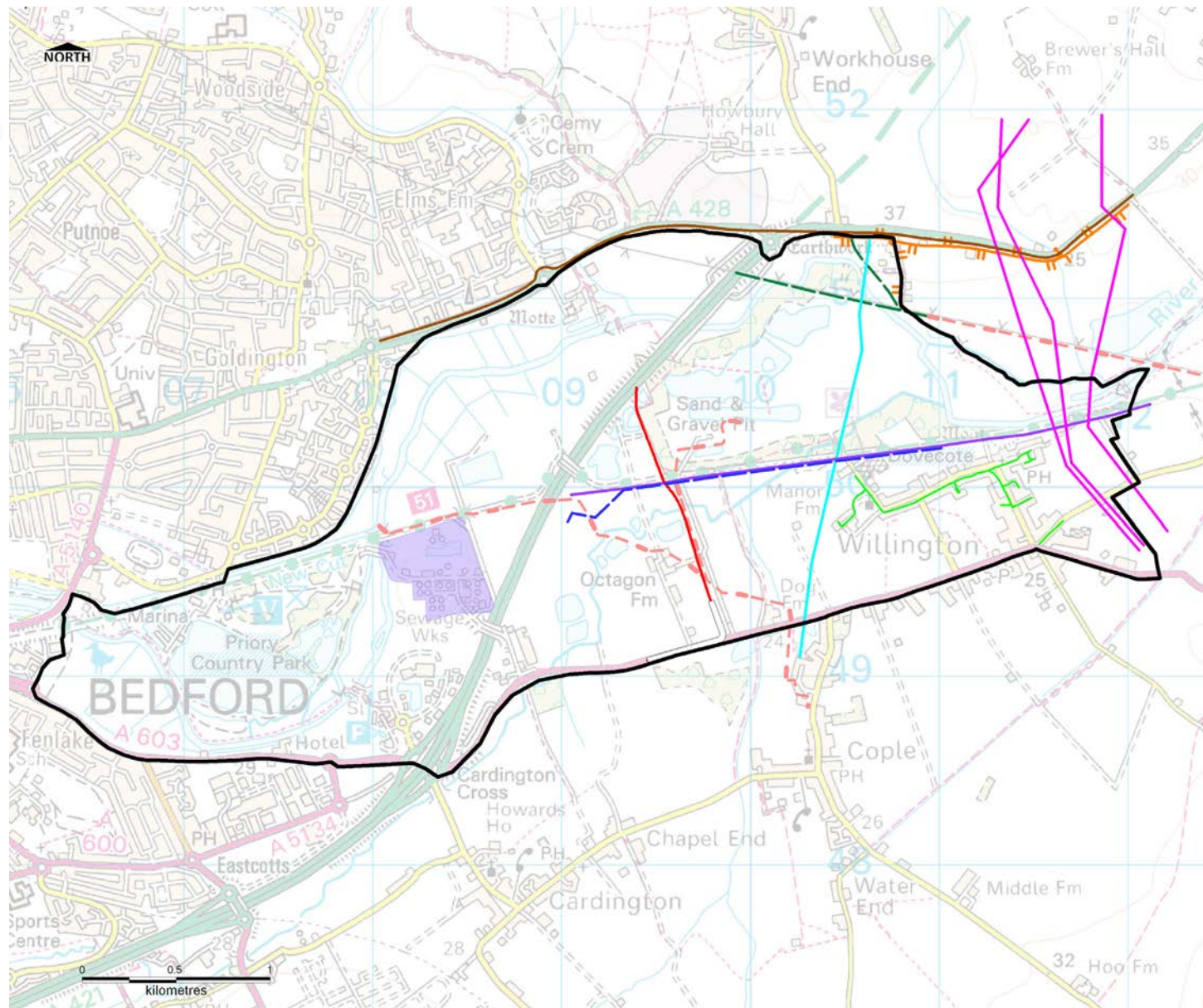
3.6 Land Ownership

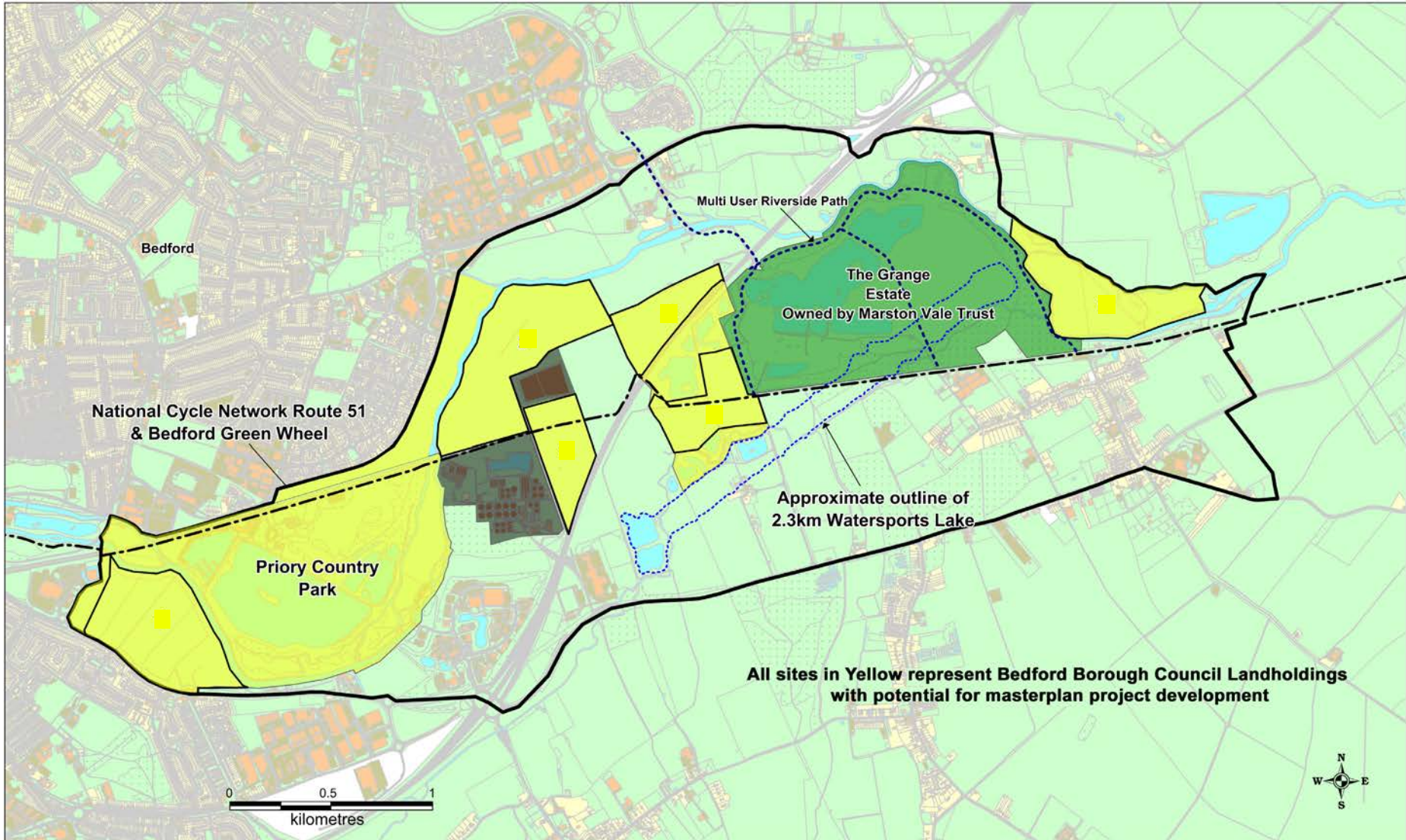
Major landowners in BRVP are Bedford Borough Council (their land being a focus of this study) and Marston Vale Trust (see plan on page 24).

Utilities

-  BRVP Boundary
-  Wastewater Treatment Works
-  Rising Main
-  Oil Pipeline
-  Area to be confirmed
-  Cable and Wireless
-  NHP Mains
-  MP Mains
-  LP Mains
-  LHP Mains
-  High Voltage Cables
-  Existing Water
-  Electrical Cables
-  EDF

Note: not comprehensive





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MAJOR LANDOWNERS

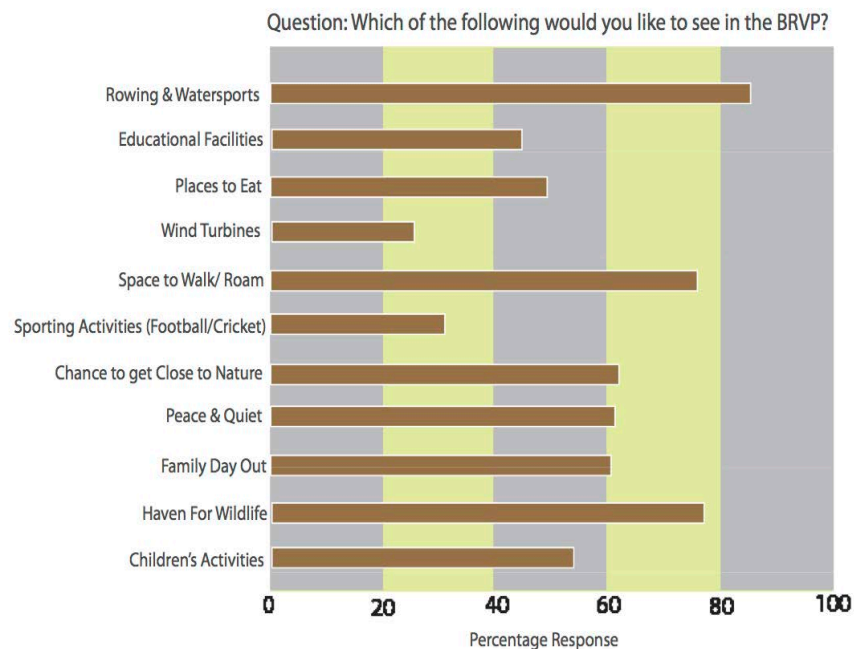
4 Consultations on BRVP

4.1 Preparation of the BRVP Framework 2006-2007

Feedback from the Public

During the summer of 2006 and the spring of 2007, the Marston Vale Trust canvassed the public and organisations on the draft BRVP Framework Plan, which had been prepared for that purpose. The consultation process was extensive, including the use of printed materials, a dedicated website, a local media campaign and personal contact through attendance at a series of public events. In June 2006, over 48,000 homes in the area between Bedford and Sandy were sent information explaining the idea of the BRVP and seeking residents' views and opinions via a freepost questionnaire. Exhibition materials were displayed at 14 different public events during 2006 where additional feedback and comments were recorded from members of local communities and the wider public. This initial feedback was used to inform the production of a draft plan in early 2007, which was subsequently used to seek more structured and detailed comments from both the public and a wide range of organisations and interest groups.

In all, over 2,100 comments were received. The vast majority (85%) were 'very supportive' of the BRVP concept - with nobody saying they were 'strongly opposed'. As expected of a consultation on such a large and complex project, there was a wide spectrum of opinion. There was great interest in walking, riding, watching wildlife and finding somewhere to enjoy peace and tranquility. A very important theme was water sports and other water-based activities, particularly rowing and canoeing. Some people expressed concerns, which were broad-ranging but centred around noise and disturbance (including proposals for motor sport), security, and over-development. Access and rights of way were also addressed by several respondents, with concerns expressed over vehicular access, car parking (both too much and a lack of) and 'access for all'.



Graphic summarising results of public feedback on BRVP

4.2 BRVP Workshop 2012

A workshop was held on the 14th March 2012 at the Corn Exchange in Bedford, to gather views from key stakeholders on issues and opportunities relating to BRVP and to seek their suggestions for future projects. The workshop was well attended by a wide variety of organisations, including heritage and user groups, parish councils, businesses and government agencies. A full list of attendees is presented in Appendix 1.

The meeting was chaired by Joel Carré, Head of Communities, BBC and addressed by Sonia Gallaher, Senior Planner, BBC on the strategic context. Gary Grant then described some of the issues and opportuni-

ties associated with delivering the BRVP, as outlined in more detail in the 'Issues and Opportunities' briefing paper sent to invitees ahead of the workshop. Following questions and an open discussion, participants worked in groups where specific themes were considered and comments and suggestions for projects were noted on large-scale site drawings and post-it notes. Themes discussed were, access and recreation, landscape and biodiversity, heritage and interpretation, other land uses (energy crops, reed bed filtration etc.) and funding (capital and revenue). Notes were recorded and used to produce a 'long list' of suggested projects and interventions (see Appendix 2).



Participants at the BRVP Workshop at the Corn Exchange, March 2012

4.3 BRVP Prioritisation of Projects

The 'long list' in Appendix 2 was evaluated against the agreed principles set out in section 2.5 the BRVP Framework. These principles are:

- Place Making
- Creating Floodplain Forest
- Multi-functionality
- Accessibility
- Promoting Sport & Recreation
- Environmental Sustainability
- Financial Sustainability
- Enhancing Existing Value
- A Functional Floodplain
- Involving People & Partnerships

In addition to compatibility with the principles set out in the Framework, consideration was given to issues such as public/ stakeholder support (as evidenced from engagement process in 4.1 and 4.2 above), initial feasibility and the various constraints and opportunities (as described in section 3 of this report). A project reference group consisting of BBC and MVT officers and the consultant team met in April to discuss all projects included in the long list and to prepare a 'short-list', which is presented in Appendix 3. The 'short list' was subsequently refined to take account of the scale of investment required, the likelihood of projects representing good value for money, deliverability, availability of supporting information and timescales for implementation, a process which resulted in the final list of projects described in section 5 (as follows).

5 Projects

5.1 Introduction

The shortlisted projects described here have emerged from the process described in Section 4. They cover the full spectrum of activities and functions across most of the BRVP, with an emphasis on land owned by the Borough. The projects may be categorised as projects to improve public access, projects to promote education and recreation, projects to facilitate water quality improvements and generate power, restore habitats and to encourage people to participate in the management of the site.

Where appropriate, costs for projects have been provided and in the case of four projects, namely the proposed Cafe and Visitor Centre at Priory Country Park, the project to grow Short Rotation Coppice, the restoration of a kayak slalom and the provision of a camping and caravanning site, a more detailed analysis of financial viability has been made.

For all projects described, there is a brief assessment of the project using the BRVP key principles from the BRVP Framework. These assessments are included in order to demonstrate relevance and validity.

Where relevant, the locations of projects are shown on the plan on page 28, with a plan showing access improvements on page 30 and river based initiatives on page 37.

An analysis of shortlisted projects is presented in Appendix 3.

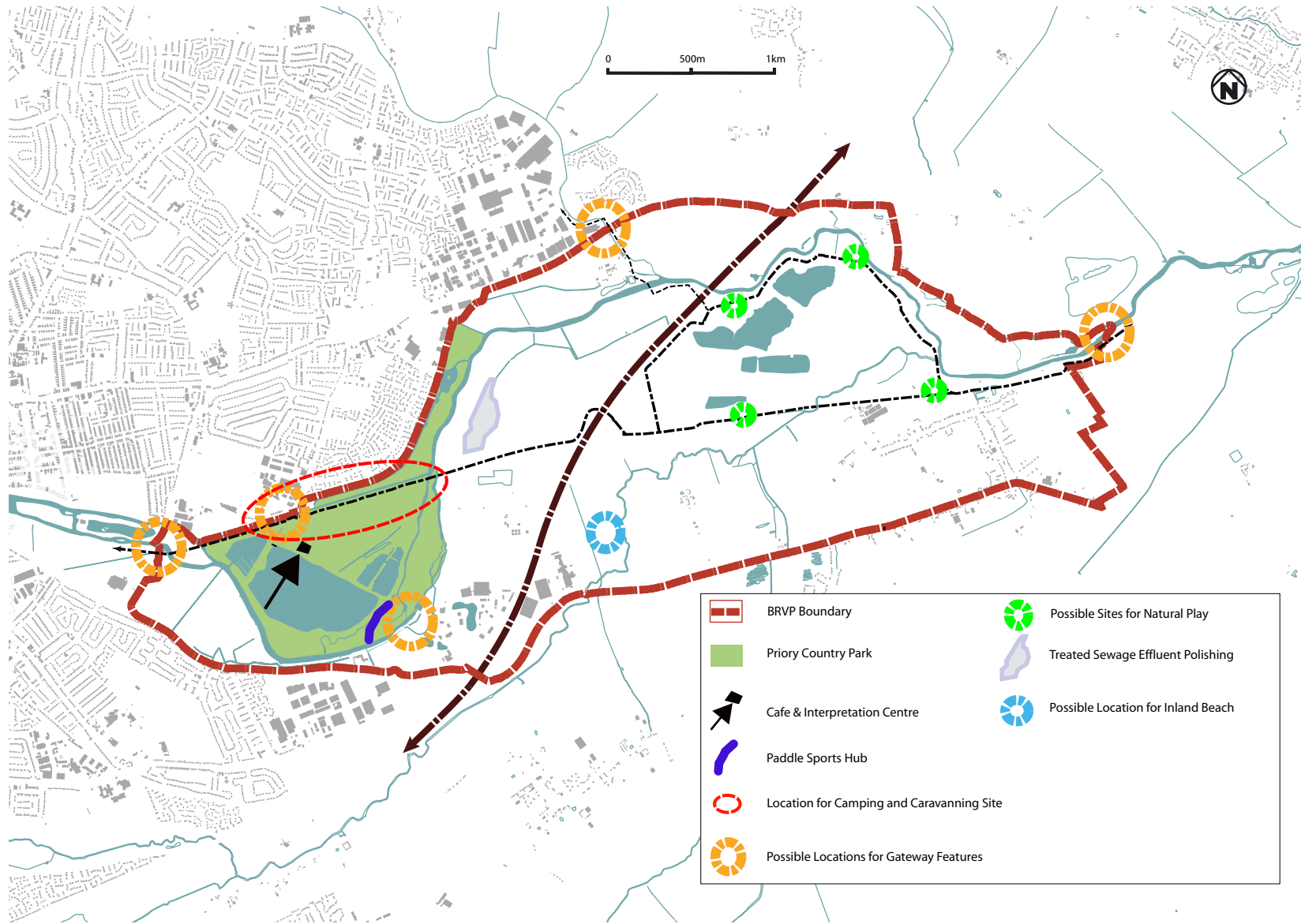
5.2 Gateway Features

Participants at the March 2012 Workshop suggested that gateway features and associated signage can celebrate a sense of place, may encourage more people to visit and help to build an identity for the BRVP. Gateway features may include symbolic gates and gate posts, public art

and signs. Possible locations for gateway features include the various entrances to Priory Country Park, Castle Mills (Green Wheel link), NCN 51 and a future entrance to the BRVP associated with the enabling development for the watersports lake. High quality gateway features will require further planning, design and coordination. It may be that new gateway features can be funded as part of wider access improvement projects or provided through planning agreements.



Gateway sculptures on the Bristol-Bath cycle path



LOCATIONS OF SELECTED PROJECTS

Project Evaluation: Gateway Features

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

5.3 Heritage & Interpretation Trails

Working with Bedford Borough Council, The Marston Vale Trust has prepared a Heritage Interpretation Action Plan which is designed to communicate past and present historic landscapes and features within BRVP. The action plan has identified key locations within the park where the public will be able to access information. Information will be available through various media, including interpretation boards and digital media. Digital media may include downloadable guides, mp3 audio trails, podcasts, mobile phone guides, bluetooth hotspots and geocaching. In addition information will be available via a dedicated Facebook page and through the BRVP website.

Content will be developed by staff, specialists and volunteers. The detailed plan has been costed and £80,100 applied for from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

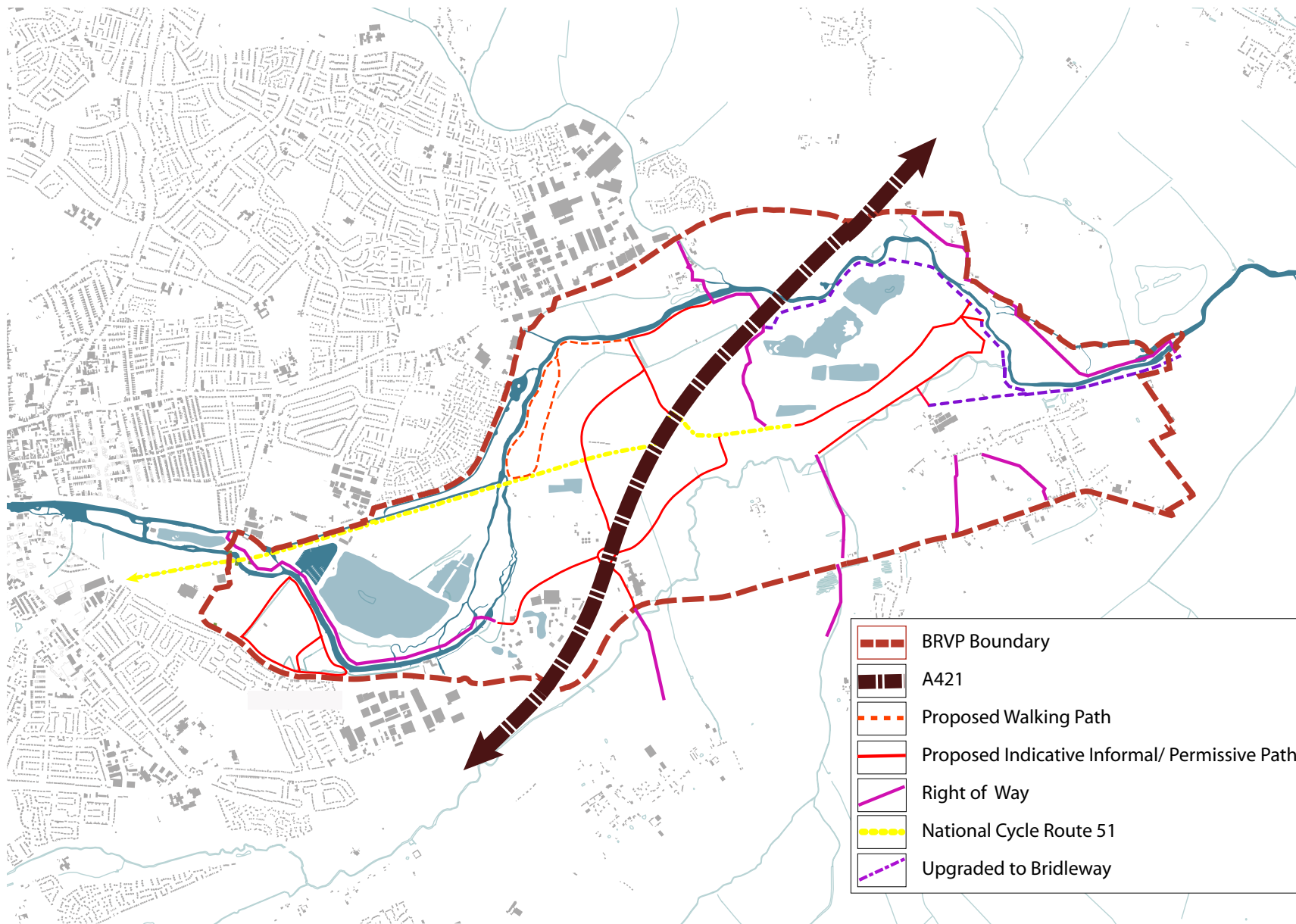
Project Evaluation: Heritage & Interpretation Trails

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality		
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	Part of message
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

5.4 Multi-user Path Network

The path network of BRVP is partly complete, with the NCN 51 forming a very well used central east-west spine with links with a number of spurs and loops. However as improvements are made to newly restored, or yet to be restored, sections of the park, there will be opportunities to upgrade existing paths and provide new paths for walking, cycling and horse access, which link with the wider rights of way network. The plan on page 30 overleaf shows the post-restoration access in the north Octagon Farm /100 Acre Site. Further access improvements and changes will need to be reflected in an evolving access plan for the BRVP. The excavation of the proposed watersports lake will require the diversion of the NCN 51 around the north-eastern end of the water body.

There is considerable interest in horse riding in the Willington area in particular and there are plans to upgrade sections of the multi-user path in the Grange Estate and a section of the NCN 51 to bridleway status.



ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

The potential for developing a dedicated trail for mountain biking needs to be investigated. Such a facility could include a range of technical challenges for different rider abilities. Trails of this nature have attracted sponsorship elsewhere and the potential for adapting restoration schemes and working with the minerals operator may improve project feasibility.

Existing informal paths in Fenlake Meadows could be improved to create a circular route. Priory Country Park has an excellent interior path network and there are popular routes connecting Priory Business Park with NCN 51. There may be opportunities to improve access to the river's edge for walkers in selected locations (for example in the 100 Acre Site to the north of the sewage treatment works). However, for some areas it may be necessary to consider potential conflicts with biodiversity interests and develop practical solutions for minimising possible problems. New links may be possible to improve the access network both into and within the park itself. The plan on page 30 (preceding) shows a preliminary scheme for extending the path network.

Project Evaluation: Multi-user Path Network

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	Promotes sustainable transport
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

Location of Cafe and Visitor Centre in Priory Country Park (circled). BRVP area shaded



5.5 Café & Visitor Centre

At each stage of the BRVP consultation process, there has been strong support for the proposal to establish a café and improved visitor centre at Priory Country Park.

Council officers have indicated that a potential location for the facility is within the existing visitor centre/ranger station, which is currently occupied by the park rangers and the Wildlife Trust. The suggestion is that an upgraded facility would consist of a café and new exhibition area with an environmental and heritage education display.

Visitor Demand

Priory Country Park is in an attractive lake and riverside location close to the town centre. The Bedford Waterspace Economic Impact & Op-

portunities Study (RGA 2011) notes that there 'is considerable scope to increase the volume and variety of visitor activity associated with the river in order to increase its economic impact.' The location of the existing ranger station/visitor centre, overlooking Priory Lake along with its adjacent parking facilities, makes it a prime location to accommodate the upgraded café and visitor centre. It is understood from consultations with council officers that the park is intensively used and a very popular resource for both local residents and visitors from further afield. Estimated annualised visitors number 750,000. The current visitor centre is basic and an upgraded facility could cater for the predicted increase in demand.

A 44 seat café would be extended from the southern edge (the current public room) of the building onto a purpose-built raised terrace in order to provide additional seating. The proposal assumes that the offices in the main section of the building would be removed to make space for the café kitchen and exhibition area. The current tenants would need to find alternative accommodation.

Capital Costs & Revenues

The table that follows presents an appraisal of potential costs and revenues associated with implementing the BBC's preferred café and visitor centre refurbishment option. This is based on a five year plan and assumes that the facility will be run directly by the BBC. Information is based on figures provided by the BBC, uses 2012 prices and does not include inflation. A relatively large initial capital sum of approximately £150,000 would be required to upgrade the current facility. Other significant new costs would include new staff and stock for the café. As noted above, it is assumed that the facility would be operated by the BBC, however there is the option of involving a commercial operator. Based on these factors, it is estimated that the Year 1 costs would be £253,000 and total five years cost £665,000.

Assessment Factors	Costs / Revenues	Notes & Assumptions
<i>Capital set up costs</i>		
Refurbishment to cafe + visitor centre (as per plan)	£150,000	Based on costing undertaken by BBC. Includes equipment and furniture costs.
Education and interpretation centre displays	-	Confirmed to be funded already through BBC BRVP budget.
<i>Additional ongoing (new) annual costs</i>		
Cafe staffing and food costs	£68,000 £26,000 (Annual)	Assumes 2 FT food servers; 1 FT kitchen worker/ cook; 1 FT cleaner (£16k, £16k, £20k, £16k salaries approx.) Assumes four rangers would continue to be funded from central BBC budgets. Food costs based on £500 per week.
Utilities (phone/electricity/water)	£3,000	Based on internet research
Maintenance budget	£6,000	Assumes £500 per month. Does not include any further major upgrade work.
Total Year 1 costs	£253,000	
Total 5 year costs	£665,000	
<i>Revenues (annual)</i>		
Angling Activities etc	£6,000	Assumes continuation of 2011-12 actual revenues (£5 to 7k – median figure taken).
Cafe Turnover	£200,000	Based on comparable country park café figures.
Total Year 1 Revenue	£206,000	
Total 5 year Revenue	£1,030,000	
Balance year 5	£365,000	

The rangers have confirmed that the only activity currently generating revenue for them associated with the ranger station/visitor centre is angling, which last year generated between £5,000-£7,000. It was noted that this income stream has declined in recent years as private fisheries have opened in the area. It has been assumed that current revenues for angling will continue at the same rate.



Elevations of a preliminary scheme for cafe and visitor centre in Priory Country Park

Based on market research, it has been estimated that the new 44 seater café may turnover £200,000 each year and therefore it could take up to 4 years for the café to begin to make a return on investment. The café would not be able to expand to become a fully fledged restaurant or serve alcohol due to a prior agreement with the adjacent restaurant.

Increasing the number of revenue generating activities can assist the situation though there may be restrictions on what the Council is able to do contractually and from a public spending perspective. The rangers have suggested that longer term there may be opportunities to increase revenues associated with the café and visitor centre by charging visitors for car parking, renting the new exhibition room to groups, charging an operator a fee to teach bush craft and survival skills in the park, plus introducing a combined angling pass with other locations.



Bolam Country Park Visitor Centre - a similar facility to that envisaged for Priory Country Park

Potential Funding Sources

As the Council has no available capital programme to fund the upgraded cafe and visitor centre project, the section that follows provides a brief overview of other potential external sources of funding that may be available.

Grant Funding via Heritage Lottery Fund

If there is a heritage component to the visitor centre and application of the grant is via a constituted not for profit group, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) may be in a position to support the project. However, given its restricted budget, increased competition for funding and strategic priorities (as set out in their Horizons of Heritage policy statement), any application will need to be backed by appropriate strategic statements, such as a Training Plan, Access Plan and Audience Development Strategy as well as a Business Plan.

The Heritage Grants element of the programme covers projects over £100,000 and may be suitable if it is made clear that the visitor centre has a strong heritage theme. Projects funded must help more people to take active part in and make decisions about heritage, and/or conserve the UK's diverse heritage. Projects can also include nature conservation, historic buildings, museum collections, archive collections, spoken history records, cultural traditions, and objects and sites relating to the UK's industrial, transport and maritime history.

In addition, grants of over £250,000 are available through the HLF's Parks for People fund. Constituted not for profit applicants must show that the community values the park as part of their heritage, that the park meets local social, economic and environmental needs and that the park actively involves local people.

For the visitor centre element of the project to be considered under this scheme it must meet all five of the following expected outcomes:

- increase the range of audiences enjoying the park
- conserving and improving the heritage value
- increase the range of volunteers involved
- improving skills and knowledge through training
- improving management and maintenance of the park

Historically HLF have not funded large-scale capital projects, although capital investment may be considered if projects maximise visitor experience. HLF will potentially contribute to costs of visitor experience e.g. landscaping, interpretation, visitor services and other activities in line with their aims to improve visitor experience, enjoyment and learning.

Developer Contributions

The use of developer contributions, through Section 106 Agreements associated with commercial or residential schemes developed elsewhere in BRVP could be investigated. Bedford Borough Council is currently

preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule and consideration could be given to whether this proposal might benefit from CIL funding in the future.

Commercial Partner

Under this model, the Borough Council would enter into an agreement with a commercial operator and in return receive a fixed price lump sum from the operator for allowing them to operate the café as a business. The benefits for Council adopting this approach would be that café staffing costs would be removed and the income stream would be guaranteed, though it would take longer to make back the initial capital sum invested.

Conclusion

The initial capital outlay required to upgrade the facility is relatively high and the revenue streams modest so as a business the proposal is on the margins of feasibility. To offset the high capital costs, the Council could seek grant funding, though in the current economic climate, success may be elusive.

To reduce outgoings such as staff costs and receive a guaranteed monthly income stream (albeit smaller) the Council may wish to engage with a commercial operator, which has been done successfully elsewhere. In addition, there appears to be scope to increase the range of fee paying activities and revenues associated with the upgraded café and visitor centre and these should be explored further.

It is clear that the café and visitor centre is in high demand and it will significantly improve visitors' experience to the country park so the Council may take a view that these considerable benefits outweigh the overall financial feasibility issues.

Project Evaluation: Café & Visitor Centre

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	Centre for community
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	Can demonstrate sustainability
Financial Sustainability	√	Profitable
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

5.6 Moorings

The Bedford Waterspace Study (2011) has recommended mooring improvements in a number of locations along the River Great Ouse within BRVP. The highest priority is given to the provision of moorings at the Barns Hotel near Cardington Lock, at the south of Priory Country Park, however there are also proposals for facilities at Fenlake Meadows, Cardington Lock, the old railway bridge by the NCN 51, the Great Ouse Boating Association, Castle Mill Lock, Willington, Danish Camp and Willington Lock (see plan taken from the strategy on page 37).

Both BBC and MVT are willing to consider proposals for new moorings or mooring improvements, which conform with the Bedford Waterspace Study, within BRVP. The Bedford Waterspace Study can be viewed at http://www.bedford.gov.uk/business/strategies,_plans_and_research/bedford_waterspace_study_2011.aspx

Project Evaluation: Moorings

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality		
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability		
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

5.7 Canoe Access and Trails

There is a thriving canoeing scene in the Bedford area and the River Great Ouse between Bedford and Great Barford is a popular section for people to explore. This scene has been further invigorated as a result of the interest generated by local kayaker, Etienne Stott, who won an Olympic Gold Medal in the kayak slalom discipline at London 2012. There are opportunities to build on this interest by improving existing facilities, such as 'portage' points around weirs and near riverside car parks for river access. Portage points can consist of beaches, steps, ramps and/or platforms where canoes can be launched safely and are relatively inexpensive to construct. Popular existing portage points include Cardington Lock and Danish Camp.

There are also business opportunities associated with developing a canoe hire business within the BRVP to enable people to access and enjoy

the river by canoe or 'sit on top' kayak in organised groups or on a self-led basis. This could be linked to the Paddle Sports Hub proposal described in 5.8 below or to the BBC's own Bedfordshire Outdoor Adventure service and in particular its Kempston Outdoor Facility.

Project Evaluation: Canoe Access and Trails

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	Portage can give others access
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	Low carbon sport
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

5.8 Paddle Sports Hub

The existing kayak slalom facility (Cardington Slalom Course) in Priory Country Park is based on a dismountable system of deflectors/ obstacles, which are individually secured by adjustable tensioned straps to the channel each time the course is set up. Viking Kayak Club is based in Bedford and it has set out a strong case and justification for BRVP to be promoted as a regional centre of excellence for canoeing and kayaking. The club has recommended as part of its representations that new and upgraded paddle sports facilities should be provided. Its recommendations include upgrading and extending the existing kayak slalom facility at Priory Country Park to become a paddle sports hub. This development opportunity could be combined with the project described in 5.7 above and in particular the base for a canoe hire business. The facility would

include the following key features:

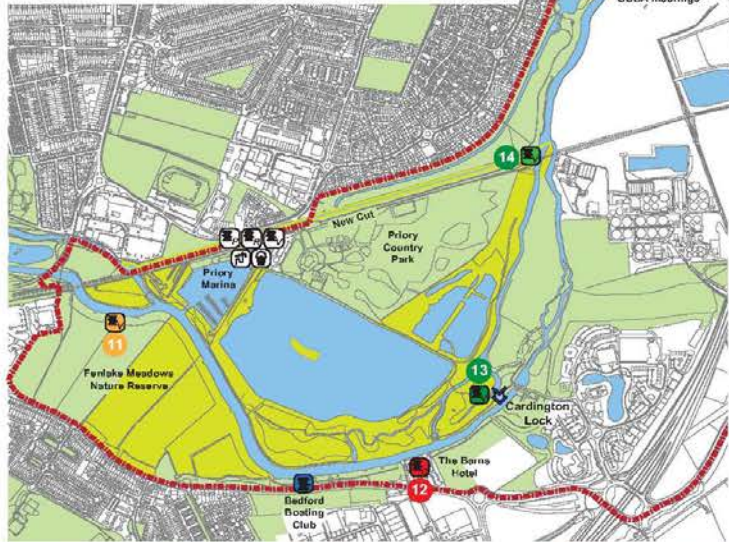
- The slalom would continue to be served by naturally flowing water so would not require any expensive pumping equipment.
- The new facility would be operational year round – currently it only operates between April and September (seven months of the year) because of the lack of facilities. In addition, the course would be used during weekdays as well as at weekends.
- Obstacles would be fitted as semi-permanent features. Currently they have to be moved and positioned each time the course is set up, taking up to a day to preparations.
- The slalom would still function as a flood relief channel.
- Improvements to facilities, including changing/ toilets/ kitchen. meeting room would encourage and allow use by public, corporate clients and private groups; and inter-club events.
- An adjacent hard standing providing parking for up to five cars.

Funding Options

Sport England's 'Community Investment Fund' accepts bids between £100,000 and £500,000 and focuses investment into projects and programmes that help create an active nation through sport and recreation. They look for projects that seek to involve the whole community, particularly hard-to-reach groups, that match regional priorities laid out in their plans for sport and that recognise the wider benefits of sport and activity in terms of health, education and community. There is no closure date for this fund. UK Sport's 'World Class Events' fund, as the name suggests, focuses on staging major sporting events in the UK, but it is worth exploring further whether this can be used to fund capital



The existing Priory Marina accommodates permanent, residential and visitor moorings together with a full range of facilities including boat repairs and chandery



Improve facilities and access to existing moorings on the Lower River, Mill Meadows



The existing Bedford Boat Club moorings



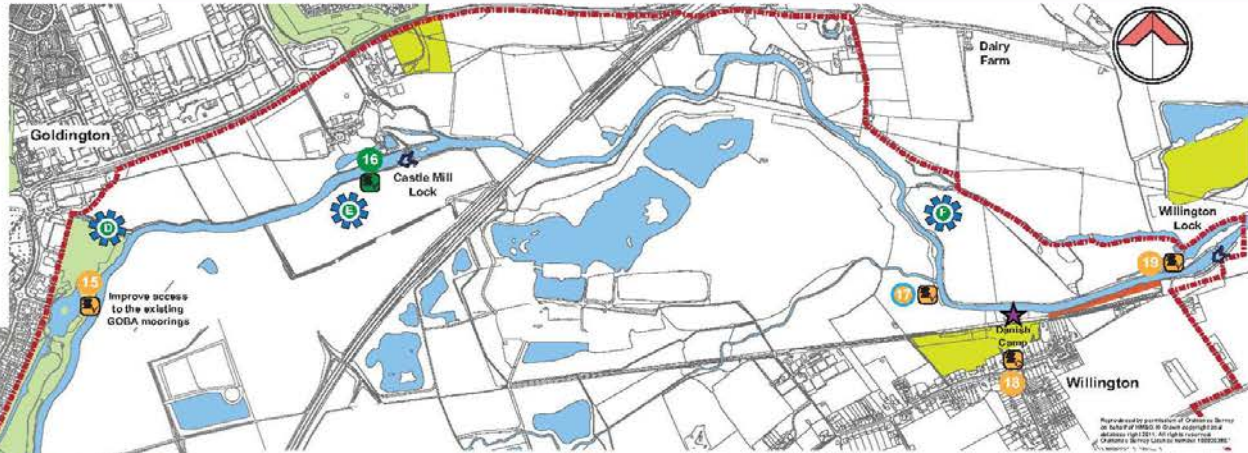
Develop visitor/patron moorings at the Barnes Hotel



Develop visitor moorings as part of the Cardington Lock redevelopment



Opportunity to develop visitor moorings above Willington Lock



- 11 Fenlake Meadows Visitor Moorings
- 12 Barnes Hotel Commercial Moorings
- 13 Cardington Lock Visitor Moorings
- 14 Goldington Old Railway Bridge
- 15 GOBA Visitor Moorings (GOBA - Great Ouse Boating Assoc.)
- 16 Castle Mill Visitor Moorings
- 17 Willington Visitor Moorings
- 18 Danish Camp Visitor Moorings
- 19 Willington Lock Visitor Moorings

Key

- Existing Head of Navigation
- Urban Open Space
- Committed Development Site
- County Wildlife Site
- Angling Club Fisheries
- Bedford Boat Club Moorings
- Danish Camp
- Bedford River Valley Park
- Suggested extension of limit of navigation
- Extend navigation to Box End Water Park
- Investigate marina options
- Proposed Route of B+MK Waterway Park

Proposed Mooring Types

- Visitor
- Residential
- Permanent
- Commercial

Proposed Mooring Facilities

- Toilets
- Showers
- Water Point
- Pump Out
- Elsan
- Power Point
- Winding Hole

Priority Action Code

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Long Term

Bedford Waterspace Study - River Great Ouse

costs associated with facilities. There is also no closure date for this fund. Developer contributions are unlikely to be applicable for this use as it is a pure recreational resource and difficult to justify in planning terms as an item that is related to development growth and pressures.

Conclusion

Capital set up costs are relatively high, particularly for the new building that is required. Currently many potential users are put off by not being able to shower after using the slalom course. This situation also means that use of the facility during the winter is not feasible. It is also evident that potential revenues are relatively low (even once corporate hire rates are allowed for) and it could take between ten and fifteen years to make a surplus. Revenues would be insufficient to cover basic staff costs. It is clear that there are other benefits associated with improving the facility such as improved health and social inclusion and there is a strong demand for an upgraded facility among users. A good case can be made for grant funding, making use of updated information and arguments set out in the 'Bedford River Valley Park as a regional centre of excellence for Canoeing and Kayaking' (Viking Kayak Club 2007).



Cardington Slalom Course in 2006 (see http://www.purecollector.com/photos/2006/cardingtonslalomjuly06/IMG_2342.JPG)

Assessment Factors	Costs / Revenues	Notes & Assumptions
<i>Capital set up costs</i>		
Upgrading slalom course	£50,000	Insertion of gates and permanent boulders. Based on estimations from VKC.
Constructing facilities	£250,000	Based on Currie & Brown and VKC estimates. Includes toilets, showers, changing room, meeting room, Tannoy system, and hard standing area outside for five vehicles.
Additional ongoing (new) annual costs		
Staffing	£25,000	Assumes 1 PT administrator; 1 PT coach (£10,000 £15,000 approx.) This is basic salary cost only. These posts currently do not exist, but will be required for more intensive use.
Utilities (phone/electricity/water)	£3,000	Based on internet research
Maintenance budget	£12,000	Assumes £1,000 per month to cover both building and course. Does not include any further major upgrade work.
Total Year 1 costs	£340,000	
Total 5 Year costs	£500,000	
<i>Revenues (annual)</i>		
Weekend hire - sports clubs and community groups	£12,150	Assumes continuation of current rate of £300 per weekend, plus £150 profit made on food served. Assumes half of weekends in a year are used (x27). £450x27.
Weekday hire - sports clubs and community groups	£13,000	Proposed rate of £100 per day. Based on estimate from VKC. Assume 50% of 260 weekdays. £100x130.
Corporate hire - weekends	£7,000	Assumes rate of £500 per weekend. Assumes a quarter of weekends in a year are used (x14). £500x14.
Corporate hire - weekday	£5,200	Proposed rate of £200 per day. Based on estimate from VKC. Assume 10% of 260 weekdays. £200x26.
Total Year 1 Revenue	£37,300	
Total 5 Year Revenue	£186,700	
Balance Year 5	£-313,300	

Project Evaluation: Paddle Sports Hub

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	Low carbon sport
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	



Inland beach at Keynes Country Park (Photo: Peter Watkins - Creative Commons Licence)

5.9 Inland Beach

Inland beaches are long established and very popular in continental Europe. In the UK, the Keynes Country Park, part of the Cotswold Water Park near Swindon, features a children's beach which in 2004 became the first UK inland beach to achieve an international Blue Flag award.

An inland beach in the BRVP would act to relieve pressure on the more sensitive wetland habitats, while offering a host of recreational benefits associated with beach sports like volleyball and football or simply building sandcastles. One possibility is that a section of the bank of the western end of the watersports lake could be covered with sand and the resultant beach (and buoyed off swimming bay) could form part of what could become a central hub close to the proposed enabling development.

Project Evaluation: Inland Beach

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitor numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

5.10 Camping & Caravanning

Bedford Borough Hotel & Visitor Accommodation Futures report (Hotel Solutions August 2009) concluded that there 'may be opportunities for further touring caravan and camping provision linked to facilities for outdoor activities such as water sports, fishing, walking and cycling' (page 65) and that Priory Country Park and the BRVP are key locations. Camping is also identified as a development opportunity in the Bedford River Valley Park Framework. Campsites located close to rivers and lakes are popular and water bodies would provide a recreational resource for campers and picturesque backdrop. In addition, a touring caravan site and/or camp site would be useful to provide short term accommodation for people attending water sports and other leisure events.

There are several potential sites owned by BBC and MVT where camping and caravanning could take place but the most promising locations are those with good vehicular access with power, water and sewerage connections within a short distance. Opportunities may arise with the implementation of the watersports lake infrastructure and associated enabling development plans, but in the meantime, consideration should be given to the provision and management of a scaled down/low key/low cost camping facility within Priory Country Park.

The following economic appraisal is based on information obtained from a 1.1 hectare touring caravan site, Lovatt Meadow in Milton Keynes. This site provides pitches for tents and about 40 caravans. It operates from April to October, usually at about 50% capacity.

A typical facility of this kind requires the following:

- Drinking water/waste water disposal/office-block/communal toilet / washing facility – within 90m from any part of the site
- Fire points & alarms – at office
- Chemical toilet disposal – collection point at office
- Signage – basic
- Toilets and hot showers with access for the disabled

- Fencing and entrance
- Basic lighting
- Drainage – all into existing sewers in adjacent road
- Minor ground modelling works
- All utilities available close by
- New access onto highway network – 10m radii, 7.5m width
- Say, 25m of 7.5m wide road within the site
- Internal gravel roads – 4m width, say total length of 250m
- 16A power supply at individual pitches
- Small office for administration

Costs are based on 2012 prices and do not include inflation.

The table overleaf shows costs and revenues. The toilet blocks represent a major expense, which could be reduced by sharing such a facility with another project, for example a visitor centre/clubhouse. It may also be possible to eliminate the cost of internal tracks, although this will depend on ground conditions. The figures suggest that it would take around 4 years to recover the cost of establishment, with the facility becoming profitable thereafter.

It is unlikely that grant funding or developer contributions would be applicable for this kind of project. A joint venture with a commercial operator may be the most practical and low risk option, although profits would be much lower.

According to discussions with existing operators at similar sites in the region, there is spare capacity, which could make an investment into a campsite questionable, however if BRVP becomes a more popular venue for watersports and other outdoor activities and events, the facility could perform an important role in developing BRVP as a whole.

Project Evaluation: Camping & Caravanning

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making		
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality		
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Income stream
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	



Well-screened 40 caravan and camp site at Lovatt Meadow

Assessment Factors	Costs / Revenues	Notes & Assumptions
<i>Estimated capital set up costs</i>		
40 caravan and 10 tent site (as described above)	£290,000	Costs provided by Currie & Brown
Continuing annual costs		
Staff	£22,000	Assumes 1 FT site manager 7 months; 1 PT handyman 7 months (£14k, £8k approx.) Basic salary costs only.
Utilities (telephone, Electricity, water)	£5,000	Based on internet research
Maintenance	£6,000	£500 per month. Does not include major upgrades
Total 1 year	£323,000	
Total 5 years	£455,000	
<i>Revenues (annual)</i>		
Caravans	£77,000	Pitches 50% occupied at £18 per night-based on two occupants. 2012 prices at Lovatt Meadow Caravan Park and Wellington Country Park. =213 days x 20 pitches x £18
Car parking fees	£2,000	Based on 5 extra cars on site at any one time at £2 each per night.
Gaezebo/Canopy Hire	£1,000	25% of caravans hire a gazebo/sun canopy at £1 per night.
Extra adult fees	£8,000	25% of caravans have an extra adult at £7.50 per night.
Extra child fees	£21,000 (£7,000+ £14,000)	25% of caravans have one extra child at £6.50 per night + 25% of caravans have two extra children at £6.50 per night.
Camping	£8,500	Based on 50% occupancy of 10 pitches during season at average of £8 per night. (213 x 5 x £8)
Total 1 Year Revenue	£118,000	
Total 5 Year Revenue	£590,000	
Balance 5 Years	£135,000	

5.11 Natural Play Facilities

The wider BRVP provides many locations and opportunities for families to explore and children to play, however there will be opportunities to create specially designed playgrounds, in some cases, close to densely populated neighbourhoods where demand for play space for younger children is high. Conventional playgrounds tend to rely on engineered equipment which can be vulnerable to vandalism and can require frequent repair. There is now growing interest in providing more naturalistic playgrounds which encourage tree climbing, scrambling, digging, den building and planting. These facilities include carefully selected vegetation and features like shelters, boulders, heavy timbers, sand pits and rainwater to create safe, accessible, age-appropriate play opportunities. The appropriate choice of planting and materials will help such facilities to survive heavy use and to blend in well with the wider park.

The partners will identify suitable locations associated with the park’s multi-user path network to install low key/ low cost natural play facilities, such as those at MVT’s Bedford’s Green Gateway sites. The development of the water sports lake and associated infrastructure may open up the opportunity to establish a more formal/ income generating natural play facility attraction, such as an aerial assault course.



Natural play space See <http://www.leavesofgreen.co.uk/landscape-design/natural-play-spaces.htm>

Project Evaluation: Natural Play Facilities

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Boosts visitors numbers
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	



Grange Estate showing potential locations for natural play facilities (circled)

5.12 Polishing of Treated Effluent

The EU Water Framework Directive (2003), makes a commitment to improving freshwater, ground water and freshwater ecosystems. See <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33362.aspx>. There is increasing concern over the possibility that low river flows caused by drought could reduce water quality in the River Great Ouse. It is therefore appropriate that consideration is given to the possible use land within BRVP for improving water quality, whether treated effluent or urban or agricultural run-off.

It would be possible to 'polish' treated effluent from the Meadow Lane Bedford Sewage Treatment Works (STW) site using constructed wetlands. The BBC's restored 100 Acre site to the north of the STW includes a water body of 2.5 hectares, which could be converted into a series of reed beds and/or wet woodlands, to receive treated effluent from the STW. Treated effluent would pass through these habitats, which would remove dissolved nutrients before discharging into the river. Such a scheme would provide attractive and valuable habitat and could be overlooked in places from publicly accessible paths.

Project Evaluation: Polishing of Treated Effluent

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest	√	
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility		
Promoting Sport & Recreation		
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Rental income
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	



Illustrative STW effluent polishing scheme at 100 Acre site, which would use existing waterbody

5.13 Short-rotation Coppice

Short-rotation coppice (SRC) involves the cultivation of rapid growing tree species like willow or poplar for the purpose of providing woodchips, which can fuel heating systems, electricity generation or combined heat and power plants. SRC can improve water quality through the process of being irrigated with treated effluent (see section 5.12 above), which also has the effect of increasing growth rates. There is also the possibility of allowing some public access through or around areas planted with SRC, which, despite being managed as a crop can still provide moderate landscape and biodiversity benefits.

SRC usually consists of densely planted, high-yielding varieties of willow harvested on a 2 to 5 year cycle, although most commonly every 3 years. A plantation could be viable for up to 30 years before re-planting becomes necessary, although this depends on the productivity of the coppice stools. In the UK, yields from willow SRC at first harvest are expected to be in the range 7 to 12 oven dry tonnes per hectare per year (odt/ha/yr) depending on site characteristics. The key determinants of SRC yield are water availability, weed control, light and temperature. For the purposes of our assessment below we have assumed a higher range yield estimate of 12 odt/ha/yr.

Demand

BBC is considering using the wood chip within local combined heat and power (CHP) facilities associated with its own building stock. MVT have also indicated that they already use wood chip as a fuel source - they are currently paying £25 per m³ on a contract running to March 2013. There may also be opportunities with using wood chip as a renewable combined heat and power fuel source associated with the adjacent proposed enabling development scheme.

Capital Costs and Revenues

The table over the page sets out an economic appraisal of potential costs and revenues associated with implementing SRC within a nominal 80 hectare area. Key assumptions are that this is based on a three yearly harvesting cycle lasting 30 years in total. Information is approximate and based on secondary data sources and published data that is available online. Major factors affecting the financial returns from SRC are wood chip yields and prices and the establishment costs. The availability and level of an establishment grant is therefore important. The data source used to determine the economic yield assumes low transportation costs so the importance of identifying a relatively local buyer so that transportation costs can be minimised must be emphasised. It may be more economical for woodchip to be delivered directly to the buyer.

Availability of grant funding and support

In England grants from DEFRA are available to assist with the establishment and management of SRC under the Energy Crops Scheme (ECS). The extent of grant funding available is subject to change and should be subject to further investigation. If BBC and MVT are interested in exploring SRC they should consult with DEFRA which could lend support with a more detailed feasibility study, building upon the information presented here.

Conclusion

It is clear that investing in SRC would be a long term investment and any financial return would only come after a minimum of three years with any profit on any initial investment potentially taking longer. If high growth levels are not achieved then harvesting may have to be increased to longer rotations, hence lengthening the period of the financial return and decreasing the overall net additional profit. It has been noted that transportation costs are also critical and it is

important for BBC/MVT to identify a local customer, such as the enabling development scheme. It has also been noted that availability of grant funding to assist with capital set up costs may be critical to ensuring these operations are financially viable and this should be explored further with DEFRA.

BBC and MVT should also review whether land parcels are available that could increase the total SRC yield. Though it should be noted that the physical environmental constraints associated with the BRVP site, such as its heritage, archaeology and biodiversity interest, may limit the available land area suitable for SRC to a level that makes the operation no longer commercially viable. Though financial returns may be relatively low there may be other clear environmental benefits to implementing SRC (notably the low carbon emissions) which may favour this approach. A supplementary source of capital and revenue may involve using the SRC to treat treated effluent from the sewage treatment works (see section 5.12 above)

Project Evaluation: Short Rotation Coppice

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest	√	Compatible
Multi-functionality	√	Energy, water quality, biodiversity
Accessibility		
Promoting Sport & Recreation		
Environmental Sustainability	√	Low carbon, cleaner water
Financial Sustainability	√	Income stream
Enhancing Existing Value		
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

Assessment Factors	Costs / Revenues	Notes & Assumptions
Estimated capital set up costs + ongoing costs (maintenance, harvest, 'local' transportation) - per hectare	£1,800	Based on 'Short Rotation Coppice Willow - Best Practice Guidelines'. http://www.ruralgeneration.com/BEST%20PRACTICE%20GUIDE.pdf -Please note available figures date back to 2007.
Estimated capital set up costs + ongoing costs as above - for 80 hectares	£144,000	
Estimated economic yield per hectare (each 3 year period)	£1,116 (£372 x3)	Assumes £31 per odt/ha . Source: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/288738/0088342.pdf -Note – assumes power station is fairly close to SRC crop. -Assumes 12 odt/ha yield. -Assumes 3 yearly harvesting cycle
Estimated economic yield per hectare (for 30 years)	£11,116	-Assumes a total of 10 x 3 year harvesting cycles.
Estimated yield for 80 hectares (each 3 year period)	£89,280	
Estimated economic yield for 80 hectares (for 30 years)	£892,800	-Note that this would equal the net profit if total capital set up costs are funded by grant.
Potential net additional profit over 30 years (for 80 hectares)	£748,800	Assumes today's prices. Does not factor in inflation or tax. Likely to climb in line with oil prices.

The calculations in the table assume a high yield of 12 odt/ha. The lower end of the productivity range is 7 odt/ha and this would yield £436,800 in total over the 30 year cycle for 80 hectare site.



SRC being harvested

5.14 Other Low Carbon Energy Generation

In addition to Short-rotation Coppice, there are opportunities to produce low-carbon energy from within the BRVP by generating electricity from micro-hydro turbines, wind turbines and photovoltaics (on buildings or as small-scale ‘farms’). The most promising locations for wind turbine and PV installation are close to the necessary infrastructure and where visual impact is less of a concern, for example by the business park or close to the A421 by-pass. PVs can be fitted to buildings and on ground-mounted arrays.

The Bedford Waterspace: Economic Impact & Opportunities Study published by the Environment Agency (see <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/GEAN1111BVEN-E-E>) indicates that the River Great Ouse offers the possibility of small-scale hydroelectric generation at its weirs and locks, such as the one recently completed at the Boat Slide Weir on Mill Meadows, which has a target power generating capacity of 160

megawatt hours (MWh). The Bedford Waterspace report also notes that elsewhere in the country, British Waterways has formed a partnership with the Small Hydro Company to create 25 schemes on the canal network, generating 210,000 MWh of power and saving 110,000 tonnes of CO₂. The initiative is backed by the Climate Change Ventus Fund, which is targeted at the UK renewable energy sector.

Project Evaluation: Other Low Carbon Energy Generation

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest		
Multi-functionality		
Accessibility		
Promoting Sport & Recreation		
Environmental Sustainability	√	Low carbon energy
Financial Sustainability	√	Income stream
Enhancing Existing Value		
A Functional Floodplain		
Involving People & Partnerships	√	



PVs combined with green roofs as seen here in Basel, Switzerland

5.15 Habitat Network

The conservation and restoration of biodiversity is already at the heart of much of the work which goes on within BRVP and the masterplanning process embraces a landscape-scale approach, with special attention paid to the establishment of ecological networks, through modification to the hydrology, remodelling of landforms, planting, seeding and changes in management.

At the catchment level there are projects to restore wetlands with the Great Fen Project downstream and floodplain forest in the Milton Keynes area. Closer to BRVP, Lafarge, the company responsible for gravel extractions, has prepared plans to restore wetlands all along the Great Ouse Valley as far as Chawston, as quarries are worked out. These restored sites will link with older flooded gravel pits at St. Neots and the Paxton Pits further downstream.

Within BRVP, there is an opportunity to restore floodplain forest within the floodplain, one of the key principles of the BRVP Framework. MVT has undertaken several projects in the Grange Estate designed to restore floodplain forest in the long term including the excavation of back-channels that connect the river with woodland, the thinning of plantations and the planting of native tree species. Although the core habitat of floodplain forest consists of native wet woodland, a wide range of habitats may also occur as part of a mosaic which may incorporate native broadleaved woodland on drier ground, reedswamps, pools, channels, wet grassland and gravel terraces. Together these habitats will create the new landscape at the heart of BRVP and the enhanced setting for other elements.

Existing habitats will form the core areas of the future network, with restored habitat established wherever practicable between the core areas making the landscape more permeable to wildlife, especially less mobile or specialised species. Important core areas of existing habitat may be

found in Fenlake Meadows, Priory Country Park and the Grange Estate.

There are barriers to the movement of wildlife, usually urban or intensively managed areas where the restoration of habitat is not possible. For example BRVP is surrounded and crossed by major roads. The A421 Bedford by-pass acts as a partial barrier, splitting BRVP into western and eastern sections. The by-pass, however is carried over the River Great Ouse and part of the valley on a viaduct and this presents an opportunity to connect the eastern and western parts of the BRVP by establishing high quality floodplain forest habitats on each side of the viaduct. Habitat on the Grange Estate is close by. New habitat to the west will connect with what could become a continuous belt of high quality habitat restored through the 100 Acre site (north of the sewage treatment works), eventually connecting with Priory Country Park and Fenlake Meadows.

There are also opportunities to improve connectivity within Priory Country Park. There are extensive areas of grassland, some of which may be converted to new habitat, through localised relaxation of mowing regimes or planting.

Project Evaluation: Habitat Network

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest	√	
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Forest products, visitors
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	



Wildlife can pass beneath the viaduct that carries the A421 Bedford bypass if suitable habitat is created on each flank



Recently completed river backwaters on the Grange Estate

Yellow denotes ecological spine of proposed floodplain forest habitats. As they mature, projects undertaken within this corridor will have the effect of connecting existing high quality habitat within BRVP.

The creation and restoration of habitat however, must not be confined to this narrow corridor - there will be other opportunities associated with, for example, the proposed Elstow Brook re-alignment and watersports lake and improvements to Fenlake Meadows and elsewhere.

5.16 Volunteer Service

MVT, BBC and partners already work successfully with volunteers. Volunteer work can involve wardening, practical conservation work, survey and monitoring. There may also be opportunities for internships to give valuable experience to students and recently qualified professionals looking for experience. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a volunteer corp that identifies itself with the whole of the BRVP. It is likely that the number of active volunteers will continue to grow and this may necessitate some adjustments in the way that employed staff work, so that more time is spent supporting, training and supervising the work of volunteers. Discussions should take place between MVT, BBC and partners (including the Wildlife Trust, the RSPB local group, the Blunham & District Angling Club and others, as appropriate), to explore the possibility of joint work parties and web-based bulletin board to exchange information. Volunteers could also have a significant role to play in the successful development and delivery of a number of the proposed projects in this plan and their ongoing management/ maintenance.

Project Evaluation: Volunteer Service

BRVP Key Principle	Addressed?	Remarks
Place Making	√	
Creating Floodplain Forest	√	
Multi-functionality	√	
Accessibility	√	
Promoting Sport & Recreation	√	
Environmental Sustainability	√	
Financial Sustainability	√	Fundraising, volunteering
Enhancing Existing Value	√	
A Functional Floodplain	√	
Involving People & Partnerships	√	

6 Next Steps

The masterplan process, through the analysis of constraints and opportunities and key stakeholder consultation and engagement, has enabled the identification of a project options 'long list' (Appendix 2); and through a more detailed assessment and appraisal process, a project short-list (see Section 5) that conforms with the key principles of the BRVP Framework.

Four projects, namely the Cafe & Visitor Centre, Paddle Sports Hub in Priory Country Park, Short-rotation Coppice and Camping & Caravaning Site have been subject to economic appraisal.

BBC will continue to promote the development of BRVP, working with MVT and other partners and stakeholders, including local communities, landowners, businesses and government agencies. The information contained in this plan will be used by BBC and MVT to guide further project planning, development and delivery work as opportunities and resources allow.

Appendix 1

INVITED DELEGATES LIST

Bedford River Valley Park Masterplan: Issues and Opportunities Workshop, Wednesday, 14 March, 2012

Organisation	Invitees
Public sector	
Bedford Borough Council:	
- Culture, leisure & sport	Sue Drummond
- Drainage & flood risk	Nicola Wilson
- Economic development	Paul Vann
- Environment and communities, incl. parks and countryside	Steve Tomlin, Joel Carré, Simon Fisher , Ed Burnett, Jon Bishop
- Heritage and archaeology	Vanessa Clarke
- Legal	Nigel Bennett, David Doorne
- Minerals	James Delafield
- Outdoor access and rights of way	Phill Fox
- Planning	Gill Cowie, Sonia Gallaher
- Property	Adrian Piper, Andrew Broadbent
- Portfolio Holders	Cllr Sarah-Jayne Holland, Cllr Michael Headley and Cllr Dough McMurdo
- Ward Members (Kingsbrook, Newnham, Great Barford)	Cllr John Mingay, Cllr Kirsty Adams, Cllr Anita Gerard, Cllr James Saunders, Cllr Carole Ellis and Cllr Stephen Moon
Central Bedfordshire Council	Jonathan Woods, Laura Kitson
Parish Councils (Renhold, Cople, Willington and Cardington)	<i>via parish council clerks</i>
Environment Agency	Ian Hirst, Paul Henderson, Erin Witcomb-Voss
Bedford Group of Drainage Boards	John Oldfield
Voluntary and community sector	
Bedford Borough Local Access Forum	Bob Wallace
Bedford River Users Group	Martyn Pearson
Bedford Rowing Lake CIC	Andy Rowe
BRCC	Cliff Andrews
GOBA	Alistair Reid
Marston Vale Trust	James Russell, Darren Woodward, Nick Webb
Viking Kayak Club	Rob Bates
Wildlife Trust for Beds	John Comont
Bedfordshire Bird Club	<i>via Hon Secretary</i>
Bedfordshire Natural History Society	<i>via Hon Secretary</i>
Private sector	
Anglian Water	
Danish Camp Riverside Visitor Centre	
Priory Marina Cycling	
Lafarge	Tim Deal
The Southill Estate	Mark Egar
BRVP consultancy team	Gary Grant, Lani Leuthvilay, Olaf Bierfreund, Kinga Wec

Appendix 2

BRVP Workshop at Corn Exchange 14 March 2012

Long list of Projects, Comments and Suggestions

Based on writing on Maps and Post-it Notes

Priory Country Park/Western BRVP

1. Improve Priory Country Park heritage education/ heritage walk/ nature walk
2. Interpretation for more recent heritage - mills, power station, railway
3. Education Centre
4. Business Parks big user of PCP
5. Hydropower from weirs
6. Finger Lakes prime wildlife interest
7. Open space can be turned into play areas, maze, mix of open meadows and trees
8. More art? Sculpture trail
9. Remove Oasis Beach Pool (save council £420,000 a year) and make a reservoir
10. Use sluice gates for freestyle kayaking
11. To assist with the WFD looking at a combined canoe and fish pass on the backwaters around the lock
12. Revenue income stream leased moorings
13. Visitor moorings increase
14. Canoe trails
15. Access/egress at Longholme, Duck Mill, Priory, Cardington
16. Create multi-functional site with several specialist interests areas (canoeing, environmental, kayaking)
17. Visitor centre/ cafe
18. Value of Fenlake Meadow LNR as wildlife refuge as PCP wildlife interest has declined due to increasing public pressure .
19. Improve visitor centre as family welcome site. Top priority!
20. Development of education on environmental services. Great opportunities but poor facilities. Could 'marina' businesses income be used? Other sources of investment?
21. Pick up any fall out missed in Bedford Waterspace Study
22. Cross reference to Bedford Waterspace Study to pick up on canoeing/rowing and hub developments.
23. Infrastructure - provide canoe portage - access/egress - moorings
24. Biodiversity opportunity on island (east of Fingers Lake) – Kings Mead. Currently leased to grazier.
25. Flooded discreet island, manage specifically for wildlife, wet woodlands?
26. Reserve services training area at Cardington sluices
27. Investigate potential for secondary visitor hub to serve PCP (at Sluice Bridge entrance)

28. Improvements to slalom. Other use could include freestyle facility, canoe trail. Commercial opportunities (of canoe events) not realised? (Cardington Course)
29. Improve temporary moorings for PCP and surrounding sites (maybe Cardington Spillway area)
30. Open up access to more areas
31. Better links and signage
32. Highlight specific areas: tranquil, wildlife, river, active
33. Visitors' centre upgrade
34. New bridge crossing from northern sliver to neighborhood
35. Link neighbourhood into Riverside Meadows, open up access, link into park
36. Lack of use in open areas. Opportunities for event/play?
37. Include path which connects city area along river to PCP?
38. Footbridge from Fenlake Meadows to PCP?
39. Engage community and link to Fenlake Meadows
40. Fenlake Meadow issues: vandalism, litter, unknown site, not enough signage, not loved
41. Allotments in Fenlake Meadow?
42. Bird watching towers in Fenlake Meadow
43. Signs to Priory industrial estate
44. Dead end river for navigation
45. How do we target other river users?

100-Acre Site/ Central BRVP

46. Hydroelectricity scheme at Castle Mill (northeastern)
47. Additional potential noisy sports area (eastern portion)
48. Manage schedules monuments and archaeology tran adverse effects of increased public access and other proposals
49. Interpretation of heritage assets and improve awareness of the historic landscape
51. Outdoor events, fairs, circus, rallies?
52. Potential for noisy sports, SAM constraints (southern portion)
53. Short crops rotation / treating Anglia water effluence (western portion, north of SWT)
54. River is main navigation corridor for both powered and unpowered craft
55. Potential for proximity to develop circular canoe routes
56. Valve of river corridor as principal wildlife route (sliver of land between River and lake northwest) – and beyond.
57. SAM - Reconstruction of monuments?
58. Quieter area in northern part? Wildlife? Management? Sensitive ecology
59. Bomb Hole fishery managed for junior angling (northeast)
60. Monument land use in eastern triangle, pastures
61. Open up angling potential on whole site
62. Ancient monument crop/service delineation
63. Site Park and Ride parks

64. Augmented reality for monuments
65. Pop up /mobile interpretation containers
66. Restrict noisy activity (motorbikes) in southern triangle along A421? Poor ecology potential
67. Heritage-SAM with rather than ignore
68. Why not reroute Ouse Valley Way?
69. Big Society- Park guides volunteers
70. Hills and areas for biking/sledding etc
71. Detrimental to habitat if link lakes to river
72. Sewage works ruins views and aesthetics - bunds to screen site
73. Wildflower meadows?
74. Car park opportunities
75. Signage on A421
76. Slip road off A421 for cafe and new mini park design for leisure but screen planted
77. Improve views and land near sewage works
78. Smaller circular access routes but not tarmac
79. Grazing
80. River underused
81. Hotels car parks and boat hire
82. Holiday package for river usage ie one pass gets cycle hire and kayak hire etc
83. Cafe opportunities community run?
84. Private sector partnership
85. Forested park/parking/camping/BMX/Mountain bike track/SAM in land adjacent to SWT?
86. Change levels to create hills for mountain bikes or sledding (northeastern triangle)
87. Cyclists too fast, separate users?
88. Skate Park

Octagon Farm Fields/Grange Estate/Dairy Farm/Eastern BRVP

Dairy Farm site

89. Potential further moorings for visitors/leased permanent for income-If any camping fees - double up for river user changing shower facilities
90. Is planned/approved restoration appropriate? Could it be more diverse for wildlife?
91. Improve canoe/boat access and portage (south of Dairy Farm)
92. Glamping/luxury camping, caravan
93. Biodiversity - create protected species 'Havens' (water voles, otter, kingfisher, especially Dairy Farm area/ Begway Brook
94. Legacy feature
95. Access (public access to Dairy Farm)
96. SAM
97. More wetlands both deep water and shallow
98. Circular loops needed

99. Retain bridge
100. River crossing at Danish Camp
101. Opportunities for partnership working with other sites for cycle hire and boat hire, etc
102. BMX/Mountain biking
103. River as barrier
- Octagon Farm Fields
104. Octagon Farm contains part of a larger scheduled monument
105. Management issues and enhancement and interpretation opportunities
106. Camping / caravan potential
107. Inland swimming, canoe polo in collection of ponds?
108. Add path/cycle route linking PCP and the Grange Estate along river (West-East)
109. Links eastwards along R51 to Sandy and Biggleswade
110. R51 - Legal issues need to be sorted
111. Route 51 underfunded
112. Good potential for ecological connectivity along river and lakes
113. Quiet areas with pedestrian access only (lakes and river just north of Octagon Farm building)
114. Angling school of excellence etc (lakes south of A421)
115. Inland beach area
116. Managed wader area for wetlands
117. Car parking (south of A421 near lakes on Octagon Farm land)
118. 'Vantage Points', industrial heritage and educational aspect
119. Hydropower from weir
- Eastern BRVP
120. Income, land use, pedestrian access, more parking, Route 51 Access links, neighboring villages
121. Potential access near Castle Dairy Farm area
122. Mooring, Water Taxi
123. Dog free and Dog Lead areas
124. Off road cycling
125. Access from Willington village
126. BRVP shouldn't become too commercial
127. Changes to restoration schemes mislead locals from original application schemes, etc
128. Infill development not wanted! Need to protect village inner open space (green north of Willington)
129. Camping site in square piece of land south of the Grange Estate?
130. Worried about losing local identity of village
131. BRVP signage needed and site named
132. Reed beds in lake within Grange Estate, enhance and nurture

Appendix 3

Bedford River Valley Park – Project Shortlist April 2012

Project	Locations	Demand (based on public consultation and responses at workshop)	Capital	Revenue	Benefits	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Notes
ACCESS & INTERPRETATION									
Gateway features	Priory, Fenlake, Riverside Meadows, Central Hub, Willington	High	Medium	No	Social, Economic (more footfall)	Feasibility/Installation	Expansion	Renewal	Builds BRVP identity. Wait for BRVP to build momentum?
Heritage & Interpretation trails	Site wide	Specialists	£80,000	No	Social, Economic (Could increase footfall)	Design and early phases	Expansion and Renewal	Expansion and Renewal	Application submitted
Improved and Extended multi-user path network	Site wide	High	Low/Medium	No	Social	Design and early phases	Later phases	Renewal	See plans showing existing and new routes
Café & Visitor Centre	Priory CP	High	Medium	Yes	Social, Economic	Pilot	Expansion	Operation	Phased. Rent based on turnover
ENERGY									
PV	Business Park, PV farms, Buildings	?	Low/Medium	Yes	Economic, Environmental	Installation	Growth	Renewal	Mainly on buildings, small 'farms' possible
Wind	A421, Business Park, Gateway features?	?	Medium	Yes	Economic, Environmental	Feasibility	Construction	Renewal	Small vertical axis turbines may be more acceptable in terms of visual impact
Micro-hydropower	Weirs (West)	?	Medium	Yes	Economic, Environmental	Feasibility	Construction	Renewal	Can be contracted to partner
Short Rotation Coppice	100-acre, Grange Estate?	High	Medium	Yes	Environmental, Economic	Feasibility	Leasing	Lease renewal	Can be contracted to partner. Possible link with STW effluent polishing
Natural play area(s)	Priory CP, Grange Estate	High	Low	No	Social	Design and construction	n/a	Renewal	Will increase footfall for kiosks etc
RECREATION									
Moorings	Priory CP and Willington	High	Low	Yes	Social, Economic	Design and install	Expansion	Renewal	See Water-space strategy.
Canoe access	Priory CP. Willington	High	Low	No	Social	Design and install	Expansion	Renewal	Strong club
Canoeing trails	Site wide (river)	High	Low	Yes	Social	Invite operator to bid	Operation	Expansion	From Priory to Danish Camp and return by boat
Kayak slalom	Priory CP	High	Medium	Yes	Social	Design	Installation	Renewal	Install features. Changing facilities required
Mountain Bike/BMX Facility	Meadow Lane	High	Medium	?	Social	Feasibility	Construction	Renewal	Can be contracted to partner
Inland beach/ swimming lake	New Central Hub	High	Medium	Yes	Social, Economic	Study	Construction	Renewal	Linked to camping/glamping? Can be contracted to partner
Camping/glamping/ caravanning	New Central Hub. Grange Estate, Priory	?	Medium	Yes	Economic	Feasibility	Construction	Renewal	Priory Country Park or Central Hub
ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY									
Habitat Network Plan	Site Wide	Specialists	Low	No	Biodiversity	Study, early phases of habitat restoration	Works	Management	Include site specific issues and guidance
FOOD									
Allotments	Margins	Varies by district	Low	Yes	Social	Consultation and construction	n/a	n/a	Do not progress – wait for demand to emerge
WATER QUALITY									
Treating Anglian Water effluent	100 acre	High	High	Yes	Environmental, Economic	Negotiations/ feasibility	Construction	Operation	Discussions with EA and Anglian Water to be progressed
MAINTENANCE									
Volunteer Ranger Service	Site-wide	High	Low	No	Social, Environmental	Corp. established	Corp. expanded	Corp self organising	Landowners to discuss shared approach

Capital - Low: < £100,000, Medium: £100,000-£500,00, High: > £500,000



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Appendix 2

Bedford River Valley Park Master Plan for Bedford Borough Council Landholdings Consultation Draft May 2013

Report on Public Consultation Results and Council Response

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) is an 868 hectare (2145 acre) multi-functional regional park being developed on land between Bedford and Willington. In 2008, a number of key stakeholders, including the Borough Council - the principal landowner within the Park - published a Framework Plan for the Park, setting out an agreed vision and set of development principles.
- 1.2 In January 2012, the Council, with the support of the Marston Vale Trust, commissioned consultants to develop a master plan for the Council's amenity landholdings within the Park in accordance with the Framework Plan. In May 2013, the Council published a draft of the proposed master plan for public consultation.
- 1.3 The consultation draft plan identified a series of proposed projects to improve public access, promote education and recreation, facilitate water quality improvement, generate power, restore habitats and encourage people to participate in the management of the evolving Park. Subject to its adoption, the Council will use the master plan to engage public, private and voluntary sector partners and the wider community in the delivery of the proposed projects, as resources and opportunities allow. Given the pressure on public finances, the Council will also use the plan to support external funding bids and investment; and to develop viable and sustainable business plans to cover any associated ongoing revenue needs with these projects. Listed below are the proposed key projects as set out in the consultation draft master plan:
 - Gateway features
 - Heritage and interpretation trails
 - Multi-user path network
 - Cafe and visitor centre

- Moorings
- Canoe access and trails
- Paddle sports hub
- Inland beach
- Camping and caravanning
- Natural play facilities
- Polishing of effluent
- Short-rotation coppice
- Other low carbon energy generation
- Habitat network
- Volunteer service

2. Public consultation

- 2.1 The Council's Executive approved the proposed master plan for public consultation in February 2013. The period of public consultation opened on 23 June 2013 and closed on 23 August 2013.
- 2.2 The consultation draft master plan, together with a short summary version, was made available both in hard copy and online formats. A number of organisational stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation plan including:
- Bedford Diversity Network
 - Bedford Group of Drainage Boards
 - Bedford Race Equality Centre
 - Bedford River Users Group
 - Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium
 - Bedfordshire Bird Club
 - Bedfordshire Natural History Society
 - Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)
 - Borough of Bedford Local Access Forum
 - Central Bedfordshire Council

- Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire
- Connolly Foundation
- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA)
- LaFarge/ Hope Construction Materials
- Marston Vale Trust
- Parish Councils
- University of Bedfordshire
- Viking Kayak Club
- Ward Members
- Watersports Lake Consortium
- Wildlife Trust

2.3 The consultation was also promoted via the following methods:

- Paper documents placed at all Borough Libraries and at Borough Hall Reception and the Council Customer Contact Centre.
- News release
- Website
- Twitter

2.4 Consultees were invited to respond either via email, letter, or using the dedicated public or organisational stakeholder response forms (available online and as hard copy). A copy of the dedicated public and organisational stakeholder response forms is included in Appendix A and B respectively.

3. Consultation responses

3.1 The public consultation generated 35 formal representations, of which, 25 were received via the response forms and 10 via letter/email. Responses were received from both individuals including local residents, naturalists and dog walkers; and the following organisational stakeholders:

- Bedford Borough Council (Planning, Property and Heritage)
- Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire
- English Heritage
- GOBA
- Marston Vale Trust
- Sharnbrook Upper School
- The Environment Agency
- The Wildlife Trust
- Viking Kayak Club
- Canoe Trail

- 3.2 A summary analysis of the consultation representations received: a) using the response forms, is included in Appendix C; and b) by written submissions is included in appendix D. In each case, the analysis details the representation, whether or not it was submitted by a private individual or organisation (and if latter, giving the organisation's name) and the Council's response including any recommended amendments to the draft master plan. In overview, the response form results show that there is near universal support from all respondents for each of the proposed projects. Indeed, the only project which generated a substantive negative response, was the proposed camping and caravanning facility, which attracted a response rate split of 7 (30%) 'Against' and 16 (70%) 'For'. From the additional comments submitted against this project in response to question 1b), the main area of concern would appear to be one of potential scale and the associated physical impact on peoples ability to enjoy the park, including increased visual intrusion, litter and vehicle activity.
- 3.3 The Council will ensure that all project proposals are assessed in terms of their sustainability, business viability, compliance with legislation/ policies and impacts (i.e. socio-economic and environmental), and; and have the necessary consents (including planning/ flood defence) and associated mitigation plans in place prior to implementation.

Appendix A: Consultation survey form - public

Bedford River Valley Park Masterplan Consultation

Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire. The responses you provide will be used to help us shape which projects are included for delivery in the final plan, subject to securing necessary opportunities and resources. All responses will be treated in confidence.

Please note the questionnaire is also available to complete online at: www.bedford.gov.uk/brvp

If you're completing this questionnaire in hard copy and run out of space when answering a question, please attach an extra sheet with your name on it.

1. **Using the table below, please indicate whether or not you support each of the proposed masterplan projects?** (please tick one box per row only)
(NB. Details on each project is included in the draft masterplan and supporting public summary document)

<u>Project Title</u>	Yes	No
Access improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New café and visitor centre in Priory Country Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
River moorings and access improvements for canoeists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refurbishment of the kayak slalom course in Priory Country Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inland beach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camping and caravanning site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural play facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sewage effluent treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short rotation coppice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low carbon energy generation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Habitat network improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer service development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For each of the proposed projects where you have ticked 'No', please provide a brief explanation of your reason why you don't support it.

(Please add further rows as required on a separate sheet)

Project Title:

Brief reason:

Project Title:

Brief reason:

Project Title:

Brief reason:

2. Are there any other projects which you'd like to propose for consideration for inclusion in the masterplan? (please write in)

3. Are you interested in helping the Council to take forward any of the proposed projects listed in Q1 and Q2 above? (please tick one box only)

Yes No

For each project that you're interested in helping to take forward, please explain below how/ in what way?

Project Title:
 How/ in what way you propose to help:

Project Title:
 How/ in what way you propose to help:

Project Title:
 How/ in what way you propose to help:

4. Are you interested in helping as a volunteer with the management and/or promotion of BRVP? (please tick one box only)

Yes No

5. Using the table below, please indicate which volunteering opportunities you'd be interested in helping with at BRVP? (please tick one box per row only) (NB. No previous skills/ experience necessary as full training and support provided)

<u>Volunteering Opportunities</u>	Yes	No
Litter picking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife conservation works eg. willow coppicing, tree planting, scrub management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access works eg. path repairs, waymarking and signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Path monitoring - keeping an eye on the path network/ reporting issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife survey/ monitoring - seasonal species surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor survey/ monitoring - annual questionnaire surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guided walks eg. lead wildlife or historical themed group walks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing and promotion, eg. website/ fliers/ leaflets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NB. If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the opportunities above, please include your contact details in the space provided below, so we can add them to our volunteer database and send you further details on the volunteering opportunities you expressed an interest in.

Name:

Address:

Email:

Tel:

- 6. As a public body we have a legal duty to ensure that what we do does not discriminate against certain protected groups. The protected characteristics are: gender; age; ethnicity; disability; faith / religion; sexual preference; gender reassignment; and pregnancy.**

Please tell us if you believe that any of the issues addressed in this questionnaire could have an adverse impact on any of these groups, or if you feel we could do anything to ensure discrimination does not take place. (please write in)

About You

The following information is for our records, and aims to ensure that we listen to the views of all sectors of our community. It will help us understand responses in greater detail by seeing 'who thinks what'. Like the rest of the form, all the questions are optional and any responses received will be treated in confidence

- 7. Gender** (please tick one box only)

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

- 8. If female, are you currently pregnant?** (please tick one box only)

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

- 9. Is your present gender the one you were assigned at birth?** (please tick one box only)

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

- 10. What is your age?** (please tick one box only)

Under 18

25 - 34

45 - 54

65 +

18 - 24

35 - 44

55 - 64

Prefer not to say

11. Do you have any of the following conditions? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A sensory disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other long term condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A mental health condition | | |

12. What is your Ethnic Group? (please tick one box only)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE English / Welsh/ Scottish / Northern Irish / British | <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED White & Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED Other (please write in) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE Gypsy or Irish Traveller | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE Other (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Bangladeshi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH African | <input type="checkbox"/> CHINESE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH Other (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Other (please write in) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED White & Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> ARAB |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED White & Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (please write in) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

13. Which of the following best describes your religion or belief? (please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> No religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Please specify 'other'

14. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual | <input type="checkbox"/> Gay woman/Lesbian | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay man | <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual/Straight | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.

**Please now send your completed form to:
Consulting Bedford,
Freepost ANG5840,
Bedford,
MK40 1ZD**

Please note the consultation closes on **9th August 2013**

Data Protection Act 1998

Please note that the information supplied on this form will be held and/or computerised by Bedford Borough Council and the Consultation Team for the purpose of this consultation and unless otherwise stated. The information collected may be disclosed to officers and members of the Council involved in this consultation. Responses received may be published, but no individual personal details will be disclosed under these circumstances.

Your Voice, Your Views

Appendix B:
Consultation survey form – organisational stakeholders

Bedford River Valley Park Masterplan Consultation

Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire. The responses you provide will be used to help us shape which projects are included for delivery in the final plan, subject to securing necessary opportunities and resources. All responses will be treated in confidence.

Please note the questionnaire is also available to complete online at: www.bedford.gov.uk/brvp

If you're completing this questionnaire in hard copy and run out of space when answering a question, please attach an extra sheet with your name on it.

1. **Using the table below, please indicate whether or not you support each of the proposed masterplan projects?** (please tick one box per row only)
(NB. Details on each project is included in the draft masterplan and supporting public summary document)

<u>Project Title</u>	Yes	No
Access improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New café and visitor centre in Priory Country Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
River moorings and access improvements for canoeists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refurbishment of the kayak slalom course in Priory Country Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inland beach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camping and caravanning site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural play facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sewage effluent treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short rotation coppice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low carbon energy generation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Habitat network improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer service development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For each of the proposed projects where you have ticked 'No', please provide a brief explanation of your reason why you don't support it.

(Please add further rows as required on a separate sheet)

Project Title:
Brief reason:

Project Title:
Brief reason:

Project Title:
Brief reason:

2. Are there any other projects which you'd like to propose for consideration for inclusion in the masterplan? (please write in)

3. Are you interested in helping the Council to take forward any of the proposed projects listed in Q1 and Q2 above? (please tick one box only)

Yes No

For each project that you're interested in helping to take forward, please explain below how/ in what way?

Project Title:
 How/ in what way you propose to help:

Project Title:
 How/ in what way you propose to help:

Project Title:
 How/ in what way you propose to help:

4. Are you interested in helping as a volunteer with the management and/or promotion of BRVP? (please tick one box only)

Yes No

5. Using the table below, please indicate which volunteering opportunities you'd be interested in helping with at BRVP? (please tick one box per row only) (NB. No previous skills/ experience necessary as full training and support provided)

<u>Volunteering Opportunities</u>	Yes	No
Litter picking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife conservation works eg. willow coppicing, tree planting, scrub management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access works eg. path repairs, waymarking and signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Path monitoring - keeping an eye on the path network/ reporting issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife survey/ monitoring - seasonal species surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor survey/ monitoring - annual questionnaire surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guided walks eg. lead wildlife or historical themed group walks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing and promotion, eg. website/ fliers/ leaflets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NB. If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the opportunities above, please include your contact details in the space provided below, so we can add them to our volunteer database and send you further details on the volunteering opportunities you expressed an interest in.

Name:

Address:

Email:

Tel:

- 6. As a public body we have a legal duty to ensure that what we do does not discriminate against certain protected groups. The protected characteristics are: gender; age; ethnicity; disability; faith / religion; sexual preference; gender reassignment; and pregnancy.**

Please tell us if you believe that any of the issues addressed in this questionnaire could have an adverse impact on any of these groups, or if you feel we could do anything to ensure discrimination does not take place. (please write in)

About You

The following information is for our records, and aims to ensure that we listen to the views of all sectors of our community. It will help us understand responses in greater detail by seeing 'who thinks what'. Like the rest of the form, all the questions are optional and any responses received will be treated in confidence

- 7. Gender** (please tick one box only)

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

- 8. If female, are you currently pregnant?** (please tick one box only)

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

- 9. Is your present gender the one you were assigned at birth?** (please tick one box only)

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

- 10. What is your age?** (please tick one box only)

Under 18

25 - 34

45 - 54

65 +

18 - 24

35 - 44

55 - 64

Prefer not to say

11. Do you have any of the following conditions? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A physical disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A sensory disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other long term condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A mental health condition | | |

12. What is your Ethnic Group? (please tick one box only)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE English / Welsh/ Scottish / Northern Irish / British | <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED White & Asian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED Other (please write in) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE Gypsy or Irish Traveller | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE Other (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Bangladeshi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH African | <input type="checkbox"/> CHINESE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH Other (please write in) | <input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN Other (please write in) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED White & Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> ARAB |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MIXED White & Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (please write in) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

13. Which of the following best describes your religion or belief? (please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> No religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Please specify 'other'

14. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual | <input type="checkbox"/> Gay woman/Lesbian | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay man | <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual/Straight | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.

**Please now send your completed form to:
Consulting Bedford,
Freepost ANG5840,
Bedford,
MK40 1ZD**

Please note the consultation closes on **9th August 2013**

Data Protection Act 1998

Please note that the information supplied on this form will be held and/or computerised by Bedford Borough Council and the Consultation Team for the purpose of this consultation and unless otherwise stated. The information collected may be disclosed to officers and members of the Council involved in this consultation. Responses received may be published, but no individual personal details will be disclosed under these circumstances.

Your Voice, Your Views

Appendix C: Analysis of response form submissions

Note: The following results are taken from the 25 response forms received during the public consultation process.

Q1a) Using the table below, please indicate whether or not you support each of the proposed masterplan projects?

NB. Details on each project is included in the draft masterplan and supporting public summary document. The section references included below correspond with the relevant sections of the draft masterplan.

	Yes	No	Total
Gateway Features (Section 5.2)	16	3	19
Heritage & Interpretation Trails (Section 5.3)	19	2	21
Multi - user Path Network (Section 5.4)	21	2	23
Cafe & Visitor Centre (Section 5.5)	19	1	20
Moorings (Section 5.6)	19	0	19
Canoe Access and Trails (Section 5.7)	24	0	24
Paddle Sports Hub (Section 5.8)	21	2	23
Inland Beach (Section 5.9)	21	3	24
Camping & Caravanning (Section 5.10)	16	7	23
Natural Play Facilities (Section 5.11)	22	0	22
Polishing of Effluent (Section 5.12)	20	0	20
Short - rotation Coppice (Section 5.13)	19	1	20
Other Low Carbon Energy Generation (Section 5.14)	17	2	19
Habitat Network (Section 5.15)	19	0	19
Volunteer Service (Section 5.16)	21	0	21

Q1b) For each of the proposed projects where you have ticked 'No', please provide a brief explanation of your reason why you don't support it.

Note:

[1] Council's response includes any recommended amendments to the draft strategy. **Recommended amendments to draft Masterplan are shown in bold text.**

[2] Organisational entries listed in alphabetical order, followed by the individual (anonymous) entries.

Organisation [1]/ individual	Consultee response	Council response/ recommendation [2]
Wildlife Trust	The Wildlife Trust would only have a formal view on projects in so far as they may have an impact on biodiversity. We would expect all these projects to be associated with an appropriate assessment of any impacts. Where those impacts are negative we would expect appropriate mitigation and if necessary compensation measures. Our expectation is that many of these projects will either be neutral, or if well planned, may be beneficial to biodiversity and may make wildlife more accessible to the public. It's interesting to note that many of those responding to earlier consultation wished for quiet enjoyment of wildlife and landscape. "Space to walk and roam" and "haven for wildlife" were second only to rowing and watersports.	Noted
Individual	5.10 - Best left to the private sector with appropriate planning controls 5.13 & 5.14 - (a) Interfere with natural habitat (b) Focus in energy generation should be on delivering secure supplies of energy at the lowest cost.	Provision of any dedicated camping and caravanning facility would require planning consent and external investment. To bring this facility forward, Council would market licence/ lease investment opportunity and associated specification. Specification to include location, size,

		<p>highway access and any associated operating constraints/ conditions.</p> <p>All proposals would be required to demonstrate sustainable business case, including impact assessment; and where appropriate planning/ flood defence consent; and to mitigate any identified negative impacts/ risks (and if necessary agree compensation measures).</p>
Individual	<p>No objection to a "low key/low cost" camping site, but a full scale caravan site with its attendant infrastructure would be inappropriate and visually intrusive. BVRP should concentrate on providing amenities for local people. A low carbon energy project would be a distraction from the aim of the project, which is already very ambitious.</p>	<p>Noted. All proposals would be required to demonstrate sustainable business case, including impact assessment; and where appropriate planning/ flood defence consent; and to mitigate any identified negative impacts/ risks (and if necessary agree compensation measures).</p>
Individual	<p>I am a horse and carriage driver and want a circular route to be able to exercise my pony and carriage. Bedfordshire, Bucks and Herts. has a thriving British Driving Society club of approx 300 who are all looking for suitable off road routes. Bedfordshire offers nothing at this time. Many counties are opening up tracks and byways to assist, eg. the Lindsay trail in Lincs. (Google it). Everything appears to be 'cyclist driven' with no consideration for other hobbies.</p>	<p>Noted. Council will assess feasibility of accommodating viable carriage driving facility within BRVP. In addition, Council will pursue opportunities to work with Local Access Forum to increase carriage access to the Borough's Byways network (c34 kms).</p>
Individual	<p>As a dog walker, I find the project very exciting, but I am worried that if the paths become more 'multi-user' the park will</p>	<p>Noted. Council fully supports responsible dog access to all of its</p>

	<p>become yet ANOTHER open space where we are unable to walk comfortably with our dogs off lead. If canoe-ists and mountain bikers and children get there own specified areas, why can't us dog walkers have an enclosed field to exercise and socialise our dogs? The introduction of camping and caravanning could increase litter and encourage illegal travellers' to stay there.</p>	<p>parks and amenity areas in accordance with recently adopted Dog Control Orders (DCOs). Under DCOs, dogs can be exercised off the lead (provided they are under control) in all the Borough's parks and amenity areas. However, when directed so by an authorised officer, owners must put their dog on a lead in such areas. Dogs are not allowed access to Council play areas and must be kept on a lead when in Council cemeteries.</p> <p>Any caravan and camping facility would be managed in accordance with agreed terms and conditions to mitigate any negative impacts/ risks, including associated litter and unauthorised usage (and if necessary agree compensation measures)</p>
<p>Individual</p>	<p>The park is an area that provides lots of leisure opportunities in a relaxed environment. I am concerned that a beach and camping and caravanning facilities will make it a more commercial operation and change its character for the worse.</p>	<p>Noted. Provision of any dedicated camping and caravanning or organised beach facility would require planning consent and external investment. To bring such facilities forward, Council would market licence/ lease investment opportunity and associated specification. Specification to include location, size, highway access and any associated operating constraints/ conditions.</p>

		All proposals would be required to demonstrate sustainable business case, including impact assessment; and where appropriate planning/ flood defence consent; and to mitigate any identified negative impacts/ risks (and if necessary agree compensation measures).
Individual	Regarding the caravanning and camping proposal I suggest you look at the Caravan Club site at Ferry Meadows, Peterborough, in order to understand the potential of this kind of facility in Bedford. The Caravan Club operate the site all year round and it is a very popular site. There is nothing like this in Bedford or Bedfordshire. A site developed in conjunction with the Caravan Club has huge potential. Bedford is just waiting to be developed as a tourist location but sadly it has never been followed up. It can be compared with Stratford on Avon. Go and see what they do and then draw a comparison with what Bedford has to offer the tourist and family holidaymaker. Their main draw is William Shakespeare and the River Avon. Bedford has John Bunyan and a far superior embankment on the River Great Ouse. A Caravan Club site at Priory Marina has everything going for it to attract visitors all year round. It has the Priory Country Park itself, a cycle route, a supermarket, Oasis fun pool, multi screen cinema, restaurants, sailing centre, cycle hire, marina, the Embankment and town centre all within walking distance. These are all features that exist already and do not include those to be developed within this plan. Bedford has so much to offer so lets advertise it and encourage people to visit.	Noted.
Individual	Primarily because, as far as I can see, there have been no	Noted. All proposals would be

	<p>environmental impact assessments (EIAs) undertaken of these projects. I appreciate that there also do not appear to be any EIAs for the projects I have "supported" - but these are ones where similar activities are already taking place. The ones I don't support are mostly new. Also, although the plan puts forward budgets for the proposed projects I can see no Cost Benefit Analyses for them. How can you present projects without a CBA? And they have been developed using the "same old/same old" accounting methodologies. Where are the natural and water accounting frameworks (e.g. SEEA - the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounts) that could have been used to assess the environmental impacts of these projects? For example, has anyone undertaken an environmental assessment of the increased carbon emissions/footprints of x number of cars, pulling caravans y number of miles to a new caravan site at the Marina? Without this sort of background information being undertaken how can you state that the BRVP plan has been considered and developed in a sustainable way - because in my opinion, without full EIAs for every project it can't have been. This major gap indicates to me three things: a) that all the "sustainable" buzzwords used in the report are greenwash; b) that the report has not been developed by people who actually know what they're doing with regard to climate changing environmental impacts and or c) that the figures have been manipulated to support decisions that have already been taken, for projects that the powers that be want to see developed. It also makes me wonder whether the BBC really cares about the environment. Finally, I don't support the indicated projects because I cannot see how they will not negatively impact on the key things that your own surveys (2006/2007) state that people seek from the BRVP - namely "quiet enjoyment of the landscape and its wildlife" (BRVP</p>	<p>required to demonstrate sustainable business case, including impact assessment (including EIA where required); and where appropriate planning/ flood defence consent; and to mitigate any identified negative impacts/ risks (and if necessary agree compensation measures).</p>
--	--	---

	Masterplan, pp4). To me, if this is what the majority of people want the plan currently doesn't "prove" that it will be provided.	
Individual	Seemingly no environmental impact assessments done on them - also will negatively impact on the quiet enjoyment of the current landscape and wildlife	Noted. All proposals would be required to demonstrate sustainable business case, including impact assessment (including EIA where required); and where appropriate planning/ flood defence consent; and to mitigate any identified negative impacts/ risks (and if necessary agree compensation measures).
Individual	I am not against improving the visitor centre so community groups can continue to use as a venue but there are already refreshments available at Priory Marina so I'm against the café. The amount of litter left blowing about would make the place unattractive - it's bad enough when you go on a summer evening and people bring out and leave pint glasses etc. Camping and caravanning in the proposed location would spoil the beautiful ruralness, tranquility and biodiversity of the meadows there (I? have seen orchids etc)	<p>Although the Priory Marina Beefeater serves refreshments and food, the Council believes there is latest demand from existing park visitors for a café associated with the visitor centre overlooking the lake; and will be tendering for a mobile café service early in 2014.</p> <p>Provision of any dedicated camping and caravanning facility would require planning consent and external investment. To bring this facility forward, Council would market licence/ lease investment opportunity and associated specification. Specification to include location, size, highway access and any associated operating constraints/ conditions.</p>

		All proposals would be required to demonstrate sustainable business case, including impact assessment; and where appropriate planning/ flood defence consent; and to mitigate any identified negative impacts/ risks (and if necessary agree compensation measures).

Q2a) Are you interested in working with us to help take forward any of the proposed projects?

Yes	8
No	14
Total	22

Q2b) If yes, please use the space below to describe how you feel you could help us?

Organisation [2]/ individual	Consultee response	Council response/ recommendation [1]
Canoe Trail	We already operate an existing canoe, kayak and stand up paddle board on the River Great Ouse already. It is called www.canoetrail.co.uk and we get visitors from as far afield as London and even overseas on a regular basis. This summer we have experienced unprecedented booking levels and typically operate between Bromham and Bedford and then Bedford to Great Barford and then Great Barford to St Neots We have a few people that chose to camp at St Neots overnight. We have a number of different formats; 1/2 day canoe, kayak and stand up paddle board hire full day canoe, kayak and stand up paddle board hire kayak, canoe and stand up paddle board tuition courses and tuition guided canoe and kayak tours Group activities and team	Noted

	<p>building There are various ways in which we can help. I complete adventures and outdoor activities all over the world and consequently can help with: Media coverage in outdoor publications including Adventure Travel, Huffington Post , Outdoor Times, Bike Magic, Outdoor Adventure Guide Speaking at national events including the Outdoor Show, Adventure Travel Show and London Boat Show Working as a TV presenter for Visit Britain Activities Other links to outdoor activities and media</p>	
GOBA	Through promotion to all of Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA) membership.	Noted
Sharnbrook Upper School	I currently work at Sharnbrook Upper School where we have a strong outdoor education department. I would really like to see the development of canoe trails and could offer expertise and equipment to develop these. It would be great to have a riverside campsite or even just a designated area for wild camping. I would also like to see the continued development of the slalom course so it is more usable for schools. We have a fantastic resource let's use it more!!	Noted
The Wildlife Trust	The Wildlife Trust, in addition to having specialist expertise in Wildlife Conservation, Environmental Education and Community Involvement, also operates through a large network of volunteers across three Counties. We are interested in exploring the scope for environmental education and for developing the wildlife potential of some of the core areas of ecological value which will contribute to the habitat network which should permeate the whole area. Input could be from both staff and expert or trained volunteers	Noted

Individual	I could drive the routes for suitability and width and restrictions.	Noted – will invite to register on Council Community Volunteering database
Individual	Publicity, leaflet distribution, test walking the path, being a volunteer 'warden' notifying the council of any unsocial activity or more positively any interesting ecological events such as a new patch of orchids.	Noted – will invite to register on Council Community Volunteering database
Individual	I can help with ideas and ways to get this off the ground in particular the camping and caravanning facility. However I am a 'can do' type of person and get very frustrated with people who put up barriers and not prepared to make things happen.	Noted – will invite to register on Council Community Volunteering database
Individual	I'm very impressed with the focus on watersports; particularly inland beach & canoe/kayak. Also the Watersports Lake	Noted – will invite to register on Council Community Volunteering database

Q3. Are there any other projects which you'd like to propose for consideration for inclusion in the masterplan?

Organisation [2]/ individual	Consultee response	Council response/ recommendation [1]
Canoe Trail	Developed business plans for activity hubs at Rutland Water when I worked for Anglian Water. Developed an international destination marketing campaign for New York State from Niagara Falls to the Statue of Liberty www.thespareseat.com - it won an international travel marketing award beating Saatchi	Noted

Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA)	GOBA has noticed you still quote our moorings, which is fine, but would like to see BBC offering further moorings whether to us or free to boaters when visiting Bedford, especially where the new riverside development will be. We could not find that mentioned in the report.	Council feels this is already reasonably addressed in master plan (s 5.6), which concludes by affirming that both the Council and Marston Vale Trust are willing to consider proposals for new moorings or mooring improvements, which conform with the Bedford Waterspace Study within BRVP.
Sharnbrook Upper School	Offer come and try it days on the canoe trail and at the slalom course.	Noted
The Wildlife Trust	At present the volunteering project in the document is not well formed and we would be interested in discussing how this might expand in both size and scope.	Noted. Council welcomes opportunity of discussing this project proposal further with Wildlife Trust and other potential stakeholders
Individual	Artificial Surf generator in one of the lakes, would make a good attraction to Bedford making it the inland surf hub for central Britain, would support local sports clubs such as canoeing and windsurfing that could use the facility and would draw in business from all around the country.	Council is dependent on securing an external partner to assess feasibility, and subject to that, to develop and implement project plan and associated investment, sustainable business case, planning and other such consent requirements
Individual	Don't make staff at priory redundant! They are a valuable resource!	Staff been appointed to new Green Space Officer posts serving urban and rural sites within wider restructured Parks and Countryside and Grounds Maintenance service. Wider

		restructuring required to deliver cost savings and provide 'fit for purpose' and resilient service
Individual	In view of the declining British butterfly population, I would like to propose a butterfly conservation area, with appropriate habitats to provide feeding for caterpillars and butterflies.	Noted. Council will work with Bedfordshire Natural History Society, Wildlife Trust and other relevant stakeholders to pursue habitat conservation and enhancement opportunities for range of wildlife within BRVP, including butterflies
Individual	Carriage driven routes. Safe parking for horseboxes and trailers, for riders and drivers	Noted. Council will assess feasibility of accommodating viable carriage driving facility within BRVP. In addition, Council will pursue opportunities to work with Local Access Forum to increase carriage access to the Borough's Byways network (c34 kms).
Individual	As previously commented, a fully enclosed field for dog walkers to exercise and socialise as it seems all other activity groups are specifically catered for...but not us!	Noted. Council feels that the needs of dog walkers are already reasonably catered for, given that dogs can be exercised off the lead in all of its c600 hectares of parks and amenity areas, including Priory Country Park, in accordance with recently adopted Dog Control Orders (DCOs). Dogs are also already able to use the existing multi-user access network within BRVP and the wider 900km rights of

		way network within the Borough.
Individual	As a fitness professional, I would like to see the inclusion of a Fitness Trail within the park. I have recently visited the Moors Valley Country Park in Dorset (see www.moors-valley.co.uk) which includes a 10 station running & fitness trail - it has been incredibly well thought out and is an excellent addition to what is already a fantastic community resource (I would strongly recommend that the people at BBC involved in setting up the Bedford River Valley Park, visit Moors Valley to see a really great country park in operation - Moors Valley is extremely well used by local people and tourists alike and brings in valuable income to the area). At a time when both adult & child obesity is on the increase, anything which can encourage people to become more active (without the need to spend large amounts of money), has got to be a good thing. Also the inclusion of a children's adventure playground or adventure trail would be worth consideration.	Noted. The Council and its delivery partners will be encouraged to investigate examples of good service practice/ ideas from elsewhere, as part of their project development planning.
Individual	The provision of another cafe along the embankment where people can just pop in for a tea/coffee and snack. The cafe kiosk in Russell Park is good but sadly the council will not allow the owner to advertise its existence along the Embankment.	The Embankment is outside the designated geographical scope of BRVP. The terms and conditions of the licence for The Kiosk, Russell Park, allows for reasonable promotion of the facility (subject to prior approval by the Council)
Individual	No, as I am one of the people who seek "quiet enjoyment of the landscape and its wildlife" and my perception of "other projects" is that they will impact negatively on the landscape and its wildlife. For example, where are the calculations on	Noted. Council will ensure that all proposed projects comply with legislation and policies and include assessments of associated

	increasing human activity in "other projects" on the numbers of otters, kingfishers, water voles, spined loach and bullheads? On other measures of biodiversity? With regard to working with you or volunteering I would be happy to, once the council has developed truly green, integrated policies across all its spheres of activity, rather than paying lip service to the idea, which is my perception at the moment.	development impacts. Where those impacts are negative, Council would expect appropriate mitigation and if necessary compensation measures. Council's expectation is that many of these projects will either be impact neutral or, where opportunities allow, beneficial to biodiversity and the public enjoyment of it.
Individual	Most projects I believe will negatively impact on biodiversity, global greenhouse gas emissions and locally endangered species, so basically NO	Noted, see comments above re. biodiversity and sustainability
Individual	Planting of native edible hedgerows for foraging, and / or community orchard	Noted

Q4a) Are you interested in helping us as a volunteer with the management and/or promotion of Bedford River Valley Park?

Yes	9
No	13
Total	22

Q4b) Please indicate which of the volunteering opportunities you'd be interested in helping with?

Marketing and promotion, eg. website/ fliers/ leaflets	5
Guided walks eg. lead wildlife or historical themed group walks	4

Path monitoring - keeping an eye on the path network/ reporting issues	3
Wildlife survey/ monitoring - seasonal species surveys	3
Visitor survey/ monitoring - annual questionnaire surveys	3
Wildlife conservation works eg. willow coppicing, tree planting, scrub management	2
Litter picking	1
Access works eg. path repairs, waymarking and signage	1
Other	2
Number of respondents	9

Q5. Please specify 'other'

Organisation/ individual	Consultee response	Council response/ recommendation
The Wildlife Trust	Environmental education	Noted

Q6a) As a public body we have a legal duty to ensure that what we do does not discriminate against certain protected groups. The protected characteristics are: gender; age; ethnicity; disability; faith / religion; sexual preference; gender reassignment; and pregnancy.

Q6b) Please tell us if you believe that any of the issues addressed in this questionnaire could have an adverse impact on any of these groups, or if you feel we could do anything to ensure discrimination does not take place.

No comments received

Appendix D:
Analysis of other submissions (ie. those made not using response forms)

Organisation [2]/ individual	Consultee response	Council response/ recommendation [1]
Bedford Borough Council (Planning)	<p>Page 6 and 7 – section 2.1 relating to the Bedford Development Framework will need to be updated and details are attached.</p> <p>Page 8 – delete the reference to BDF and replace with development plan. Update that the Green Space Strategy is now adopted</p> <p>Page 9 – Watersports lake and enabling development. Update that the planning permission has now been implemented. Update about the allocation of the enabling development. Update in the minerals section about the restoration as some of this is about to be completed (check with James Delafield at CBC).</p> <p>Page 24 – update about the Heritage Lottery Funding bid that was successful and we have now received the money.</p> <p>Page 30 – improve the map base of the map. Look at using a colour aerial photo.</p> <p>Page 31 - improve the map base of the map. Look at using a colour aerial photo.</p>	<p>Noted. Amend 2.1 in accordance with text changes submitted Planning</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>

	<p>Page 32 – second paragraph, last sentence, there are two ‘would’.</p> <p>Page 34 – take out the paragraph relating to developer contributions as this would be difficult to justify. The project has not been identified in the Infrastructure Project Plan for CIL and due to the nature of the activity being for a commercial venture it is unlikely to get contributions from CIL in the future.</p> <p>Page 40 – second paragraph, last sentence. Should be ‘canoeing’ instead of ‘carnoying’</p> <p>Page 42 - improve the map base of the map. Look at using a colour aerial photo</p> <p>Page 44 – last sentence in section titled demand. Should be ‘development’ instead of ‘developmemt’.</p>	<p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p>
Bedford Borough Council (Heritage)	<p>Page 7 Bedford Development Framework – Needs updating as Allocations and Designations Plan now adopted.</p> <p>Page 9 – Section 2.3 – See above</p> <p>Page 9 – Minerals – believe that LaFarge have now sold their quarries to Hope Construction Materials in this area. Also see Section 3.2, p.17 & section 5.15</p> <p>Page 29, section 5.3 – A grant of £78,900 has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund with £6,000 match-funding provisionally agreed with English Heritage. BBC and MVT are currently working together, along with the appointed heritage interpretation specialists, <i>in</i>-Heritage, on implementation of Phase 1 Heritage</p>	<p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p>
English Heritage	<p>It would be helpful if master plan could include a bit more information on the heritage and interpretation trails than is currently shown in section 5.3 and</p>	<p>As 5.3 relates to a project which is now</p>

	<p>highlight potential links to the wider landscape within and beyond the master plan area. We hope that the interpretation will cover the considerable changes in the area's landscape from the prehistoric to 21st century, with information points located through the park, including the new visitor centre.</p> <p>Section 5.3 currently suggests that the trail would not address the 'multi-functionality' principle from the BRVP Framework. We disagree and consider that the trails could address multiple aspects and not just heritage. Boards could include details of the changing landscape and its archaeological, heritage and biodiversity issues; the preservation of a scheduled monument could provide multiple opportunities to enhance the nature conservation upon and around it; the trail could improve access and has educational and recreational benefits, could provide multiple volunteering opportunities and would be an important part of the 'green infrastructure' of the park.</p> <p>The master plan would also benefit from clarity in terms of how heritage assets will be safeguarded and managed. Section 3.3 does not really discuss opportunities and constraints involved with heritage assets. For example, a key opportunity is achieving better access and understanding of heritage sites, whilst a key 'constraint' is ensuring that such sites are not harmed or damaged. Similarly, while the document refers to the BRVP Framework document from 2008 and its key principles, this master plan would benefit from an overall vision and set of objectives (to include reference to preserving and enhancing heritage assets).</p>	<p>being implemented, following successful HLF bid and with input from English Heritage, don't propose to amend text to provide further detail or 'tick' "multi-functionality" principle in Framework checklist .</p> <p>As this chapter relates to 'Site Constraints and Opportunities' and text for section 3.3 was provided by Council Heritage Officer and follows similar approach to the other asset descriptions within this chapter don't propose to amend to clarify how heritage assets will be safeguarded and managed. Also don't propose developing new vision/ objectives, as feel this is sufficient addressed by adopted</p>
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	<p>All proposed projects (including the trail itself) will need to assess the direct and indirect impact upon heritage assets, including designated assets in the form of listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Archaeological investigations/ impact assessments will also be needed for the non-designated below ground archaeology and impact upon setting should also consider the undesignated features in the landscape. Some explanation of the heritage map on page 19 is needed, particularly with regards to “areas identified for further investigation” (presumably archaeological, but this is not clear).</p> <p>Although English Heritage was invited to attend, and attended, the March 2012 workshop, it is not currently named in Appendix 1, which lists the names of the workshop attendees.</p>	<p>2008 Framework Plan</p> <p>Noted. Amend key legend to Heritage Sites map accordingly.</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p>
<p>Environment Agency</p>	<p>The creation of Bedford River Valley Park offers a good opportunity to enhance the habitat of the River Great Ouse and the surrounding area. The project could contribute towards meeting Water Framework Directive (WFD) targets. A landscape scale habitat creation project such as this can help link habitats and form wildlife corridors and can contribute to Article 10 of the Habitats Directive, which states that wildlife corridor networks should be protected from development, and, where possible, strengthened by or integrated within it. Also the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 109 recognises that the planning system should aim to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible. The master plan has linkages and references back through to the Bedford Waterspace Study, which is welcomed. It is also positive to see the inclusion of the water sports and moorings.</p> <p>Electronic Interactive Interpretation Signage We are exploring outdoor electronic interactive interpretation signage displays at our Denver Complex as part of a HLF grant bid to display electronic information for the Ouse washes area. We would welcome the opportunity to explore similar</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. HLF funded heritage trails project (section 5.3) already</p>

	<p>opportunities elsewhere along the River Ouse and especially adjacent to any new moorings that are created. We recommend that consideration should be given to interactive interpretation to enable people to learn about each others heritage and to have the ability to display a wide variety of materials to different audiences including boaters and paddle-sports enthusiasts.</p> <p>BVRP volunteering scheme We are interested to see if we could benefit from having involvement in the establishment of the BVRP volunteering scheme as stated in section 5.16. We are looking at developing a volunteer programme for Waterways in Anglian Region to help deliver our business priorities and add value to our work in an efficient way. This has taken place very successfully in SE Region and we are looking at replicating this work in our Region and would welcome working with others to achieve this by sharing resources.</p> <p>Flood Risk Any developments within the flood plain or adjacent to main river will require a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and any works in or adjacent to the watercourse will require Flood Defence Consent (FDC).</p> <p>Specific comments on the Masterplan 2.3 Initiatives & Developments: Realignment of Elstow Brook as part of the water sports lake development will provide an opportunity to enhance the habitat of the brook. This could include for example, profiling the banks to benefit wildlife, including a low level berm, allowing the brook to follow a sinuous course, planting suitable aquatic or emergent plant species and appropriate management.</p> <p>3.1 Water and flood: The creation of accessible floodplain forest is welcomed. The creation of the forest can help to manage flood risk and reduce the impacts of water pollution downstream.</p> <p>3.2 Access opportunities should be sought to increase angling availability and to</p>	<p>includes interactive interpretation. Will ensure heritage trails project team is aware of EA interest</p> <p>Noted, will involve EA in any waterway volunteering scheme planning</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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	<p>improve access for anglers where possible.</p> <p>3.5 Biodiversity opportunities should be sought to create and enhance habitats for wildlife. This could include for example, the creation of backwaters and spawning habitat for fish as well as river habitats suitable for otters and water voles. As part of the site management plan the control of mink could be considered to encourage the return of water vole populations.</p> <p>5. Projects: Although not listed as specific projects, many of those listed could benefit wildlife and also attract visitors and involve people and partnerships. Benefits could include angling, bird watching or pond dipping for example.</p> <p>5.6. Moorings: We welcome the inclusion of possible new moorings and improvements as stated in section 5.6.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
Marston Vale Trust	<p>Although much has been done to encourage people to use sustainable transport to visit the BRVP sites that already exist, there are issues with car parking at the eastern end of BRVP and particularly within Willington. Any new project that will potentially increase usage or attract people to locations already lacking in parking capacity should also include an assessment of parking and attract people to locations already lacking in parking capacity should also include an assessment of parking and a way forward to resolve the lack of spaces available.</p>	<p>Noted. Council will ensure that all proposed projects comply with legislation and policies and include assessments of associated development impacts, including parking/ highway access. Where those impacts are negative, Council would expect appropriate mitigation and if necessary compensation measures.</p>
Viking Kayak Club	Summary	

	<p>roundabout), Cardington Lock at Priory CP, Willington just upstream of Danish Camp and ideally at Castle Mill Lock too.</p> <p>Outside of BRVP's designated area but connected to it, and in line with the BBC Waterspace Strategy, it would be ideal if Launch Points were also located at Clapham, Bromham Bridge, Kempston, and Queens Park such that people wanting a longer trip could still canoe downstream (the easiest and most popular direction) and use BRVP as the destination.</p> <p>Portage Points, ie. an easy and safe way to get around or 'portage' the locks along the river. This constitutes a launch platform upstream and downstream, plus accessible paths and gates to enable safe easy passage along the river. Ideally if parking is adjacent, these necessary portage platforms can double up as a Launch Point as above. Portage points should be installed at Bromham Weir, Bromham Bridge, Kempston Weir, Duck Mill, Bedford Lock, at the east end of the Embankment as well some improvements to the existing weir portages downstream of these.</p> <p>Information. Information is necessary online and on the bank. Before the journey, people could pick their route on the BRVP or BBC websites and as part of the journey, they will need directional signage to indicate the correct route and information boards to inform the public about the Canoe Tails.</p> <p>The BRVP should also see itself as a destination site for people canoeing along the Great River Ouse. We would like to see the establishment of the 'Great Ouse Canoe Trail' on a similar basis as above whereby canoeists paddling from say Buckingham could plan to stay over at BRVP's camp site. Examples of best practice are on the River Medway in Kent see www.medwaycanoetrail.couk and on the River Mersey, see www.stockport.gov.uk/2013/2978/8803/12246/canoetrailguide</p> <p>Self evidently, it will be essential that the proposed BRVP camp site will be adjacent to the river to facilitate canoeists, who will of course have to carry</p>	<p>constructed at a number of these locations.</p> <p>Noted. Outside scope of BRVP but picked up in Bedford Waterspace Study</p> <p>Noted. Outside scope of BRVP but picked up in Bedford Waterspace Study</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. Proposed trail outside scope of BRVP</p> <p>Noted</p>
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	<p>everything in their canoes and kayaks including their clothes and camping equipment, food and drink as wells as their canoes paddles etc.</p> <p>The consultation draft is right to point out that there is an excellent opportunity for canoe hire companies to be established to take advantage of these facilities, creating both jobs and another attractive addition to BRVP. Indeed, it will only be when canoe hire becomes more available that these canoe trails will really begin to meet their potential, which would then represent a significant economic benefit for Bedford.</p> <p>Paddlesports Hub Since the publication of the Consultation Draft, things have progressed at Cardington and Canoe England have confirmed that they will fund the slalom course upgrade using the new obstacle system used at the London 2012 white water venue at Lee Valley. Also, the EA have now confirmed their intention to renew the lease and to continue to maintain the sluice gate at the slalom course into the future. This is excellent news and the project is on course for delivery in 2013. Allowing obstacles in the course: The vision for the future is to tap the enormous potential of the site. Built with £273k of public money in 1982, it has sadly not been developed in 30 years of use, mainly because of the existing requirement to remove the obstacles after every use, due to flood management considerations. But these constraints need to change as leaving the obstacles would only reduce capacity slightly, such that it would not be a flood risk to property in the area. Inevitably the current constraint means that users only hire the course for long periods of time, generally a whole weekend or longer. Allowing obstacles to be left in channel is the key to future development, enabling users to turn up and use the course without building it from scratch and having to dismantle it afterwards. With a semi-permanent course, the venue could be used by local schools, for example, for an hour after school on week days, or by commercial coaches (e.g. BBC 's Kempston Outdoor Centre) who could run courses in white water canoeing, creating an economic benefit for Bedford. BBC and BRVP should support this and encourage the EA to expedite this as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly to reflect project developments</p>
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	<p>Facility Building The next key to development will be adding a facility building as the only facility currently is a small storage hut. At the moment there are no toilets, showers etc. on site so weekend users generally need to hire in portaloos. Viking Competition organisers need to own a specially fitted caravan which is only used for event management at Cardington and event catering is managed in a tent with all equipment brought to site. What is needed is a facility building with toilet, showers, changing, a meeting room/race control room overlooking the course, a classroom sized room, a small kitchen, boat and equipment storage and adequate adjacent parking.</p> <p>Adjacent parking The Consultation Draft rather curiously mentioned parking ‘for up to 5 cars’ but it is not clear where this number came from and we would expect the parking arrangements to be on the basis of reasonable need. The main Priory Park southern car park is a quarter of a mile away so it is not reasonable to expect users to carry their equipment (kayaks can be over 20kg) for half a mile, taking some twenty minutes, especially for the shorter user sessions that will expand the usage of the course as explained above.</p> <p>Capital Funding The Consultation Draft rightly states that the above Facility Building and adjacent parking would be a ‘good case for grant funding’ either by Sport England or by others. We envisage that a Partnership Funding model with Sport England as the primary funder backed up by contributions from other bodies, e.g. Canoe England, local corporates and charitable givers would be the most likely scenario. Viking and Canoe England are happy to lead this funding search but we will need the support of BBC and BRVP in doing so.</p> <p>Running costs The Consultation Draft showed a table of revenues and costs which purports to show the projected financial results of the first five years (page 38). This analysis</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Revenue analysis is indicative</p>
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	<p>was not shared with us in advance and we do not believe it is at all representative.</p> <p>The course has been run by volunteers for the last thirty years so to state 'revenues would be insufficient to cover basic staff costs' and that over five years a loss of over £300k would be incurred is entirely groundless and misleading, and should not have appeared in a published document. We hope that the general public or other readers of this document are not influenced by any negative perception created. This is the only major flaw in what is otherwise an excellent document. We would be happy to work with you to rewrite this section to show a more realistic financial presentation.</p> <p>As above (d) we envisage that the facility building would be grant funded and designed to minimise maintenance costs, the site itself is very low operating costs as the river provides all the water by gravity alone, there is no pumping involved and the EA has the responsibility to maintain the sluice gate. The site has therefore very low maintenance and running costs and will continue to be run on a volunteer basis until such time as the revenues grow to the point where volunteer management is no longer sufficient.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, we are not seeking funding from BBC or BRVP for either capital or running costs and the site will continue be run by Canoe England volunteers.</p> <p>Future development As in our 2007 submission to BRVP, we believe that Cardington Sluices (downstream of the lock) represent a possible venue for Freestyle canoeing with minor modifications similar to those being deployed in the slalom course upgrade. This would create another fundable, low-cost attraction that would complement the slalom course and make use of the same proposed facilities.</p> <p>Inland Beach We fully support the Inland Beach initiative and believe that this would represent</p>	<p>only and based on facility being operated intensively using salaried staff rather than volunteers. All projects will be required to demonstrate sustainable business plans (including financial viability), before being able to progress to implementation stage.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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	<p>an ideal environment to enable people to hire Canadian canoes and sit-on-top kayaks for what may be their first experience of canoeing or even boating more generally.</p> <p>Safe & fun learning environment This safe and user friendly environment could lead to a pathway of greater involvement if info was available on site (e.g. info boards, leaflets etc). This could lead on to courses in canoeing or to membership of canoe clubs etc.</p> <p>Location – Priory Lake The Consultation Draft mentions that a beach could form a part of the Willington Watersports Lake which would certainly make sense, and we would support, but it should not be forgotten that there is already a beach at the east end of Priory Lake, adjacent to the bottom of Cardington Slalom course. If a facility building was located there as described above, this could potentially support an Inland Beach/canoe hire initiative earlier than waiting for the Willington Lake to be built. Indeed it would be an ideal use of the Cardington facility building to store canoe and kayaks that could be used on the river and lake as well as the white watercourse.</p> <p>Camping, caravanning facilities We fully support the Camp site initiative, and as stated above under section one, believe this can complement and mutually support the Canoe Trails initiative, and be part of the establishment of a Great Ouse Canoe Trail. Indeed we would like to see some direct linkage of these two initiatives.</p> <p>The Consultation Draft, however, makes no comment as to the location of the campsite within BRVP and as stated above (1), self evidently, it will be essential that the proposed BRVP camp site will be adjacent to the river to facilitate canoeists, who will of course have to carry everything in their canoes and kayaks including their clothes and camping equipment, food and drink as well as their canoes paddles etc.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted, though Priory Lake beach is not designed for swimming. However, it is practical for canoe access.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Location/ design of camp site to be determined as part of the detailed planning stage, based on sustainable business plan, including target</p>
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	<p>We urge BBC/BRVP to link the Campsite and Canoe Trails initiatives so as to maximise the benefits of both.</p> <p>Willington Watersports Lake We support the development of the proposed lake which will be a great attraction and focal point for sporting events and high quality training in Bedford for both rowing and canoeing, as well as potentially triathlon, open water swimming and many other activities.</p> <p>Canoe Sprint The proposed lake is designed to be 2.2km long to meet international rowing standards, but we understand that this may not be achievable, initially at least, due to cost considerations whereas the first 1.2km of the lake would be relatively problem free and less costly. It should be noted that the lake will conform to international competition standard for Canoe Sprint racing, however, as Canoe Sprint as it is raced over distances from 200m up to 1km long.</p> <p>Canoe Sprint (a term that covers both Canoe and Kayak Sprint also) is the Olympic flat water canoeing discipline and has events run over 200m and 1km distances, with solo boats (classified as C1 for canoe, K1 for kayak), two man crews (C2 and K2) and four man crews (C4 and K4). As such there are twelve gold medals available and GB has a good record in sprint including the men's Olympic Champion for 200m K1 at London 2012.</p> <p>As there are relatively few Canoe Sprint venues in the UK, and all National Sprint Regattas currently take place at Nottingham, we believe that the lake would be a valuable resource and attract visitors from around the UK and would provide an opportunity to the Willington Lake to become the southern base for Canoe Sprint competitions.</p> <p>Canoe Polo The Watersports Lake would also be a suitable home for Canoe Polo and could be designed to have a permanent Canoe polo pitch or pitches, each of which</p>	<p>market to be served.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted, Council supports maximising community use/ value of lake</p>
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	<p>would constitute an area (each pitch 35m by 23m) marked out with floating ropes, like swimming pool lane markers, and a pontoon or adjacent bank-side area for referees. This should be close to facilities, changing and parking. If it was close also to the Inland Beach this might also provide spectators with something to watch and help the 'beach vibe'.</p> <p>Canoe hire & lessons Canoe Hire and lessons for beginners could also take place at the lake, again ideally at the Inland Beach as described in the draft. This would be a great introduction in a safe environment for members of the general public to try canoeing.</p> <p>Access to river Consideration should be given to the exact positioning of the lake to allow water based access between the river and the lake by boat. This would facilitate access to land-based lakeside facilities to canoeists and kayakers journeying along the river.</p> <p>Camping We would hope that the placement of a campsite, which we fully support and recommend, would be adjacent to the River Great Ouse but it would be ideal if this could be at a point that is also adjacent to the lake.</p> <p>'Watersports Lake' & equitable use We strongly support the Council and MVT/BRVP's decision to describe the lake as a 'Watersports Lake' rather than let it be defined by one single user group, even if this is likely to be the majority user group, as this is likely to create prejudicial behaviour towards other user groups, or at very least the perception</p>	<p>Lake already has planning consent.</p> <p>Location/ design of camp site to be determined as part of the detailed planning stage, based on sustainable business plan, including target market to be served.</p> <p>Noted. Council supports maximising community use/ value of lake</p>
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	<p>of this, especially over the longer term. It is important to get these things right from the start and to make sure all users and potential users feel they can use the lake equitably.</p> <p>Future Governance. Consideration for this equity issue (e) will need to be given towards any future governance arrangement and it will be important for BBC or BRVP or both to retain an ongoing interest in this. We would suggest some sort of Watersports Lake users charitable trust with BBC/BRVP involvement might be most appropriate.</p> <p>Priory Park as the activity hub of the BRVP We are encouraged to see our 2007 submission “BRVP as a regional centre of excellence for Canoeing and Kayaking” being quoted in the Consultation draft. Many of the initiatives above are already showing considerable progress to this goal and all of the above initiatives complement each other and each increase the potential success of the others.</p> <p>Priory Park has been a great success but does need a new lease of life and we support the new visitor centre and cafe ideas. We would also support focussing more of the Borough’s outdoor activities on this site which would again reinforce and complement the existing strengths.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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Individual	I would just like to say that this proposal is fantastic and I am particularly pleased to see there is a possibility of an inland beach being created. Having visited a beautiful country park in the Cotswolds recently which has an amazing beach area, I am so pleased this is hopefully coming to Bedford.	Noted
Individual	I would like to see an everlasting legacy for the residents of Bedford Borough Council. One that is ‘Green’ and utilises the grassland and wooded areas. My suggestion is for a Green Burial Site. People who want a choice of where they are buried do so as they are more likely to be non-religious and attracted to	Noted. Council is willing to consider uses that are acceptable in policy terms, including

	<p>nature and the natural world. Although the land is reclaimed, this I don't see as a detriment as burying someone is only a means of recycling a body after all. The council have the cemetery on Norse Road a stone's throw away from the Castle Mill part of the Bedford River Valley Park. The cemetery is very urban and bustling at the seams I believe. It is somewhere I am not keen to end my days in. The nearest Green Burial Sites are Keysoe and Olney, not exactly convenient for people to visit from Bedford especially by public transport. The council can also make money from this scheme to aid the taxpayers of the borough, a win-win solution. Think outside the box from solely leisure pursuits and use the land for a good purpose.</p>	<p>Planning, Flood Defence, Environmental Health and consistent with Framework Plan vision/ principles.</p> <p>Council is seeking delivery partners to identify and develop project ideas and secure the necessary consents and investment for them to succeed and be sustainable.</p>
Individual	<p>I would like to suggest that the Planning Group pays a visit to the Stanwick Lakes Country Park just off the A45 between Rushden and Raunds. Here, I think, the Leatherworkers' Guild, have provided some funding, but the Country Park Management also appears to raise funding for the children's area through car park charges. There is also a team of volunteers who have a lot to do with 'making the area work safely for children'. It might be that the visit would suggest innovative ways for developing and maintaining the proposed children's area in the Bedford River Valley Country</p>	Noted
Individual	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At 3.6, I am unclear of lake vehicle access point close enough for disabled access to enable me to put a sprint kayak safely on the lake. 2. At 4.1 Sprint kayaking championships, national and international, regional and local seem not to be considered. I understand a BCU representative was consulted. 	<p>Representation point unclear</p> <p>This section summarises in very broad terms headline results of Framework Plan consultation in 2007</p>

	<p>3. Having walked around priory before the lake was made, after it was made with no other visitors and going there again now and then over the last 43 years, I do feel the wildlife environment is stressed from overuse by dogs. Safeguards should be made to provide non dog areas for wildlife refuges with signs of warnings of fines for breaking these site safeguards.</p> <p>4. Butterfly trails with planting of foliage and habitat to encourage / reintroduction and support for existing species, and new species are low cost and environmentally friendly if they were introduced to the plan.</p> <p>5. At 5.5, revenue from kayaking events could be administered at the visitor centre which already has a department handling fees, so this could be incorporated into that at negligible cost.</p> <p>6. typo at block graph page 38 says “sporce” ?</p> <p>7. At 5.8 typo says “camouing”</p> <p>I do not wish to appear picky but this is supposed to be a professionally implemented project. The draft I have been given to review appears to have lack of administrative care which may call into question content of this document.</p> <p>8. I would propose, make a natural amphitheatre so schools, arts, plays could be performed on warm summer nights, and make an interesting feature for visitors to sit at.</p> <p>9. The footpath under castle viaduct gets cut off by flooding, the footpath needs to be moved closer to end of bridge or raised. Have photos of flood event to prove it. This is access from one of the gateways to the park.</p>	<p>Noted. Opportunity to pursue this through extension of existing Dog Control Orders (subject to public consultation)</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted. Amend accordingly</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Unclear what location is being referred to here</p>
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	<p>10. The sports lake depth should be considered. Too deep and life jackets would have to be worn by sprint kayakers. This may be detrimental to future consideration of use in this activity for both children and adults.</p> <p>11. The sports lake needs tall trees around it to break up the wind. This is extremely important, Thames racing locations, HPP (national water sports centre) suffers a great deal from wind problems disrupting activities.</p> <p>12. Parking at lake should encourage national sprint and rowing possible requirements.</p> <p>13. Sprint kayak competition would bring attention to Bedford and put it on the sports map and if developed to a modern model, could be a preferred and international venue. Consideration to paths along its sides for coaches on bikes should be made.</p> <p>14. I have missed any dog walking restrictions in the document, some restrictions placed at the finger lakes I have seen totally ignored with dogs ploughing through undergrowth and disrupting the habitat and wildlife.</p> <p>15. Camping and toilet facilities at sports lake may be very useful in the short term until further development is made in future years.</p> <p>16. At 5.6 moorings at barns I feel should consider canoeists stopping for meals or overnight if available. This facility could then be put on a national canoe trail, and support local business.</p> <p>17. At all proposed moorings canoe and kayak portages should be incorporated as it has been stated in the draft, that they are very cheap to build.</p> <p>18. I would like to bring the historic Bedford to St. Neots canoe race into consideration and where that could fit in to portage and facility development.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>See response to 3 above</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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	<p>19. Disabled access and the distance between landings at canoe portages are important considerations during any landing developments.</p> <p>20. At 5.6 key principle block, sprint kayaking ticks more boxes such as place marketing, hosting events makes money, kayaking sports and recreation. This seems to have been neglected.</p> <p>21. At 5.8 paddle sports hub statement seems erroneous. I wrote a draft constitution for the Cardington White Water Committee and through my involvement helping them find some of the information stated at this section to be wrong and misleading giving the impression the facility would sustain large annual financial support to maintain. A reappraisal of this section I feel is needed with consultation and approval of interested parties, to enable presenting of a factual analysis and assessment.</p> <p>22. The standing wave at Cardington sluice gates could easily be used as a facility for kayaking and competition. Parking is already there. It would just need a landing built and a wave base fitted to the sluice. It is also excellent for spectator viewing of this activity.</p> <p>23. I would again, reinforce a possible sprint kayaking national event location as the current one at HPP I feel is degraded by it's problems with the wind.</p> <p>24. At 5.9 the inland beach area is not connected to the main river by a landing on the river, lake side for disable access.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Revenue analysis is indicative only and based on facility being operated intensively using salaried staff rather than volunteers. All projects will be required to demonstrate sustainable business plans (including financial viability), before being able to progress to implementation stage.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Representation point unclear</p>

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS
AS SET OUT IN THE
REPORT ARE
ATTACHED**



Bedford River Valley Park

Masterplan for Bedford Borough Council Land Holdings
ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Workshop 14th March 2012
Briefing Note for Participants*



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Fenlake Meadows LNR



01 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide participants in the forthcoming workshop with some background on the Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP), including a review of issues and opportunities. The workshop, to be held on the 14th March, will inform participants of various programmes and initiatives but will be devised primarily for the generation of ideas and suggestions for the future development of the BRVP. There will be a special emphasis on the consideration of options for various sites owned by Bedford Borough Council. For these sites, a team comprised of Gary Grant, URS and Currie & Brown will, in consultation with the client group, draft, refine and issue a masterplan before the end of June 2012. Hard copies of the various maps and plans included in this document will be provided at a larger size for the workshop. An agenda for the workshop will be circulated to participants before the event.

02 BRVP

The 868 hectares BRVP is situated on the eastern edge of Bedford, largely in the flood plain of the Great Ouse. The area is relatively flat and bisected by the A421 Bedford Southern Bypass. The River Great Ouse flows west to east through the site and is fed by a number of tributaries. To the west of the bypass is the popular and well-established Priory Country Park, with the adjacent Fenlake Meadows and various other attractions and businesses. Close to the centre of the site is a sewage treatment plant operated by Anglian Water. The land use to the east of the bypass has dominated by sand and gravel extraction, with a number of water bodies evidence of this, however agriculture and woodland is beginning to change this, with the Grange Estate and adjacent Danish Camp cafe connected to the Country Park by National Cycle Network Route 51. Plans for a rowing lake and associated enabling development in the eastern part of the park are well advanced. Willington, an ancient and attractive village, marks the eastern end of the BRVP.

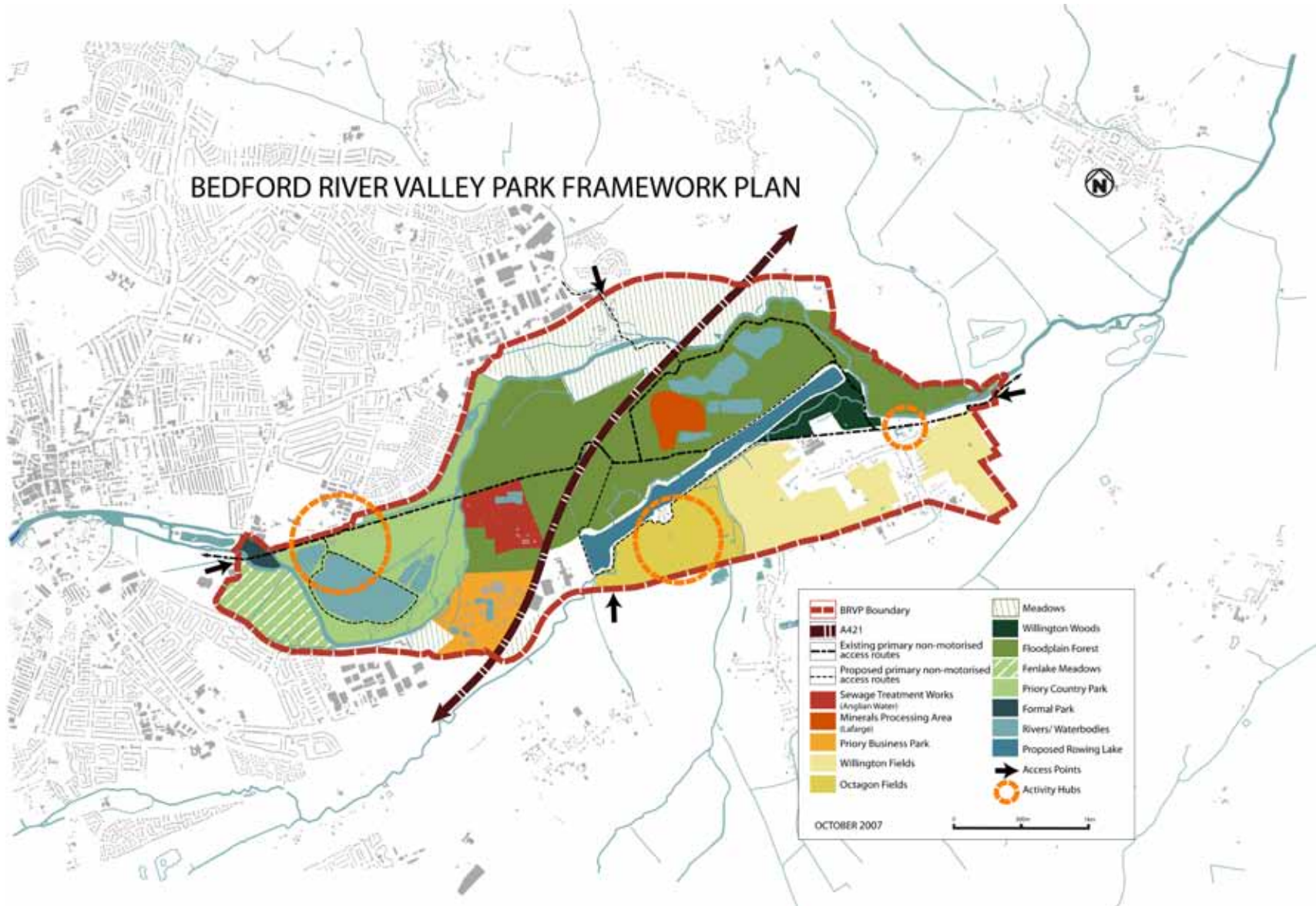
The surface geology of the BRVP area consists of drift deposits of alluvium and valley gravel (see British Geological Survey, Sheet 203, Bedford – 1:63,360). The depth of the superficial deposits, which overlay the Oxford Clay beneath, vary across the site. The site is largely low lying and much of it floodplain (see below) with gentle changes in topography, apart from embankments formed to take the former railway and bypass. There is a notable platform associated with the Anglian Water sewage treatment plant with levels between 25m AOD and 30m AOD. Typically levels across the site vary between 17m AOD and 23.5m AOD in the highest spots on the southern edge of the site.

03 BRVP Framework

All initiatives, interventions and management that occur within the BRVP should take account of the over-arching Framework document and map for the area, which were published and endorsed by the various partners in 2008. The Framework sets out a shared vision for the Bedford River Valley Park and has been designed to guide the detailed planning and design of the park by the many individuals and organisations that will be involved in its delivery. The Framework is not overly prescriptive, and all maps and descriptions are provided as guidance only, with an endorsed set of principles and concepts to guide future work. See <http://www.bedfordriver-valleypark.org/vision.aspx?Id=1> for further information. This masterplanning project will look in more detail at BBC land holdings, most of which are included in an area envisaged to be floodplain forest – a broad category which includes a range of habitats including woodlands, marsh, reedbeds, open water and grasslands.



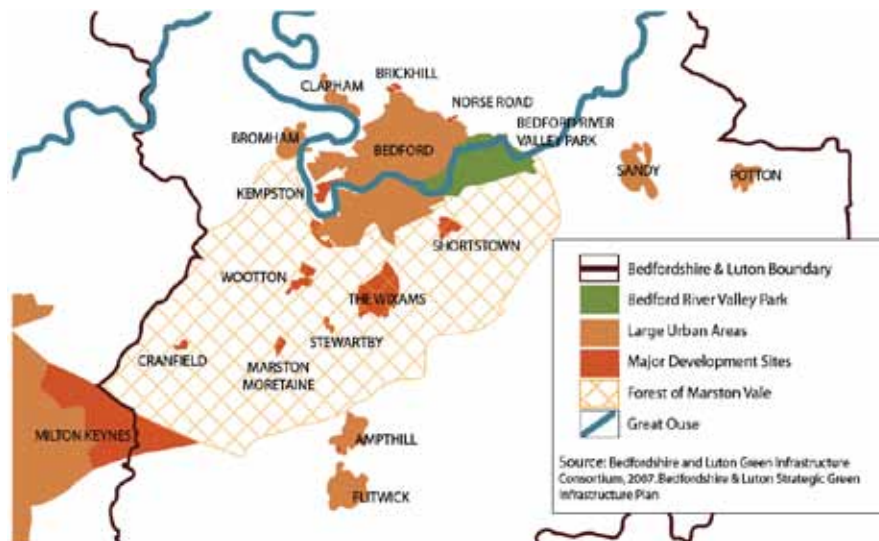
Volunteers gather to plant trees



04 Issues

4.1 Green Infrastructure & Growth

The population of the Bedford area is predicted to grow: An additional 19,500 dwellings are planned for the Bedford/ Kempston and the northern Marston Vale area for the period up to 2021 (see figure below). The Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan observes that there is a strong case for the provision of accessible greenspace within Bedfordshire and Luton and that this needs to be located close to where people will be living and working.



BRVP and existing and proposed development

Green infrastructure, like the BRVP, needs to:

- Restore ecosystems and the goods and services that they provide (e.g, flood protection, clean water and air, pollination, fuel etc)
- Safeguard and enhance biodiversity
- Promote social cohesion, health, well-being and contact with nature
- Improve local image and distinctiveness
- Promote sustainable economic growth and investment
- Create places where people want to live and stay
- Support education and training
- Safeguard and enhance historic assets
- Address existing deficiencies and ensure a net gain in greenspace provision to accommodate urban growth

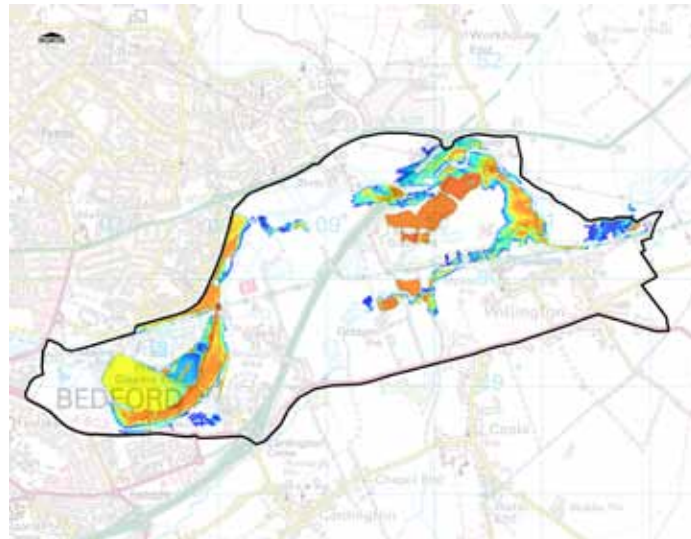
4.2 Water, Flood, Climate Change

The Great Ouse enters the BRVP at the western boundary and curves around the south of the Priory Country Park before heading north and east, leaving the area to the north east of the village of Willington, by Danish Camp. The Elstow Brook and the Wilstead Brook enter the BRVP from the south, join together and then join the Great Ouse to the north of Willington. The Renhold Brook joins the Great Ouse to the south east of Castle Dairy Farm. The Gadsey Brook is a northern diversion of the Great Ouse, running along the north-eastern boundary of the site.

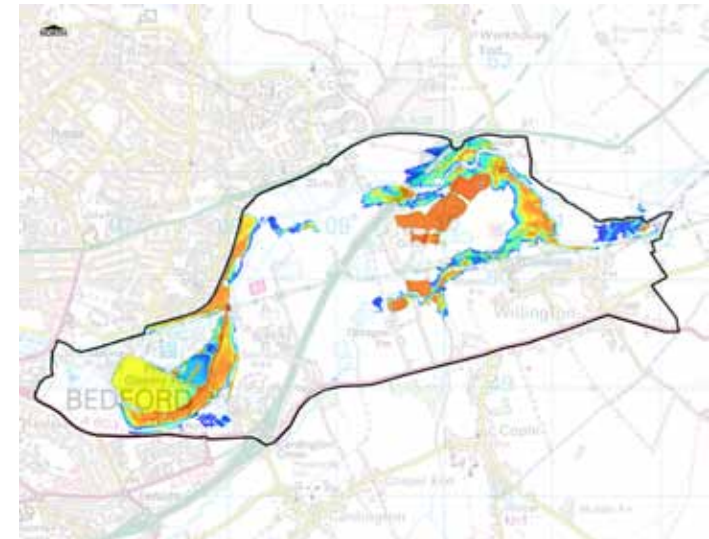
BRVP Floodplain

Water Depth (metres)

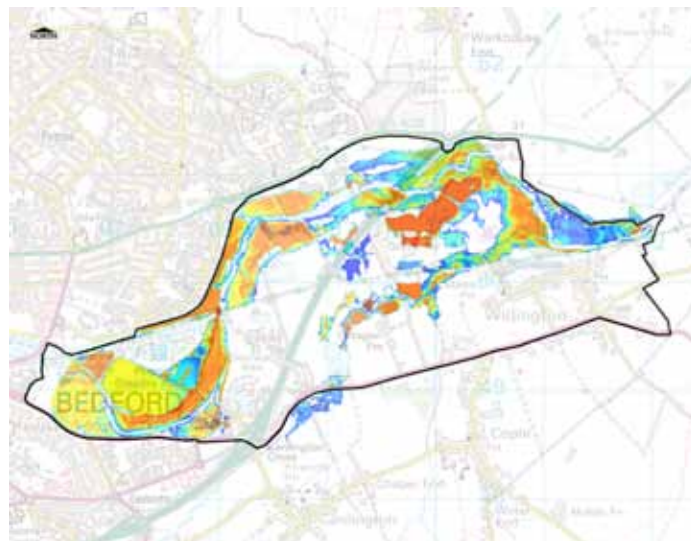
- 0.00 - 0.25
- 0.25 - 0.50
- 0.50 - 0.75
- 0.75 - 1.00
- 1.00 - 1.25
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- 2.00 - 2.25
- 2.25 - 2.50



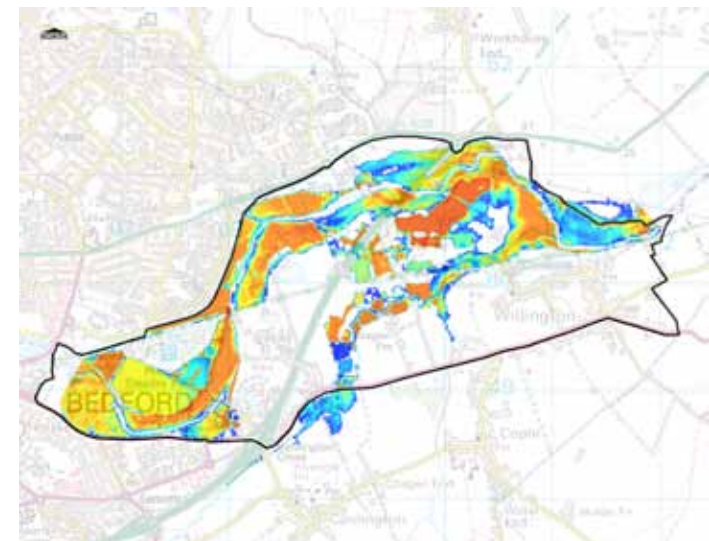
2-Year Storm Event



5-Year Storm Event



10-Year Storm Event



25-Year Storm Event

The many gravel pits are largely supplied by groundwater, which is subject to seasonal fluctuations. In general, ground water is encountered 2-3 m below ground level. None of the monitoring boreholes on site have ever been recorded as being dry. The Great Ouse floodplain is at the highest risk of flooding in winter following extended periods of rainfall in the upper catchment, however flooding can also occur due to short high intensity local storms, which may occur in summer. Clay is the dominant underlying formation in the catchment, and surface runoff provides a substantial percentage of the flow received by the Great Ouse. Figure x shows the extent of flood during various conditions.

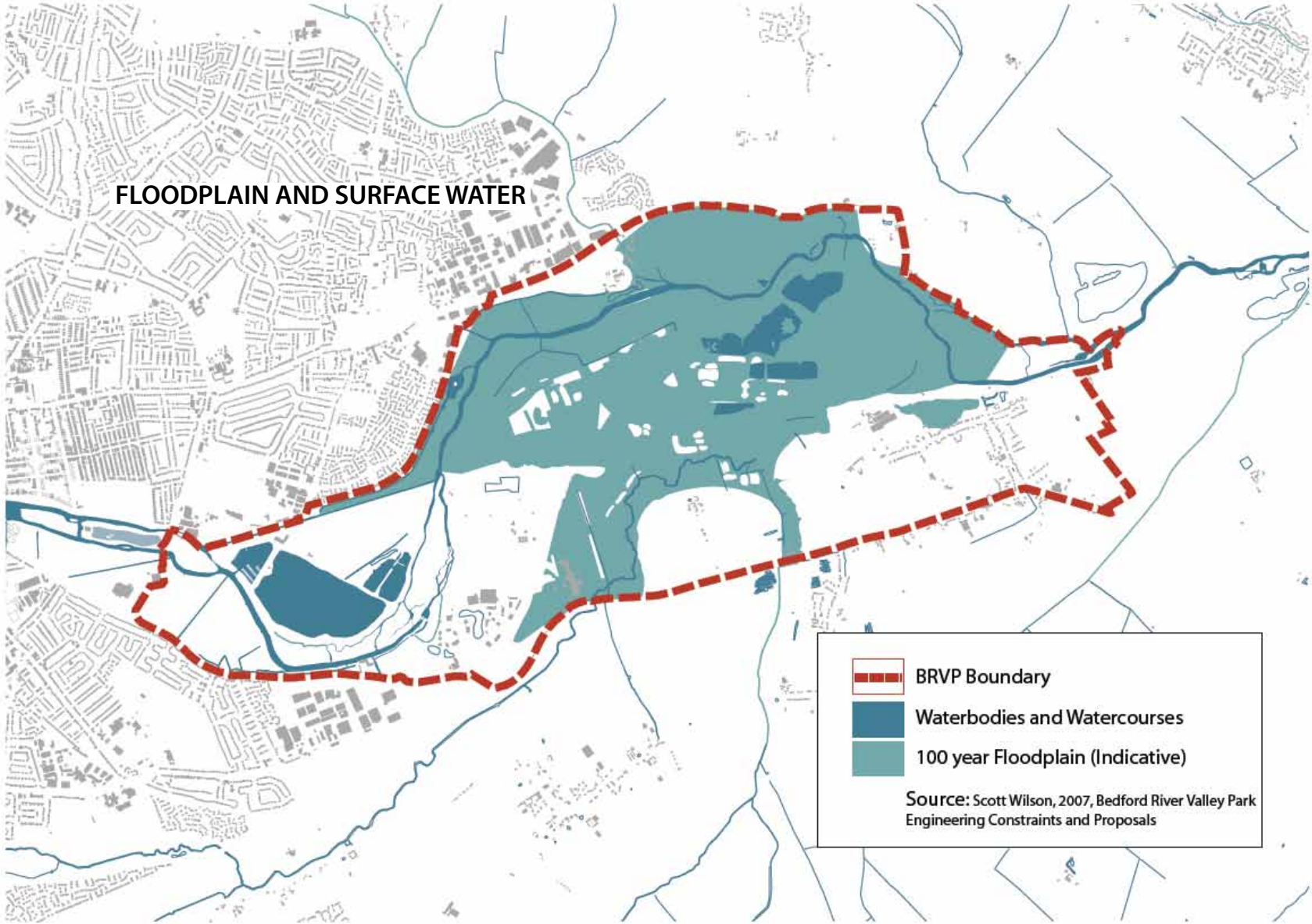
There are 18 active water abstraction licences within the vicinity of the BRVP and the preferred Environment Agency option for future management of the sub-catchment is to maintain the current resource availability status of 'No water available'

In dry weather a significant proportion of the base flow of the Great Ouse is provided by the consented discharge of treated wastewater from Anglian Water's Bedford sewage treatment works, which lies within the BRVP, however the EA has rated water quality in the Great Ouse and the Elstow Brook as B (good) and a (very good) respectively.

For the UK, it is predicted that climate change will mean warmer temperatures, wetter winters and drier summers. The frequency of extreme weather episodes may increase. There may be a greater threat of flooding following rainstorms and the number of flood events affecting the BRVP may increase. The role of the BRVP in conserving water and helping to manage flood may become more important. Vegetation and soils may become increasingly stressed and the fauna of the area will change, with an increase in the numbers of species normally associated with warmer, more southerly climates.



Many gravel pits become important wetlands



4.3 Access

The site is crossed or bounded by a number of public rights of way, including river, roads, bridleways and footpaths. These include:

- The Great Ouse (Bedford to St Neots and beyond) which is a strategic waterway
- A421 Bedford Bypass (Bedford to the A1) – crosses the site
- A603 (Bedford to Sandy) forms the southern boundary
- Private haul road serving the Lafarge Quarry and providing emergency access to the Castle Mill Weir for the EA
- Country Way forming part of National Cycle Route 51: Oxford to Cambridge
- Cople Bridleway No. 6
- Willington Bridleway No.1
- Cople Footpath No. 16 (currently unusable).

The BRVP area already has two existing hubs of activity, namely:

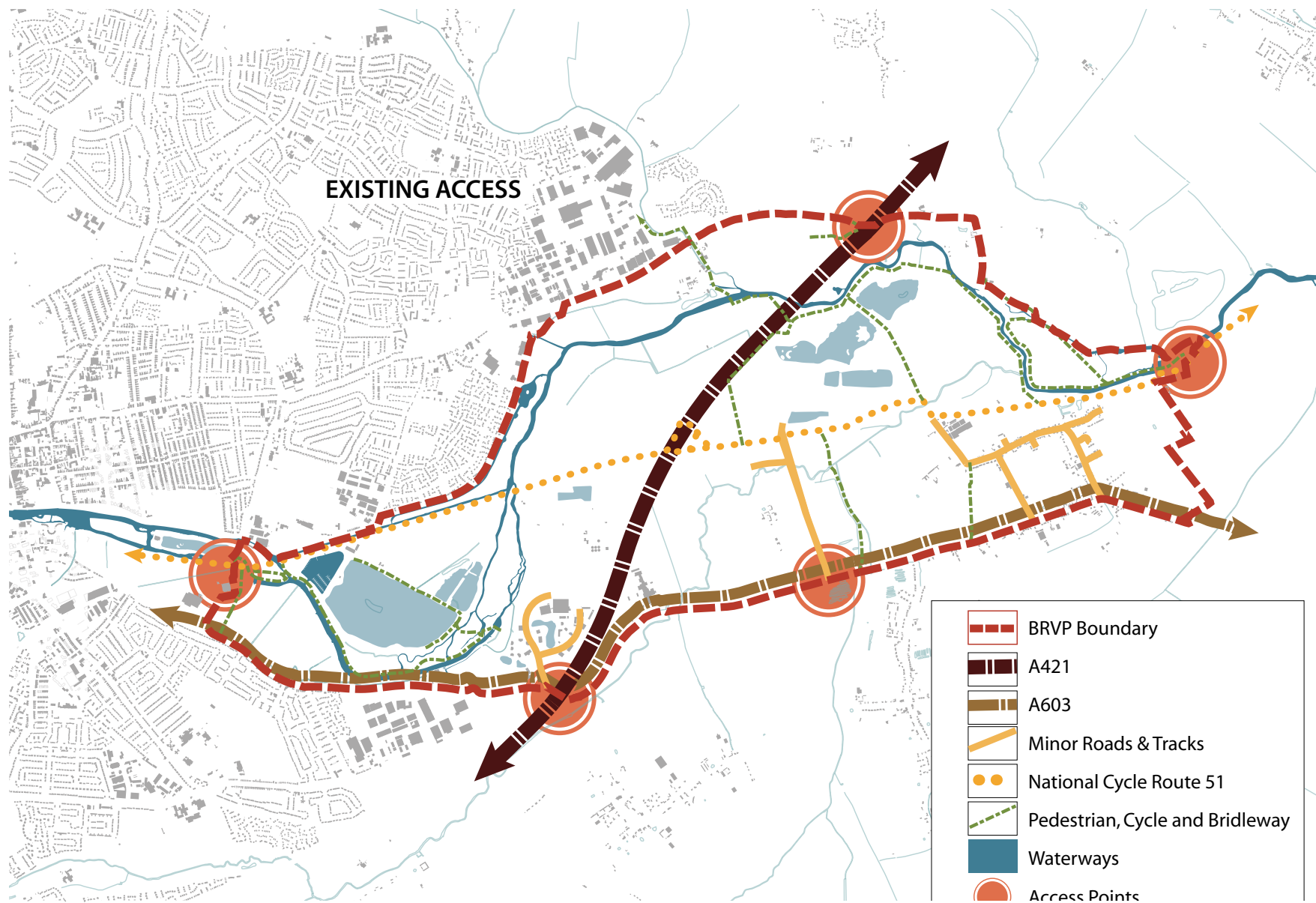
- (1) Priory Country Park, (A 'Green Flag' award winning site) with walks, angling, cycle hire, wildlife observation and a small visitor centre with educational facilities. There is an adjacent marina with 200 moorings, a sailing lake, hotel and restaurant, with car parking
- (2) Danish Camp (a café) by the Great Ouse at Willington. Car parking is adjacent to the cycle path and cycles are available for hire.



New bridge taking cycle path over Elstow Brook on the Grange Estate

Since its creation in 2003, National Cycle Network Route 51 has become a popular route linking Willington to Bedford. The new surfaced path which follows the river and circles the Grange Estate is also popular with walkers and cyclists.

The Bedford Bypass and the Great Ouse both act as major barriers. The bypass restricts movement between the western and eastern parts of the site. The Great Ouse restricts access to the Willington area from the north.



4.4 Heritage

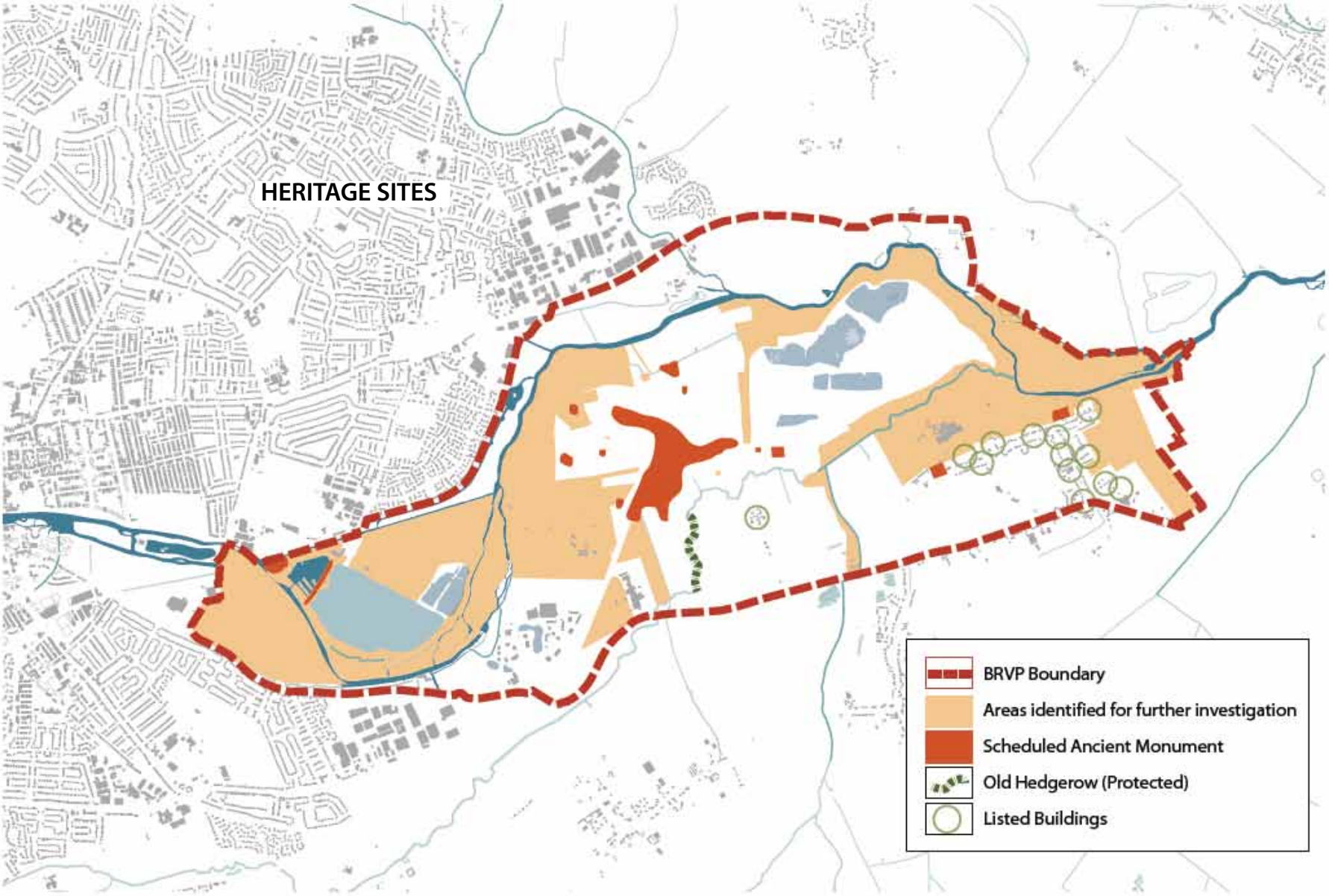
A number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMS) occur within the BRVP and there are also listed buildings (over 20 in Willington Village including a 16th Century stables and stone dovecote owned by the National Trust). The river valley has been inhabited since at least the Neolithic, as demonstrated by funerary and ritual features. Other assets include ring ditches, a cursus monument, linear enclosures, pit alignments, isolated burials and recently discovered round barrows.

The group of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments is one of the most important in the region. The area close to the Great Ouse was once largely covered by marshland, with higher islands or peninsulas of gravel between watercourses being used for settlement. A rising water table during the onset of the Roman period could account for the apparent abandonment of low lying settlements and a gradual shift to the higher gravel terraces in the south.

There is evidence of an Iron Age and Romano-British agricultural landscape including settlement enclosures, field boundaries and trackways. A Roman villa set within a rectangular field system was investigated ahead of gravel extraction in the 1950s. Archaeological remains of the later periods indicate that the area gradually became a settled, agricultural landscape. Medieval remains in the area are few, but it is likely that the area was part of the common field system during this period. Other significant features include the former track bed of the Bedford to Sandy railway line, constructed in 1862, which crosses the site, and a number of Grade II listed farm buildings.



Tudor dovecote in Willington



4.5 Landscape & Wildlife

A Bedfordshire County Council study has identified five landscape character units in the area. The first is 'Priory Country Park', the second at the centre of the site associated with the river valley is the Ouse Valley Restored Farmland, which includes restored gravel pits, plantations and pasture. To the south around the village of Willington is an area named as the 'Willington Farmland and Paddocks'. To the north of the Great Ouse are meadows which have been named as the 'Risinghoe Castle Farmland with Parkland'. Finally at the extreme east of the site are the Ouse Valley Meadows, pastures that have yet to be exploited for gravel extraction.

The site does have some scenery which is industrial and urban including gravel extraction works, an abattoir, the sewage treatment plant and the A421 Bedford.

Trees on the site are largely associated with linear or boundary features such as the two principal watercourses, the Great Ouse and Elstow Brook, as well as tracks and plantations associated with mineral workings or restoration schemes.

The Bedfordshire County Council study rated the BRVP landscape as low to moderate condition and sensitivity and therefore suitable for the large scale enhancements.

The flat topography of the area means that the BRVP is visually discrete. Limited views across the site are possible from the most elevated section of the A421 Bedford bypass and the bridge for NCN Route 51. In a few locations there are important long-range views to the Cardington Airship Hangars and the Greensand Ridge



Elstow Brook is visited by otter



Common blue damselfly

to the south and the intention is to preserve these.

The County Biodiversity Action Plan identifies the BRVP as an area that presents good opportunities to create floodplain habitats. The Great Ouse with their associated bankside vegetation is a County Wildlife Site (CWS). Two fish, the spined loach *Cobitistaenia* and bullhead *Cottusgobio* occur in the Great Ouse. They are both bottom-dwelling species, are threatened in Europe and are listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive (Conservation [Natural habitats, &c.] Regulations 1994). The spined loach is also protected under Schedule 5 of the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and is a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species in Bedfordshire and Luton.

The area is visited by otter (a European protected species), kingfisher (a Schedule 1 listed bird). The mature trees and wetlands attract several species of bat (protected under European legislation). There is habitat suitable for water vole, a declining UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species, however a recent survey failed to find this species, which may have been displaced by mink.

Fenlake Meadows Local Nature reserve (LNR) is a County Wildlife Site, which contains grazed floodplain grassland and marshy grassland. Floodplain grazing marsh is a UK BAP priority habitat. Cople Pits CWS support great crested newt (a European protected species). and an area of marshy grassland also occurs within the Willington Moat CWS.

Badgers regularly cross the site with an active main sett, outlier setts and latrines in the locality.

Existing water bodies in the area attract wintering waterfowl.

Several species of duck are joined by cormorant, herons, grebes and waders. In addition, a number of notable wetland birds breed around the waterbodies in the area, including little grebe, sedge warbler, reed warbler, reed bunting and kingfisher.



Wild carrot



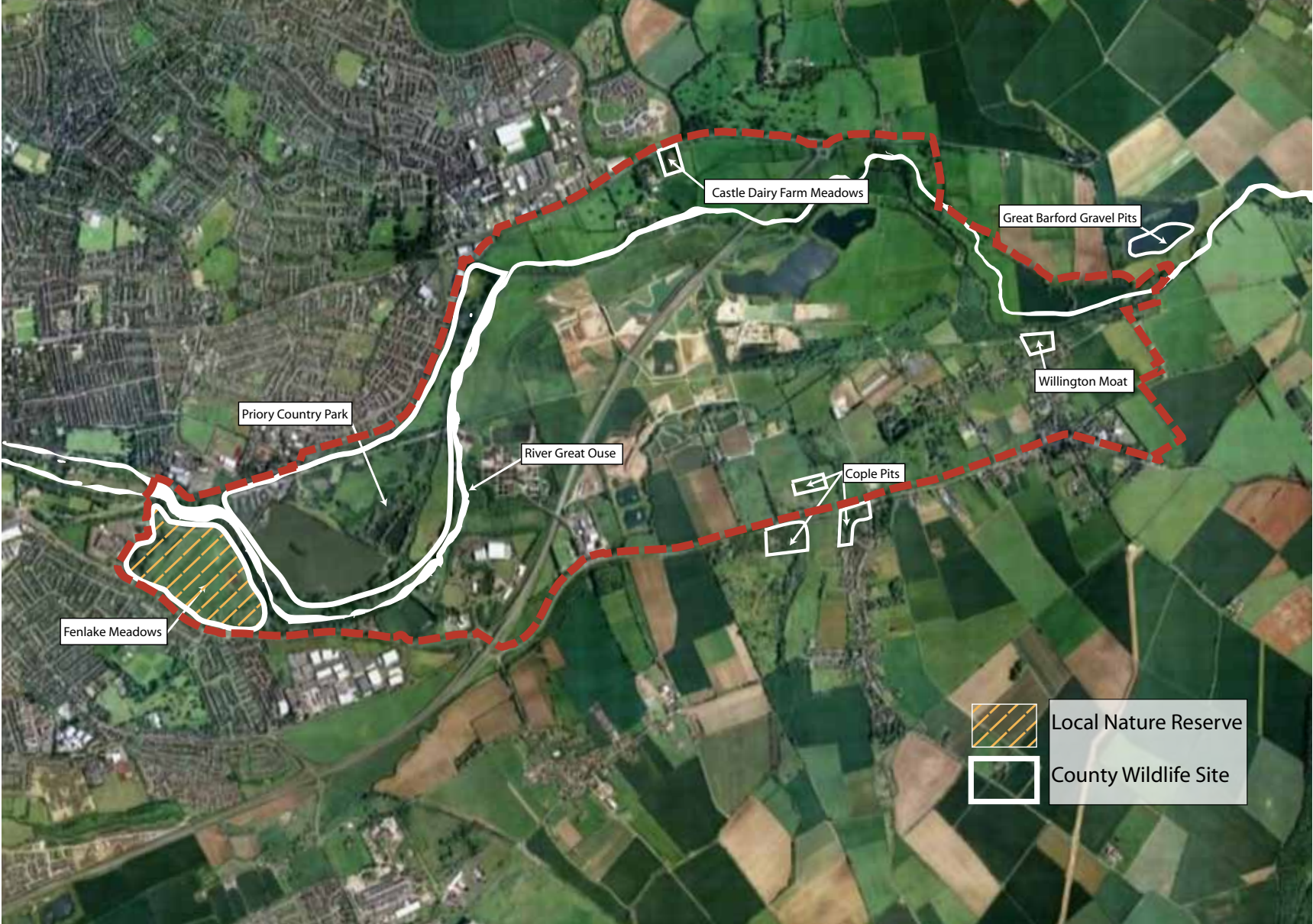
Brown-banded carder bee



Tufted duck



Spined loach



4.6 Utilities

A number of utilities affect the study area. Most notable are overhead electricity lines, foul water sewers and rising mains, gas mains, water mains and surface water sewers. Dairy Farm, to the east of BRVP, is affected by overhead electricity lines, as well as a number of buried gas mains.

Running broadly parallel to NCN Route 51 are a number of foul water rising mains, as well as gas mains. A number of utilities are converging around the Anglian Water sewage treatment plant.

A large number of services are also located at Priory Country Park and Priory Business Park.

4.7 Ownership

Major landowners in BRVP are Bedford Borough Council (their land being the main focus of this exercise) and Forest of Marston Vale. Other major landowners are Anglian Water, Southill Estates, Smith and Benny (see figure on page 22.)

4.8 Existing Schemes















Bedford Rowing Lake

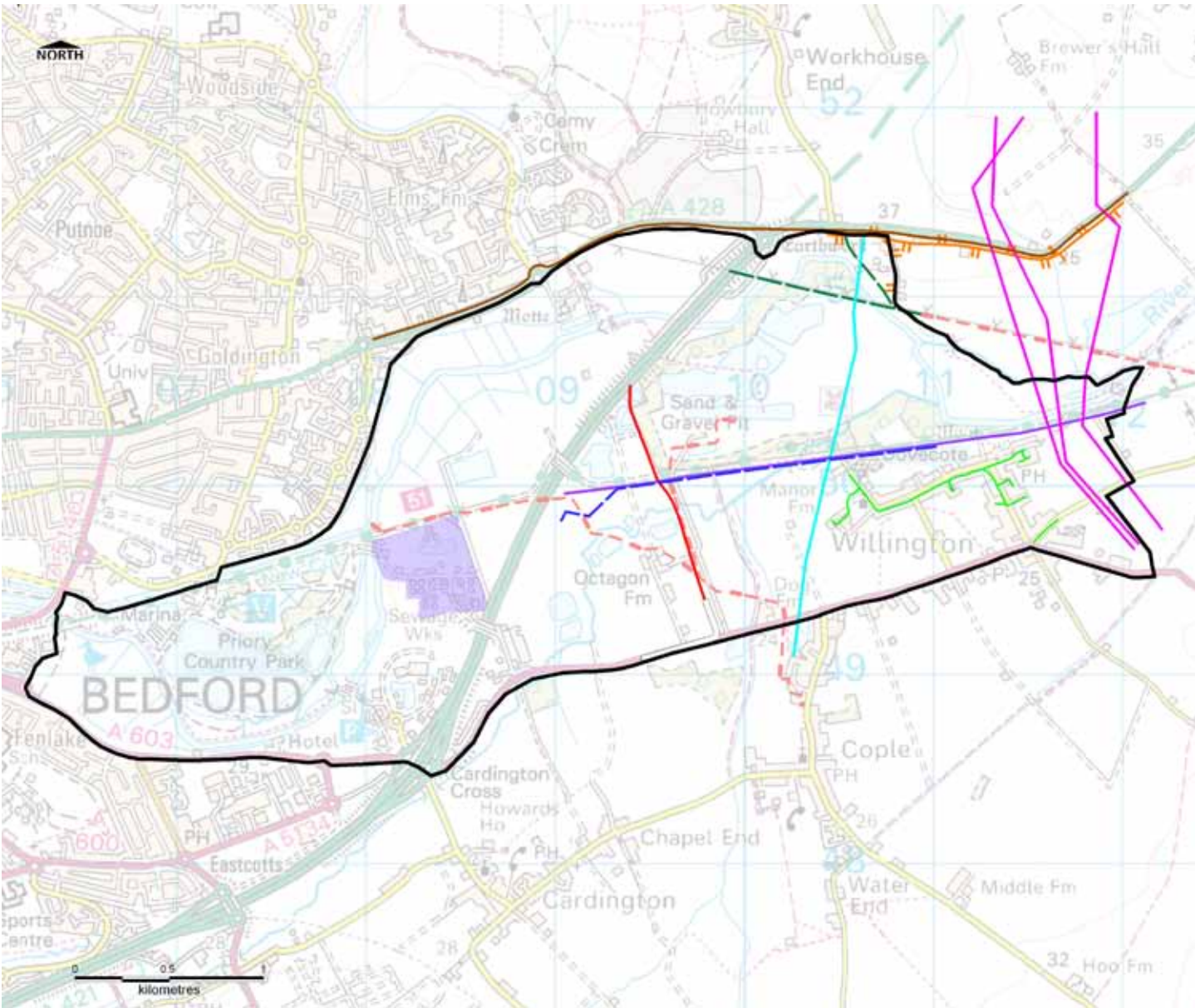
In 2006, planning permission (BC/CM/2003/33 and 30/2006) has been granted for the excavation of a 2.3km long 108m wide, 37 ha rowing lake in the eastern section of the BRVP. On the 3rd February 2011, Bedford Borough Council extended the permission for a further 2 years (10/02907/EXT). In order to build the rowing lake, the Elstow Brook will need to be diverted to the south. Figure on

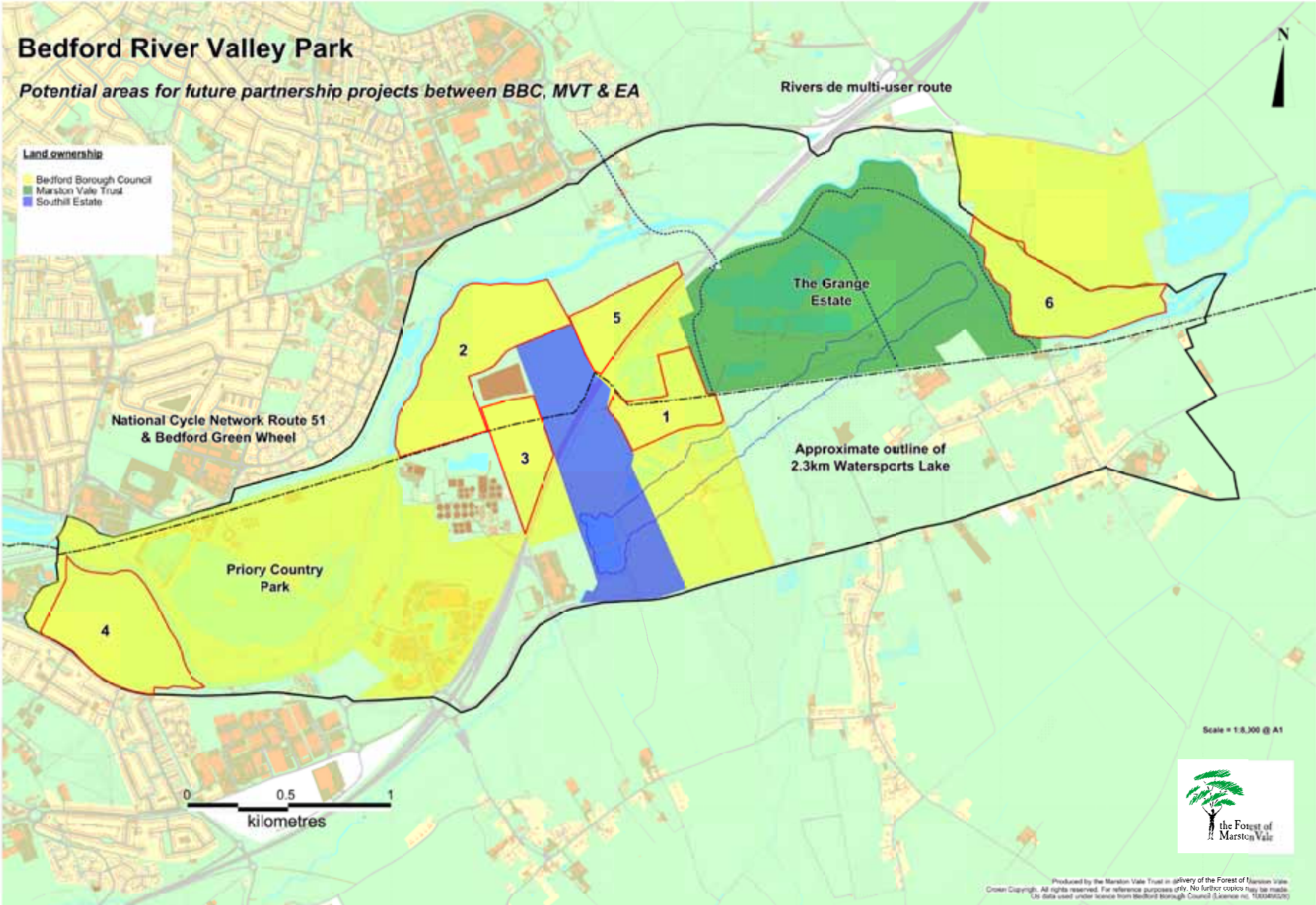


Approved Rowing Lake scheme

Utilities

-  BRVP Boundary
-  Wastewater Treatment Works
-  Rising Main
-  Oil Pipeline
-  Area to be confirmed
-  Cable and Wireless
-  NHP Mains
-  MP Mains
-  LP Mains
-  LHP Mains
-  High Voltage Cables
-  Existing Water
-  Electrical Cables
-  EDF





page 20 shows the approved scheme.

Enabling Development

A consortium of landowners and developers including Connolly Homes plc, Bedford BC and FMV is looking to submit a planning application for a development to the south of the rowing lake (in the Octagon Farm area), which will provide the necessary resources to excavate the rowing lake and provide associated facilities. The enabling development may include a residential care village, a science and technology park, student accommodation, hotel and supporting facilities. The development is being promoted through the Local Development Framework process, with formal adoption likely during 2013.

Priory Country Park & Fenlake Meadows

Bedford BC is currently pursuing several projects to improve the western part of BRVP including restoration of water control structures at Fenlake Meadows LNR, enhancements to the Fingers Lake and refurbishment and renewal of facilities within the Country Park.

Grange Estate

FMV has a continuing programme of access improvements and habitat creation and restoration projects on the Grange Estate. Projects already completed include a new multi-user path following the river, a new bridge over the Elstow Brook, backwaters for spawning fish and other wildlife, tree planting and a scrape for wetland birds.



Fenlake 1883-1884. Bedford Borough Council is looking at the restoration of grazing marsh at Fenlake Meadows

4.9 Minerals

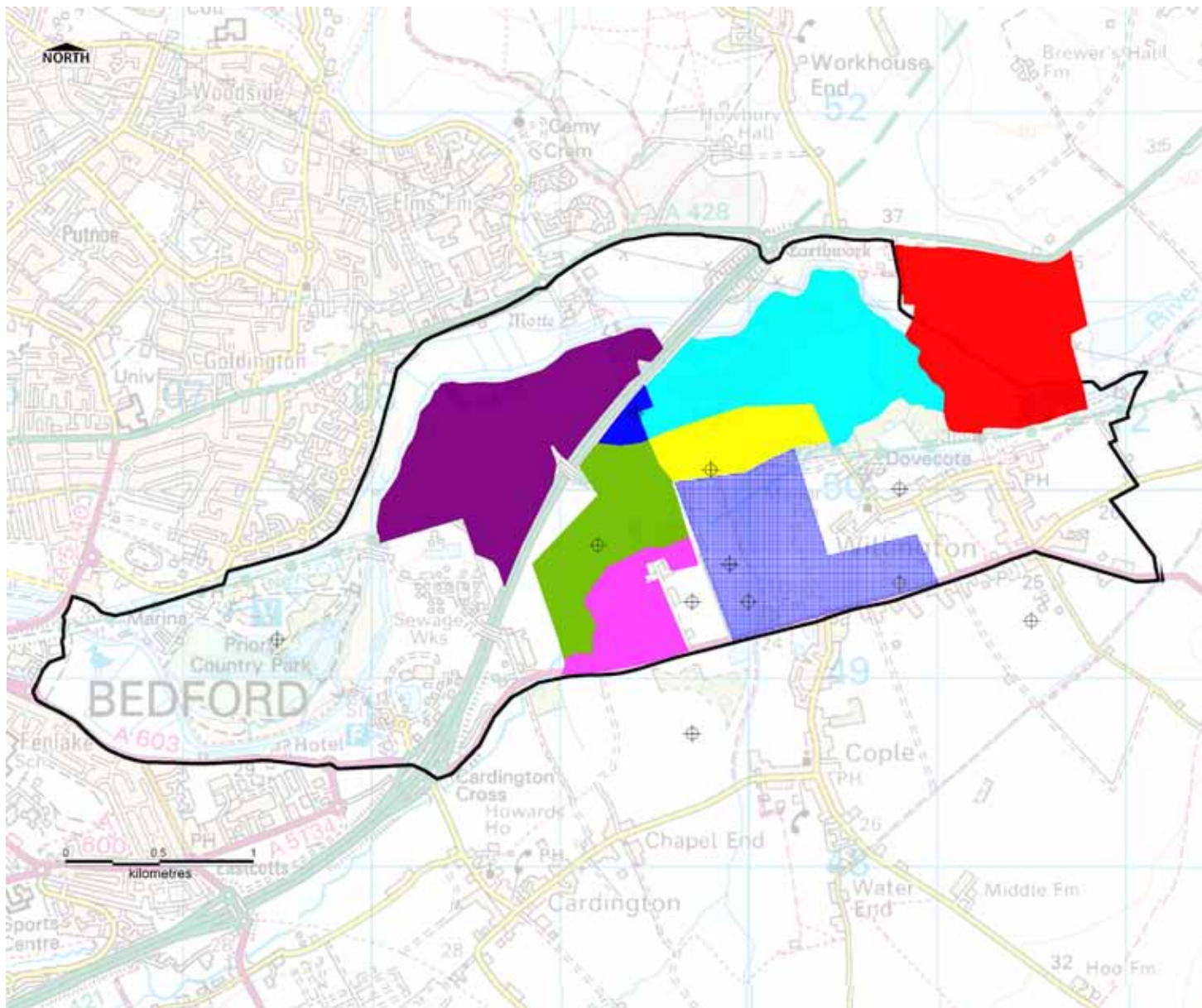
Quarrying for sands and gravels within the BRVP has been continuing for decades, beginning with the area that is now Priory Country Park and continuing towards the east. With the exception of a few remaining pockets close to the Anglian Water site, the focus for quarrying will move to Dairy Farm to the east of BRVP. The Lafarge processing plant will continue to operate within the Grange Estate and is connected to new quarries to the east by a haul road and Baily bridge.



Recently completed river backwaters on the Grange Estate

Quarry Phasing

- December 2016
- December 2014
- December 2010
- December 2008
- Completed and Ongoing
- BRVP Boundary
- Previously worked and reformed
- October 2008
- LAFARGE Works
- June 2010
- Waste Licensing Site



05 Opportunities

5.0 Access

As improvements are made to newly restored, or yet to be restored, sections of the park, there will be opportunities to provide new trails and cyclepaths, following the river and interlinking with NCN 51.

The rowing lake and enabling development will create a new gateway into the BRVP and the need to make connections with NCN51. The possibility of creating a new crossing of the Great Ouse should be considered, perhaps in partnership with Lafarge, who may benefit from a new access from the north. As new crossing will make the BRVP more accessible to a large number of people living in as well as creating new north-south routes for cyclists.

5.1 Recreation

There is a thriving canoeing scene in Bedford, with popular clubs including the Viking Canoe Club. The Cardington Canoe Course is in Priory Country Park. There are opportunities to build on this interest by improving existing facilities or creating new courses and routes.

Former quarries can make excellent locations for motor sports like motocross or courses for BMX. There are locations close to the bypass where noisy activities might be out of earshot of residents or alternatively there may be an opportunity to develop quieter activities with electric vehicles.



A number of stables are located in the Willington area and there is demand for more equestrian routes. Sealed paths suitable for cycles are often unsuitable for horses, so careful consideration needs to be given to the full spectrum of potential path users.

5.2 Water Quality

The EU Water Framework Directive, which came into UK law in 2003, requires a commitment to improving freshwater, ground water and freshwater ecosystems. See <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33362.aspx> Land within BRVP can be deliberately remodelled and managed for the purpose of improving water quality whether treated effluent or urban or agricultural run-off. There is land in the vicinity of the Anglian Water site that could be used to construct wetlands or other multi-functional landscape interventions like short-rotation coppice (see also Green Energy below). In addition there could be a number of local sustainable urban drainage features located around the BRVP, dealing with highway drainage or other urban run-off.

5.3 Flood Management

BRVP is already an important landscape in terms of its ability to store floodwaters following heavy rainfall in the Great Ouse catchment, however there may be ways of improving the ability of the area to store flood water or to re-direct flows away from sensitive areas. There is a suggestion that there is a bottleneck to fluvial flows at the point where the NCN 51 crosses the Great Ouse. Opening up new channels here and elsewhere may help to reduce upstream flooding whilst simultaneously providing new habitats.

5.4 Green Energy

Short-rotation coppice (SRC) involves the cultivation of rapid growing tree species like willow or poplar for the purpose of providing woodchips, which can fuel small power plants or combined heat and power plants. There are areas within BRVP, which may be suitable for SRC or other biomass crops. SRC can improve water quality through the process of being irrigated with effluent, which also has the effect of increasing growth rates. There is also the possibility of allowing some public access through or around areas planted with SRC.

There is the potential for wind turbines or small scale photovoltaic farms to generate electricity within BRVP.



A short rotation coppice of Willow

by M J Richardson

5.5 Interpretation & Engagement

There are already successful initiatives to educate the public on the natural environment within BRVP, most notably at the Priory Country Park and the Grange Estate. These will form the foundation for further engagement with the public and students and the BRVP develops. The area enjoys a wealth of archaeological and historical features and it has been suggested that more effort should be made to inform and educate visitors about these.

5.6 Habitat & Species

The conservation and restoration of biodiversity is already at the heart of much of the work which goes on within BRVP, however the large site area and coordinated approach means that there will be opportunities to adopt a landscape-scale approach, with special attention paid to the establishment of ecological networks, through modification to the hydrology, remodelling of landforms, planting and seeding and management.

5.7 Food

Farming already occurs within BRVP. It is likely that this will continue, especially grazing, which is more compatible with the floodplain forest approach than arable farming. Around the periphery of the site, where there is a demand from local residents, it may be appropriate to create allotment gardens or orchards, In other areas it may be appropriate to consider experiments with agroforestry or other sustainable agricultural practices.



5.8 Funding & Employment

The financial crisis, cuts in public spending and unemployment are bringing new perspectives to projects like BRVP. Project proponents are increasingly aware of the need to generate income and ensure that operational costs do not increase public spending. Given this background, it seems increasingly likely that partnerships between the authorities, NGOs and businesses will feature as part of the various initiatives being considered. There will be opportunities to create jobs within the BRVP, managing the land and facilities but also providing services for visitors, who will arrive in larger numbers as various attractions like the rowing lake and new paths are completed.



Part of the site could be leased for motorsport