



# NICKEY LINE

## GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2022 – 2027

Produced by:



On behalf of:



## OVERVIEW

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### Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

### Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for 6 weeks between August and October 2020, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3.

A second stage of engagement was carried out between 28 June 2021 and 9 August 2021 where stakeholders to comment on the detailed proposals within the draft plan.

### Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
01	22.03.21	Draft for public engagement	GA	AT	DF
02	22.03.22	Final copy amended after public engagement	GA	AT	DF

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## **1.0 SUMMARY**

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### **1.1 Site Summary**

Site Name:	Nickey Line
Designations:	Local Wildlife Site (Harpenden to Redbourn Lane and Hemel Hempstead Road to the Maylands Industrial Estate)
Owner:	St Albans City & District Council (SADC) Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), managed by SADC

### **1.2 Vision Statement**

The Nickey Line will be a corridor for wildlife and people. Vegetation will be managed to promote a diverse range of habitats. People will be able to use the route for leisure, taking in the landscape and the history, and also as an off-road transport connection between the settlements of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden.

## **2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

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### **2.1 Background**

#### **2.1.1 Overview**

The Nickey Line is a closed railway line that connects the settlements of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden. The line is now approximately 7.2 miles long, with about 1.4 miles at the Hemel Hempstead end having been lost to development.

The primary present-day function is a recreational route for pedestrians and cyclists, forming part of the Sustrans National Cycle Route 57 connecting Welwyn Garden City and Oxford as well as the Chiltern Cycleway.

The current route broadly follows the original position of the rail line, with the exception of minor repositioning around road junctions near to Redbourn and the removal of sections as part of the development of Hemel Hempstead new town.

#### **2.1.2 Ownership and Management**

This GAP covers the section of the Nickey Line that falls within St Albans District. Most of this section is owned by St Albans City & District Council (SADC). A 1.3 mile section alongside Redbourn is owned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), with an agreement in place that it is managed on their behalf by SADC.

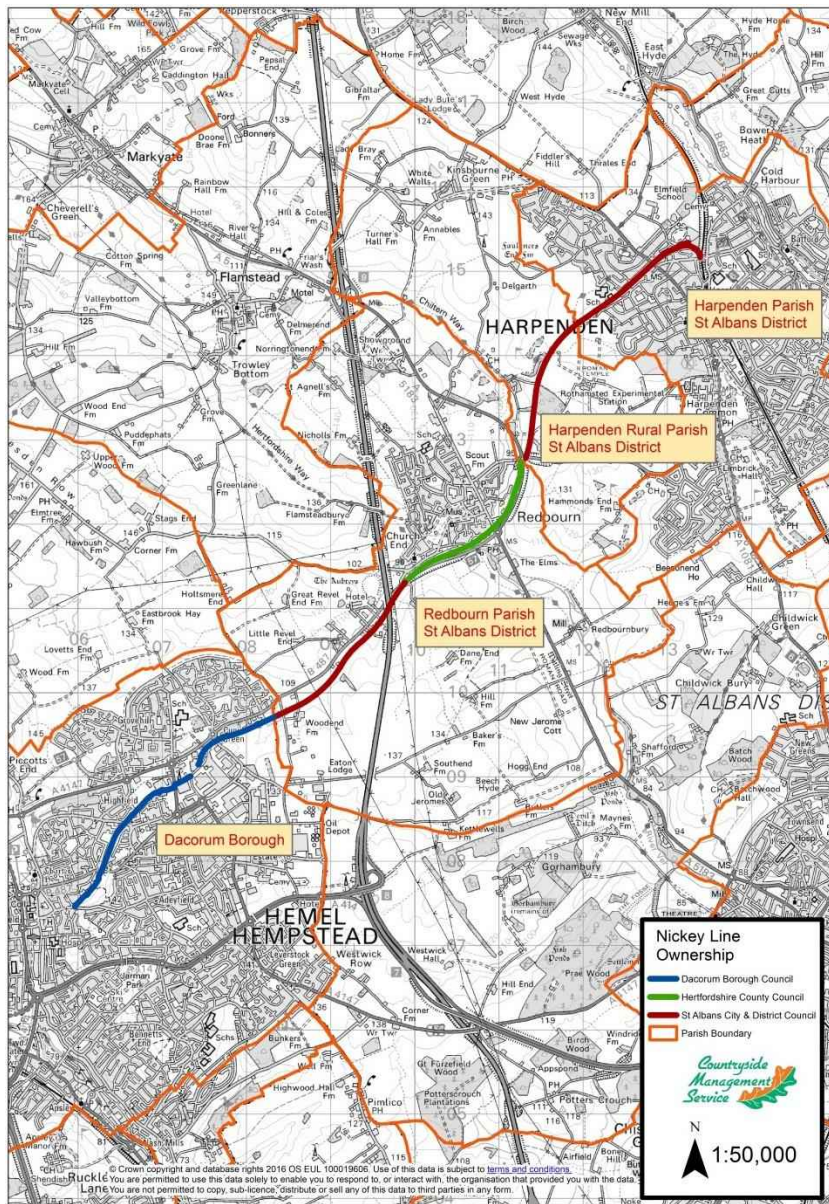
A separate GAP is in place for the section that falls within Dacorum Borough, which is owned and managed by Dacorum Borough Council (DBC). SADC and DBC will work in liaison over common issues to ensure continuity across the whole route.

The Friends of the Nickey Line was established in 2006 and the group is active in the research and publicity of the line and in carrying out management through their volunteer work parties. They also source funding towards management and improvement projects. The aims of the group are:

- To conserve and enhance the Nickey Line for the benefit of the local communities and wildlife.
- To encourage and maintain community interest in the Nickey Line.
- To advise, assist and work with any person or body which shares a common interest in the Nickey Line.

The work programmes of the Friends are agreed on an annual basis with CMS and SADC, with tasks typically drawn from the GAP.

Day to day management is the responsibility of SADC, which is largely delivered through their grounds maintenance contract with John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance.



Ownership of the Nickey Line

## 2.1.3 History

### 2.1.3.1 Former Railway Line

As a rail line, the route originally connected Hemel Hempstead with the Midland Main Line at Harpenden. Officially called the Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead Railway, it was commonly known as the Nickey Line.

Construction of the line was initially driven by trade as well as passengers. When the line opened in 1877 it included four passenger trains and one goods train, stopping at Hemel Hempstead (different to the present day Hemel Hempstead station, note historic spelling) and Redbourn stations before joining the Midland line on its way up to Luton. This provided an important connection between the straw plaiting textiles trade at Hemel Hempstead and the hat making of Luton.

As the straw plaiting industry declined in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the line shifted its focus towards passengers. Following a takeover by Midland Rail, a southern connection was added in 1888 onto the junction with the Midland Rail line, thereby joining up with the London-bound train at Harpenden Central station. The northern link to Luton was closed at the same time. During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Heath Park Halt, Godwin's Halt, Beaumont's Halt and Roundwood Halt were opened to encourage passenger use.

A connection was made to Boxmoor Station (now Hemel Hempstead). However, this was only briefly used for goods trains before closure.

With low usage, passenger services ceased in 1947. Goods trains remained until the expansion of Hemel Hempstead in the 1960s, albeit on an increasingly rare basis. Thereafter, part of the line remained in use by the Hemelite brickworks, becoming privately owned by them in 1968.

The upgrade of the Bedford Line (former Midland Line) removed the junction at Harpenden in 1979, leading to the final closure of the line. The tracks were removed in 1982 and the route opened as a cycleway and footway in 1985.

### 2.1.3.2 *Remnant Features*

Much of the former railway infrastructure has been removed, though several iconic features do remain to provide a reminder of the history.

The most clearly identifiable remnants of the railway are part of the platform and a quadrant signal at Roundwood Halt. Part of the platform was buried when making the path connection to the adjacent roads. In 2018 The Friends of the Nickey Line cleared back much of the vegetation that had been encroaching onto the platform. Scraping back of organic material from the path surface revealed remnants of the rail track close to the platform. As part of any interpretation plan consideration should be given to how these can be best preserved.



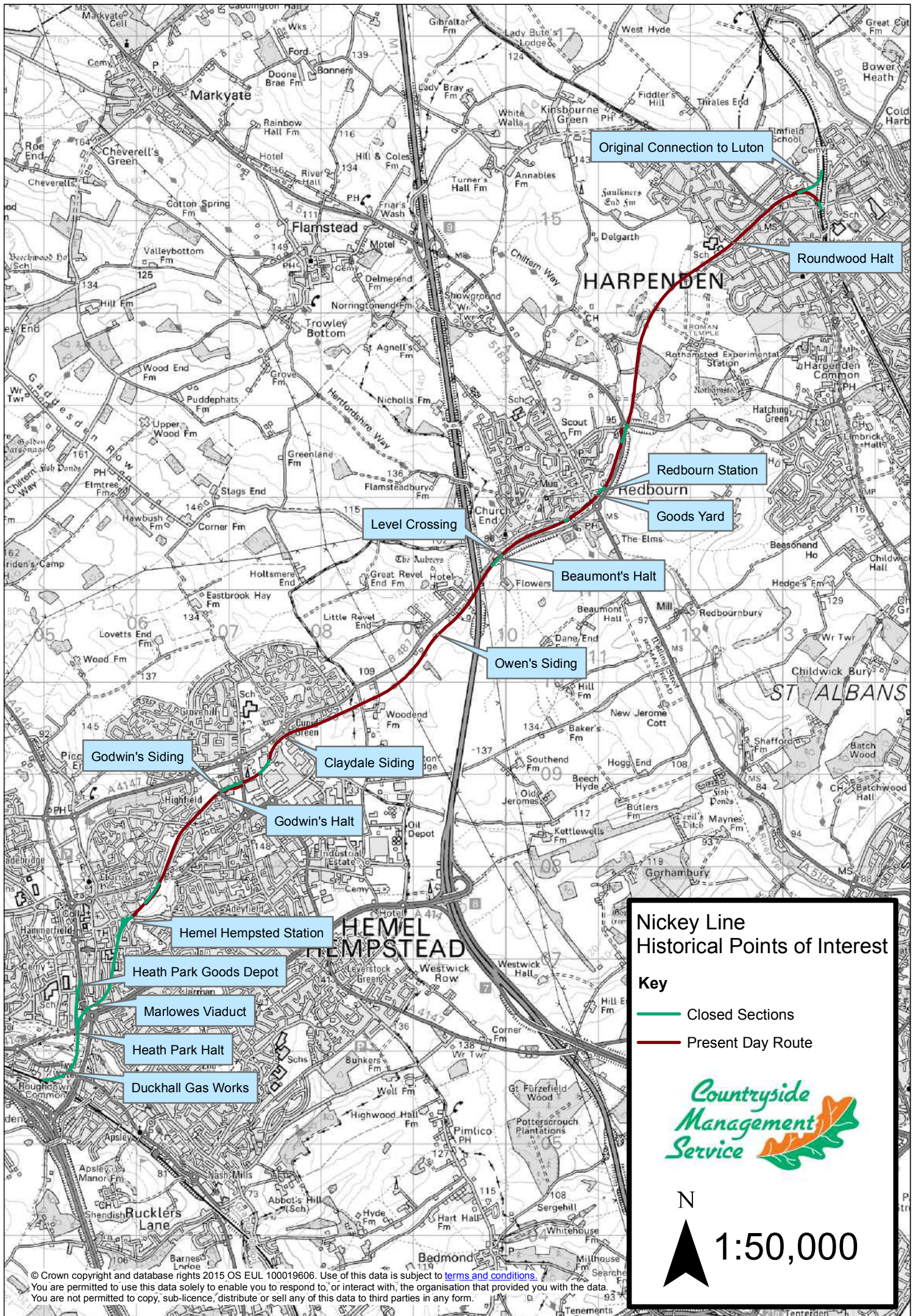
A large brick retaining structure is located within Harpenden from a historical cutting that allowed the Nickey Line to have a southerly connection to London.

There are also two brick bridges, at Ambrose Lane in Harpenden and at Cherry Tree Lane near to Hemel Hempstead. Views of the Cherry Tree Lane bridge have been opened up by Friends group volunteers in recent years through the removal of adjacent vegetation.

A former goods yard that was located beside Redbourn Station is now a picnic area called the Millennium Site, owned and managed by Redbourn Parish Council. Apple trees have been planted at the north-eastern end alongside an art installation made from railway sleepers.

Owen's Sidings, a former railway siding that previously served a nearby gravel pit, is located between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead. Its location is evident today through remaining brick foundations.

The Nickey Line bridges over Luton Road in Harpenden and High Street in Redbourn. These comprise of a brick archway and a wrought iron bridge respectively, making the Nickey Line visible to the roadway below.



**Nickey Line  
Historical Points of Interest**

- Key**
- Closed Sections
  - Present Day Route



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## 2.1.4 Geography and Landscape

### 2.1.4.1 Compartments

The Nickey Line combines the rural landscape of Hertfordshire with the urban settlements of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden. This GAP divides the St Albans district section of the Nickey Line into four compartments, each of which has its own character:

Harpenden Town



Harpenden to Redbourn



Redbourn



Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead



### 2.1.4.2 Compartment 1: Harpenden Town

Close to the town centre, embankments lined with mature trees create an impressive sense of enclosure, yet due to their height and the width of the route there is sufficient room for them not to be intimidating. The high canopy differs from the rest of the Nickey Line where the user often travels at the same height or at a higher level than the adjacent rural land. This transition in levels corresponds with the change from rural to urban, marking the arrival to the town of Harpenden.

At other locations within Harpenden Town the towering trees are lost to close enclosure by garden fences. The path narrows and becomes momentarily unattractive.

The route is surfaced with a tarmacadam base topped with stone.

#### 2.1.4.3 *Compartment 2: Harpenden to Redbourn*

A wide path typically with an open and rural feel. Despite intermittent sections of taller trees, the majority of this section is lined with hedgerows, creating a sunlit path, often with attractive grass and wildflower edges. Occasional breaks in the hedge line open up views onto the surrounding agricultural landscape. Often busy with people, this section has more vibrancy than elsewhere on the route.

The surface is crushed stone that in many places has become largely concealed by a build up of organic matter.

#### 2.1.4.4 *Compartment 3: Redbourn*

The majority of this section is enclosed by hedgerows close to the user. With a relatively narrow path the route feels squeezed at times, before opening up to 'breathe' where it reaches adjoining sites, such as The Millennium site picnic areas and the river. The surface is primarily coarsely crushed stone.

#### 2.1.4.5 *Compartment 4: Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead*

Dense and overmature hedge planting lines the much of route and shuts out light from reaching the ground. Where ground flora does exist, it is typically scrubby vegetation. The path surface is poor and narrow in many places. There are occasional views onto the surrounding landscape, along with areas of coppicing introduced in the previous GAP, which provide more open and less intimidating sections.

## 2.2 **Habitats and Wildlife**

### 2.2.1 **Ground Flora**

In addition to the ground flora either side of the path, there are small areas of adjoining grassland. These include scallops regularly maintained by FoNL and an area within Redbourn which was cleared by volunteers as part of the previous GAP.

There are a range of wildflowers and other ground flora present that have previously been recorded by FoNL, including Lords and Ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Common Dog-Violet (*Viola riviniana*), Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*), Townhall Clock (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). They have also recorded a number of fungi species.

### 2.2.2 Hedgerows

Hedgerows lining much of the route ensure the Nickey Line provides a 'green corridor' through countryside. The hedgerows vary in terms of their age, species composition and their impact on the feel of the route to the user.

Compartment 1:

- The majority of this compartment is mature trees with some understorey plants. There is only a limited amount of hedgerow.
- Parallel to the western end of Townsend Lane the hedgerow on the southeastern side of the Nickey Line was overmature, with weak and dying specimens, opening unwarranted access to the adjoining farmed land. During the previous management plan a number of these specimens were laid with a semi-formal point identified for safely viewing the farm animals. Despite improvements from the hedge laying there remain a number of gaps within the hedge which may need to be filled to provide a more robust hedgerow and security for the farm.

Compartment 2:

- Agricultural hedgerows alongside the Rothamsted Research land are dense and typically well managed
- A hazel hedgerow alongside Knott Wood was coppiced within the previous GAP by the Friends of the Nickey Line.
- To the south of Knott Wood a section of predominantly hawthorn hedgerow has been laid over a period of years by the Friends of the Nickey Line, maintaining views across the surrounding landscape.
- At the southern end of the compartment, towards Redbourn Lane, many of the hedgerows are overmature. Some coppicing has been carried out by volunteers but the area remains heavily shaded.

Compartment 3:

- Directly to the south of the Ver Meadows Caravan Park is a tall and overmature hawthorn hedgerow that separates the Nickey Line from the A5183.
- To the west of the village, where the Nickey Line runs parallel to Hemel Hempstead Road, the southern side of the Nickey Line is predominantly hazel coppice. This entire section was re-coppiced within the previous management plan by volunteers and contractors.

Compartment 4:

- Hedgerows with a mix of native species line the vast majority of the route between the M1 through to Hemel Hempstead. In many locations they are overmature with gaps developing.

- Several tall sycamore were coppiced to the west of the M1 during the previous GAP to allow for future hedgerow planting.

### **2.2.3 Trees**

Mature trees can be found along the route on the embankments or within hedgerows. They become more prominent within Harpenden where the route is lined by continuous tree cover. Towards the eastern end of the route these stand prominently on the tall embankments above the user.

Tree species include a large number of oak, sycamore and ash, with a smaller number of beech. Sycamore brings with it a high maintenance requirement due to its ability to self-seed amongst the scrubby understorey and also has a lower wildlife benefit than the oak, ash and beech.

Ash Dieback is present amongst young ash trees. As it increasingly reaches mature trees consideration will need to be given to removing hazardous trees and where appropriate replacing with other native species. Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) was found in 2019 in trees to the southern side of Harpenden.

### **2.2.4 Woodlands**

There are several small woodlands adjacent to the Nickey Line, with the trees and hedgerows that line the route providing a beneficial link between these. Two of these wooded areas are within the St Albans District section:

- Knott Wood – a beech woodland within the Rothamstead Estate with a good spring covering of bluebells which can be seen from the Nickey Line
- There are small wooded areas to the south of the Nickey Line where the route crosses the River Ver and the River Red in Redbourn. This land is owned by Hertfordshire County Council and falls outside of the management agreement with SADC.

### **2.2.5 Rivers**

At Redbourn the Nickey Line crosses over the River Ver and its tributary, the River Red. Both rivers can be clearly seen and enjoyed from the bridges. A small sign is present to mark the River Ver.

## **2.3 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

### **2.3.1 Green Infrastructure Network**

#### *2.3.1.1 Sustainable Off-Road Transport Route*

The Nickey Line is a vital component of the green infrastructure network. As a sustainable transport route it encourages people to be physically active, reduces the pressure on the road system and provides a recreational activity. Use of green transport routes also provides considerable benefits to mental wellbeing.

The Local Transport Plan places a high emphasis on active travel. This includes aiming for a 'modal shift' from car use to sustainable travel including cycling and walking.

The route provides access between the settlements of Harpenden, Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead, as well as points along the route, such as:

- Redbourn Golf Course
- Rothamsted Estate
- Redbournbury Mill and St Albans (via the Ver Valley walk)
- Aubreys Hill Fort, located within the grounds of Aubrey Park Hotel
- Maylands Business Park

Usage of the route has steadily increased over the years. FoNL surveyed usage and produced the 'Nickey Line Lockdown Usage Report May 2020'. This estimated weekly usage of the route at 12,000 uses. This showed a significant increase from a previous survey in July 2013. Whilst May 2020 may represent a spike in users due to the COVID-19 lockdown, there has been a steady increase in usage over the years and the survey provides evidence of the value the Nickey Line has to the surrounding communities.

The survey also confirmed that usage is not evenly spread along the route, with over 1,000 uses per day in the Harpenden section compared to 350 in the Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead sections.

The higher usage around Harpenden is likely to reflect the stronger connections onto the route and the better condition of the surface. Towards Hemel Hempstead the surfacing is bare earth in many locations and vegetation encroachment results in a narrow route. The majority of users towards Hemel Hempstead were found to be local visitors rather than those travelling from further along the route.



Strava data for cycling heat map for Redbourn to Harpenden (above) and Hemel Hempstead to Redbourn (below)

Cycling usage data from Strava shows heavy usage of the route as a connection between each of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden. It is the most frequently used route between each of these settlements. There does however remain a significant number of journeys made by road, most notably along Redbourn Lane and the High Street as a connection between Redbourn and Harpenden. Whilst it is noted that the Strava data will not be a fully representative sample of all users, it does show the potential for further expansion in the use of the route.

### 2.3.1.2 Surfaces

Within Harpenden, up to Park Hill/ Moreton End Lane entrance, there is a tar and chip surface. This is a high specification finish which provides an attractive appearance and good accessibility.

The rest of the route has historically been surfaced with tarmac or crushed stone. The condition of this surface varies across the route. Notably poor sections include around Roundwood Halt in Harpenden (improved summer 2021), various sections through Redbourn, and the majority of the route between the M1 and Hemel Hempstead.

Vegetation encroachment has also narrowed the route considerably in sections through Redbourn and to the west of the M1.

Higher usage seen since the pandemic have exacerbated many of the issues resulting from poor surfacing, such as the poor path condition pushing users out to the edges, eroding grass verges and widening the paths.

### 2.3.1.3 Public Rights of Way

Harpenden Rural Footpath 011 crosses the line twice, connecting up to Footpath 013. These provide convenient access from elsewhere in Harpenden.

Harpenden Rural Bridleway 001 crosses between Harpenden and Redbourn and allows for access to Redbourn Golf Course and Rothamsted Estate.

Redbourn Footpath 020 provides access into Redbourn to the west, and to the east takes people to the southern end of Harpenden via Harpenden Golf Course.

Redbourn Footpath 024 follows the River Ver down to Redbourn Mill and St Albans.

Redbourn Footpaths 038, 034, 031 and 012 provide access south to a network of rural walks.

Redbourn Footpath 013 connects the line from close to Hemel Hempstead up to Redbourn Road and to Cherry Tree Lane via farm tracks.

## 2.3.2 Interpretation and Signage

### 2.3.2.1 Interpretation Boards

An interpretation board was installed in 2009 by the CMS and Friends of the Nickey Line opposite Knott Wood that portrays the wildlife that can be found on the route. This is located within a well-used section of the route where views of the adjacent countryside have been created and scallops cut, taking advantage of a prime location with interesting wildlife.

The Lost Rails project installed a board that details the history of the line. This is well positioned at a junction between paths. It previously provided audio of interviews with local people about the line, however it is damaged and now works only periodically. The sign was not installed by SADC and previous attempts to find a repair solution have not proved successful. The use of recordings was a popular feature and should be considered for future boards, potentially hosted online and accessed via QR code to minimise risk of damage and ongoing maintenance.

### 2.3.2.2 Entrance Boards



Entrance boards are located at several main access points. These provide details of ownership and contact details. In some locations the surface coating of the boards is beginning to deteriorate.

A yellow Nickey Line logo is displayed at several entrance points which helps to give the route an identity and link it with its history.

### 2.3.2.3 FoNL Notice Boards

Several notice boards are located along the route which are used by the Friends of the Nickey Line to provide updates, such as advertising upcoming events and conservation tasks.

### 2.3.2.4 Waymarking

Blue waymarking signage previously installed as part of a Sustrans project is located along the route, providing distances to nearby settlements.

### 2.3.2.5 Online Resources

The Friends of Nickey Line website is well developed and provides comprehensive information about the route.

## 2.3.3 Access Points

Access points listed are those in addition to the Public Rights of Way outlined above.

Location	Users	Signage	Notes
Hollybush Lane steps	Pedestrians Cyclists (via channel built into steps)	Nickey Line logo Entrance board Waymarking FoNL notice board	

Ambrose Lane ramp and steps	Pedestrians Cyclists Wheelchairs	Entrance board Waymarking	Well used access point. Condition of steps beginning to deteriorate.
Park Hill/ Luton Road steps	Pedestrians	Waymarking	
Park Hill level access point	Pedestrians Cyclists Wheelchairs Maintenance vehicles	Waymarking	
Park Hill/ Moreton End Lane	Pedestrians Cyclists (through access chicane)	Waymarking FoNL notice board	Main access point for Roundwood Park School
'Fiveways' connection with Townsend Lane and footpath Harpenden Rural 011	Pedestrians Cyclists (via Townsend Lane only) Maintenance vehicles	Waymarking FoNL notice board	Access gates (broken) cover approximately three quarters of the route and are largely redundant.
Redbourn Lane	Pedestrians Cyclists	Entrance board FoNL notice board Waymarking	Junction with major road Small car park
Ver Meadows Caravan Park	Pedestrians Cyclists		Bollards to restrict larger vehicles
Millennium Site	Pedestrians Cyclists Wheelchairs	Nickey Line logo Waymarking	Surfaced path leads through to High Street
High Street steps	Pedestrians	Entrance board FoNL notice board Waymarking	
Chequer Lane steps and ramp	Pedestrians Cyclists	Nickey Line logo Entrance board Waymarking	Ramp upgraded during previous GAP
Hemel Hempstead Road	Pedestrians Cyclists	Waymarking	Junction with major road
Cherry Tree Lane steps	Pedestrians	Waymarking	Condition of steps is deteriorating

### 2.3.4 Benches

There are benches at various points. These are in both an old rustic style and a newer style that was introduced in the last GAP that uses timber sleepers.

The position of benches has previously been chosen based on natural stopping points and places of interest. There is currently no minimum distance between benches.

# Nickey Line

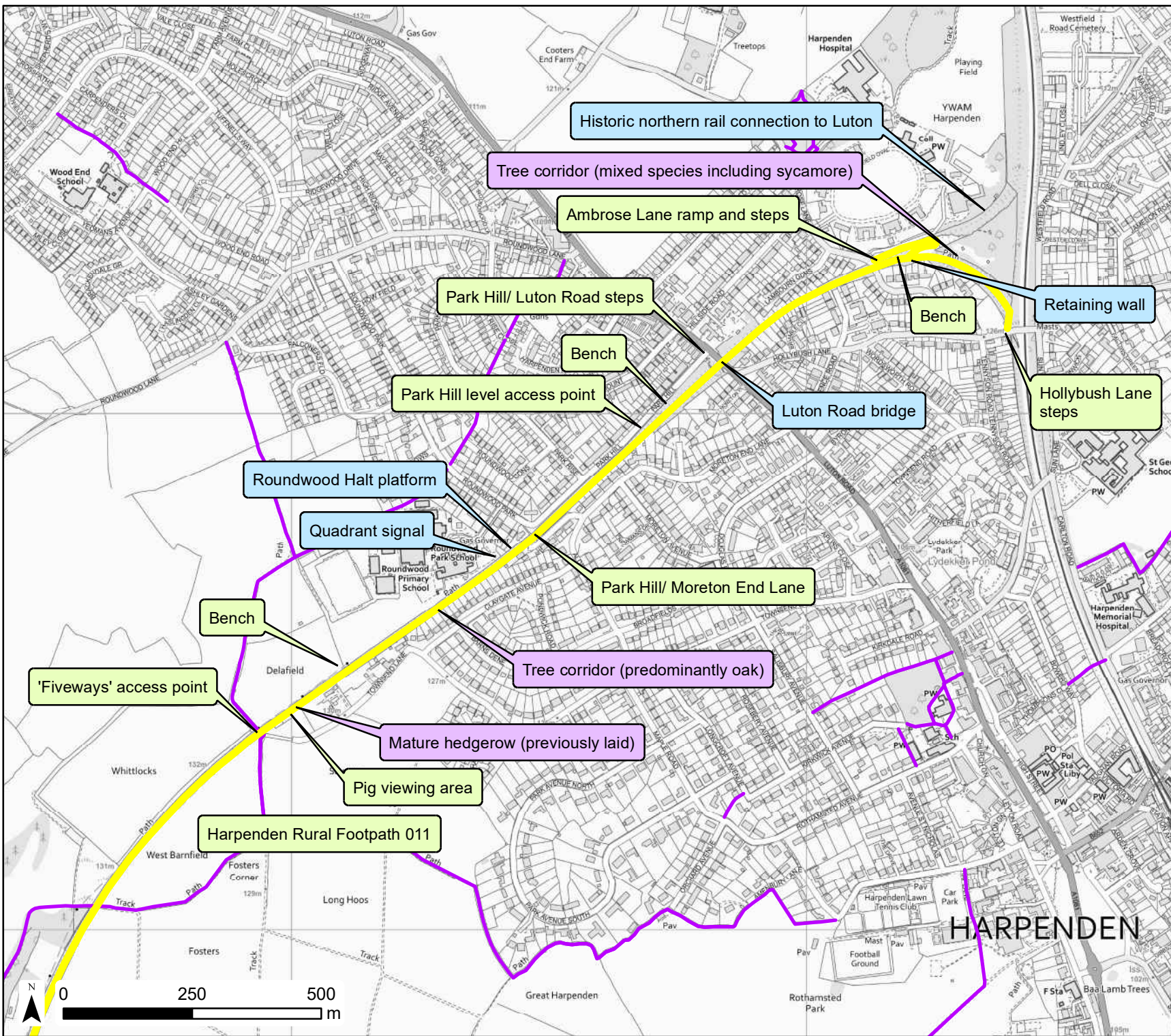
## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 1 Description

**Legend**

- Nickey Line Route
- Public Footpath

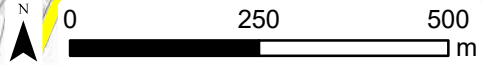
- Access
- History
- Habitat



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# Nickey Line

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 2 Description

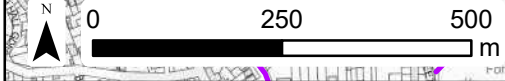
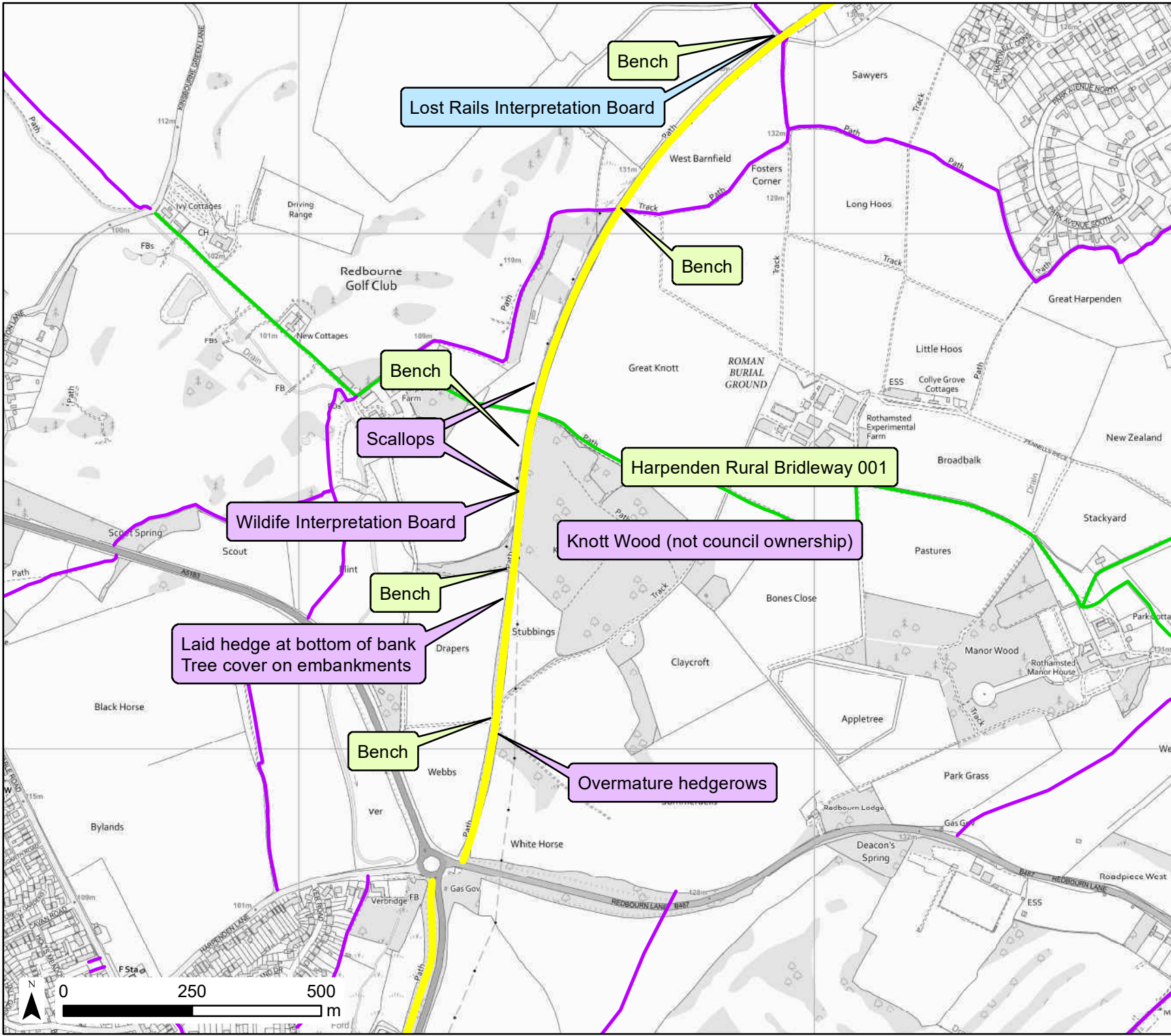
**Legend**

- Nickey Line Route
- Bridleway
- Public Footpath

**Access**

**History**

**Habitat**



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# Nickey Line

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 4 Description

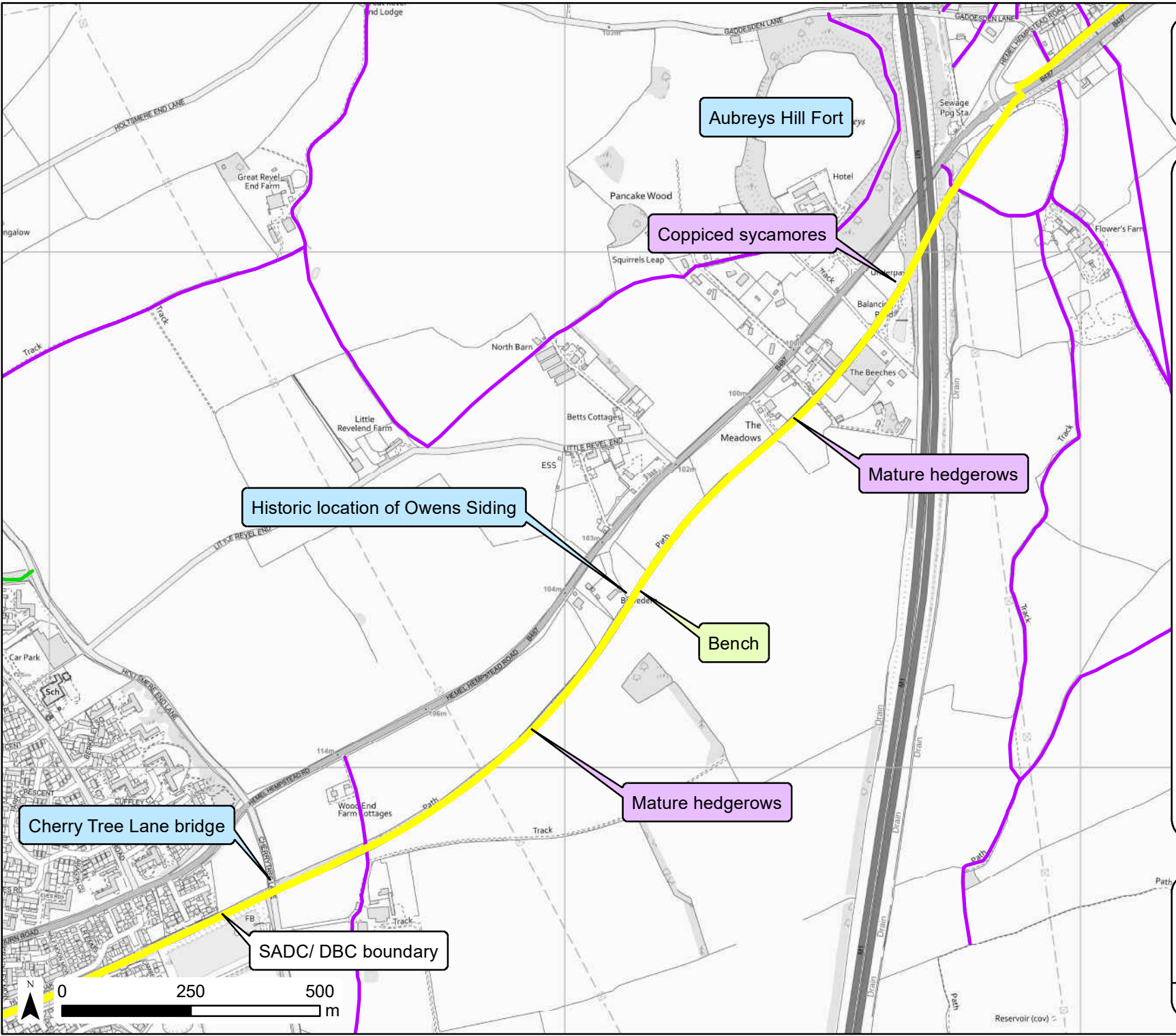
**Legend**

- Nickey Line Route
- Bridleway
- Public Footpath
- Unmetalled UCR

**Access**

**History**

**Habitat**



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### 3.0 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

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The aims and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

- A. Promote public use of all sections of the Nickey Line:
  - A1 Create a legibility to the entire route, ensuring users understand where they are in the context of the whole line
  - A2 Seek funding for the upgrade of surfaces to allow for travel between Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden for walkers, runners and cyclists and, as much as possible, for wheelchairs and pushchairs.
  - A3 Monitor usage by different user groups at various points along the route
  - A4 Create views out from the line where possible to connect users with the wider landscape
  - A5 Enhance access points, ensuring these are clearly signed and welcoming
  
- B. Ensure engagement and involvement of the local community along the route
  - B1 Support the Friends of the Nickey Line to continue running events, activities and volunteering
  - B2 Publicise and facilitate potential for involvement from each of Harpenden, Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead
  - B3 Develop a scheme of interpretation that allows people to understand the history of the line and present day points of interest, with branding to reflect the historical use as a railway
  - B4 Protect remnant features of the railway and increase their visibility to the public, including Roundwood Halt and the various rail bridges
  
- C. Enhance the Nickey Line's role in providing a green corridor
  - C1 Enhance key habitats including the trees, hedgerows and ground flora along the route
  - C2 Adopt appropriate management regimes
  - C3 Build in adaptability for the future, including the replacement of trees that die with appropriate native species
  - C4 Ensure good biosecurity practice is followed
  
- D. Provide a safe and enjoyable route
  - D1 Conduct tree risk surveys and implement mitigation works
  - D2 Improve navigation of major road junctions where possible
  - D3 Promote responsible use and minimise conflict between those using the Nickey Line by differing means of transport
  
- E. Uphold a high standard of maintenance
  - E1 Ensure surfaces are kept clear of debris and vegetation to maintain full access
  - E1 Regularly review the programme of vegetation management to ensure it continues to provide an attractive route and biodiverse habitat
  - E3 Ensure that value for money is obtained
  - E4 Install new benches, signage and other site 'furniture' as it is required and replace old ones when no longer fit for purpose
  - E5 Ensure sufficient litter bins of an appropriate size and style are provided and emptied regularly

## **4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS**

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### **4.1 Ownership and Management**

#### **4.1.1 Coordinated Management**

To ensure a coordinated approach across the different ownership boundaries, SADC, DBC and CMS will work in collaboration on key projects wherever possible to ensure plans are complementary. This will include proposals such as surfacing and interpretation.

#### **4.1.2 Friends Group Task Programme**

Within the St Albans District section, the work programmes of the Friends are agreed on an annual basis with CMS and SADC, with tasks typically drawn from the GAP.

#### **4.1.3 Maintenance Contract**

The grounds maintenance contract between SADC and John O'Connor Grounds Maintenance covers the core management tasks, including:

- Cutting grass verges, 1 metre in and 2.5m up
- Clearing leaf litter from surfaced paths
- Litter clearance and frequent bin emptying
- Fly tip removal

Graffiti has occurred previously at various points along the route, but is more common on bridges. This is detrimental to the appearance of the Nickey Line. SADC aim to remove graffiti as quickly as possible, usually within five working days. Racist or obscene graffiti will be removed within 24 hours.

### **4.2 Habitats and Wildlife**

#### **4.2.1 Ground Flora**

##### *4.2.1.1 Scallops between Harpenden and Redbourn*

The FoNL have successfully established and continue to maintain several scallops to the south of Harpenden close to Knott Wood. Continuation of managing these with a cut and lift at the end of each summer will ensure a valuable grassland habitat. Should the conservation volunteers have enough resource further scallops can be created within natural breaks in the trees further to the north.

These will typically be managed with a single cut at the end of the year with cuttings removed from site. If new scallops are established these will have three cuts in their first year in approximately April, July and September, with arisings removed in order to lower soil fertility and promote species diversity.

#### *4.2.1.2 New orchard area in Redbourn*

The area of scrub cleared within Redbourn in the previous GAP will be managed with a late season meadow cut. Over time this will encourage the establishment of a diverse range of plant species that will support wildlife including bees and butterflies.

Local origin fruit trees were also planted. Any failures will be replaced as required.

From year 4 when trees have successfully established part of the fencing alongside the route can be removed to encourage access, with a path and culvert established over the ditch running parallel to the Nickey Line. Minor works will be required to ensure new access routes in a level.

#### *4.2.1.3 Scrub clearance to east of M1*

A relatively open section immediately to the east of the M1 has areas of grassland that are gradually being lost to scrub. These will be cleared and managed with an end of year wildflower cut to encourage greater species diversity.

#### *4.2.1.4 Grass verges*

Grass verges will be cut as part of the grounds maintenance contract, keeping these as rough grass. This will provide a further habitat whilst also preventing encroachment of vegetation onto the path.

### **4.2.2 Hedgerows**

#### *4.2.2.1 Compartment 1*

##### *4.2.2.1.1 Infill planting by Townsend Lane Farm*

Plant new native hedge species based primarily around hawthorn and hazel within gaps in the previously laid hedge, maintaining the viewing area of the pigs.

#### *4.2.2.2 Compartment 2*

##### *4.2.2.2.1 Hazel coppice by Knott Wood*

Continued coppicing on rotation by FoNL volunteers will ensure the hedgerow remains a valuable habitat and that views can be maintained into Knott Wood.

##### *4.2.2.2.2 Hedge Laying to the South of Knott Wood*

With the route located above the surrounding area, hedge laying by FoNL volunteers at the bottom of the embankment has enabled views out across the landscape. Establishing such views connect users of the route with the locations they are passing through.

Ongoing hedge laying can be carried out to extend the current section, with infill planting introduced where needed. New planting should be predominantly hawthorn.

#### *4.2.2.2.3 Overmature hedgerows*

At the southern end of the compartment the route drops to a lower height than the embankments. At this point there are mature hazel coppice. These are shading out ground flora and would benefit from re-coppicing.

Efforts were made during the previous GAP by volunteer parties to bring these areas under active management. However there are a number of large specimens that will require works carried out by contractors.

#### *4.2.2.3 Compartment 3*

##### *4.2.2.3.1 Hawthorn Hedge Laying near Ver Meadows*

A hawthorn hedge alongside Redbourn Bypass is overmature and would ideally be managed through hedge laying.

Due to overhead cables and requirements for road traffic control this work will be carried out by a contractor.

##### *4.2.2.3.2 Entrance to Millennium Site*

The southwesterly entrance point to the Millennium Site is a small gap within the hedge that can easily be missed. As a picnic site the area can be a valuable stop off point along the route and should be promoted to users. This can be done by widening the gap in the hedge, which could be completed as a volunteer task.

##### *4.2.2.3.3 Hazel coppice through Redbourn*

The entire length of the section between Chequer Lane and Redbourn bypass was coppiced in the previous GAP. These will typically need re-coppicing approximately every 7 years, which will not fall within this GAP.

The additional light created by the previous coppicing has enabled some self-seeded sycamore to establish. These will need to be removed periodically to ensure these do not become established and shade out the hazel.

#### *4.2.2.4 Compartment 4*

##### *4.2.2.4.1 Sycamore coppice close to M1*

Tall sycamore trees that had been historically coppiced were re-coppiced in the previous GAP, opening up light on this section of the route. Infill planting can be carried out as a volunteer task beside this regenerating sycamore coppice to establish a more diverse hedgerow.

Further sycamore coppicing carried out by contractors would further improve light levels within this section.

#### 4.2.2.4.2 *Opening pockets of lights*

Throughout compartment 4 sections of poor quality or overmature hedgerow will be coppiced to improve light levels. These sections will be around 20-50m in length.

One such location will be at Owen's Sidings, where a bench is located. Previous clearance on the northern side has established views across the adjoining field. Reduction of cover on the southern side would make this a more attractive place to stop and encourage greater diversity of ground flora.

### 4.2.3 **Trees**

#### 4.2.3.1 *Tree Health*

##### 4.2.3.1.1 *Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)*

###### If oak processionary moth is suspected on site:

If a potential oak processionary moth (OPM) sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, the following actions will be taken within the first 48 hours:

1. The exact location will be recorded and photographs of observable caterpillars, nests and webbing will be obtained and sent to the Forestry Commission (FC) for official identification.  
Email: [OPM@forestrycommission.gov.uk](mailto:OPM@forestrycommission.gov.uk)
2. Notices will be posted at prominent access points and close to the location of the sighting to alert people accessing the site to the possible presence of OPM.  
Link: [./OPMPublicInformationPoster\\_06APR16\\_print.pdf](#)
3. Relevant partners will be informed to ensure that activities are conducted safely or cancelled where necessary.
4. The specific location of the sighting will be assessed with consideration to the typical use of the site. If OPM is identified within close proximity to areas assessed as posing a high risk of public contact then additional precautions such as additional signage or temporary fencing will be taken to reduce the risk of public contact with OPM caterpillars and nests.

###### Once OPM is confirmed on site:

If OPM is confirmed on site by the FC – either a) following submission of photos from a suspected sighting to the FC or b) through the FC issuing a statutory plant health notice following OPM identification as part of the FC's monitoring programme – then appropriate control measures will be determined within five working days of the FC's confirmed identification.

###### Initial OPM control measures

While this document outlines the intended process for OPM control this may be adjusted in line with additional instructions included in the statutory plant health notice issued by the FC.

The OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable and is discovered in time to complete spraying before caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying represents the best control to limit further advancement of the population.

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable but is discovered after caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying in the current season does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. In this case nest removal should be conducted if a) the infestation is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August), or b) if nests are in close proximity to high risk areas. Insecticide spraying should then be conducted within acceptable areas the following season.

Following assessment, if spraying in the current season or nest removal is appropriate then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be instructed to take appropriate action as soon as possible (typically within five working days). Arborists will be required to conduct insecticide spraying, nest removals and waste disposal in line with FC guidance as set out in chapters 6-7 of the OPM Manual.

Chapter 6: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-proceSSIONEA/opm-manual-6-chemical-control-larvae/>

Chapter 7: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-proceSSIONEA/opm-manual-7-manual-removal-nests-and-larvae/>

#### Subsequent OPM control measures

Based on current FC policy and practice, sites of OPM infestations within the 'control zone' (encompassing the entire county of Hertfordshire) are typically included in the FC's inspection and insecticide spraying programme for two seasons following the initial discovery. The FC informs landowners that are to be included in this programme by February of each year. The FC will be contacted (if no communication has been received) by late-February in the two seasons following the initial discovery to confirm whether the site is to be included in the programme. If the site is not included in the FC's programme then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be engaged to conduct insecticide spraying following caterpillar emergence.

Whether insecticide spraying is conducted by the FC or by an appointed arborist the contractors will be required to operate in accordance with FC guidance (outlined above).

Once insecticide spraying has occurred, a suitably qualified and experienced arborist can be instructed to carry out nest removal. This will be conducted only when nests are in close proximity to high risk areas.

Following two seasons of spraying the FC will be consulted to confirm whether OPM has been successfully eradicated from the site. If OPM is still present the FC will be consulted on appropriate future action.

#### *4.2.3.1.2 Ash Dieback*

As ash dieback reaches the upper canopy of trees and impacts upon more mature trees, these may require removal. Consideration of this will be in ongoing tree risk assessments. Where replanting will be beneficial this will be done with other native species such as oak.

#### *4.2.3.2 Tree Cover alongside Park Hill*

Tall canopy cover along the route parallel to Park Hill, at the end closest to Luton Road, is shading the route. 4m either side of the route will be cleared of trees and shrubs to provide more light penetration for ground flora. The width of the embankments at this stage will leave a good buffer of tree cover further from the path combined with improved ground flora that will result in a more diverse habitat.

#### **4.2.4 Woodland & Rivers**

The secondary woodlands adjoining the River Ver and River Red are owned by HCC Highways and are outside of the management agreement with SADC. HCC Highways have confirmed they are happy for works to be carried out by CMS within this area.

The main benefit will come from reducing shading of the river channel. The Ver Valley Society have expressed an interest in supporting this work.

### **4.3 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

#### **4.3.1 Green Infrastructure Network**

##### *4.3.1.1 Surfaces*

It is acknowledged from the public engagement of this plan that there are varying opinions on the best choice of surfacing for the Nickey Line. Whilst many respondents supported a tarmac surface others raised concerns about its visual appearance in a rural setting and had concerns around cycling speed.

The primary objective of this plan in relation to the surfacing is to improve accessibility, ensuring the route can be used and enjoyed by as many people as possible throughout the year. It can allow people to use the route for local journeys such as travelling to work or to school. Sealed surfaces are the best way to achieve this as they can be used by pedestrians, runners, all cyclists, mobility scooters, wheelchairs and pushchairs.

An aspiration of this plan therefore is to provide sealed surfacing along the entire length of the Nickey Line. This will be delivered as and when funding can be obtained and as such is likely to be upgraded in small sections at a time. Wherever feasible, the route will be upgraded to be in line with LTN1/20 cycle design guidance.

Surfacing will predominantly be with tarmac. Evidence from other multi-user routes such as the Alban Way has shown this greatly increases access for users. Whilst the Nickey Line is rural for much of its length, it is also a route of industrial origin and transport is at the core of its heritage. Nevertheless, at particularly visually sensitive points, and where funding allows, a higher specification resin bound surface or tar and chip surface can be installed, such as that located within Harpenden. The higher usage currently observed in Harpenden is likely to reflect the stronger connections onto the route and the better condition of the surface.

Tarmacadam surfacing is proposed within the Dacorum Borough Council section of the route. Surfacing from Maylands Business Park up to Cherry Tree Lane (within the St Albans section) was carried out in summer 2021.

#### 4.3.1.2 Multi-User Management

Usage of the Nickey Line has increased in recent years and further surfacing improvements would be expected to increase usage further. This develops the potential for conflict between users, notably cyclists, pedestrians and dog walkers. Concerns have been raised about cyclists travelling at unsafe speeds, particularly on the downhill sections.

The nature of the Nickey Line as a former railway line means that bends are gradual and maintain sightlines of over 100m. A cyclist travelling fast at 40kph should be able to stop in less than 50m. Issues therefore are less likely to stem from users unexpectedly meeting each other, but by poor conduct when they do pass. To minimise conflict the following steps will be followed to manage multiple different users:

- New surfacing installed to at least 3m width, ideally with a further strip of amenity grass either side. This will allow users the space to safely navigate past each other
- Signage on entrance denoting a shared use route and promoting respect for other users
- Have shared use signage promoting a code of conduct, including:
  - Look out for and be respectful of other users
  - Cycle at a safe speed and take extra care when passing dogs, children, older people and wheelchairs
  - Keep dogs under control
  - Cyclists use a bell or call ahead to warn those you are approaching from behind
  - Make sure you are visible in dark conditions



Shared route signage from Greenwood Park (left) and the Cole Green Way (right)

Separated sections for cyclists and pedestrians is not a viable option due to the overall limited width of the path, which in many places is limited to around 3m by existing hedgerows and embankments. Designating only 1.5m for each user is unlikely to be followed in practice and would lead to greater conflict and potentially irresponsible behaviour from one user feeling ownership of their space.

Speed reduction measures such as chicanes or additional signage are not desirable additions to the route but will be considered at critical positions if there is a clear need for it, such as at Fiveways on the entrance to Harpenden.

#### *4.3.1.3 Short-term Surfacing Repairs*

Parts of the route will require work to ensure they remain easily passable throughout the year.

Over summer 2021 accumulated organic material was removed from the section between Roundwood Halt and Fiveways. To the southwest of Roundwood Halt for approximately 175m a new layer of crushed stone surfacing will be applied in year 1 of the plan, along with new drainage. This will provide immediate improvements to access over remaining wet sections but will not preclude the area from a future sealed surface, where the crushed stone would form the sub-base.

Further ad-hoc improvements will be actioned when identified and where funding is available. This will include muddy sections in the section between Harpenden and Redbourn Lane.

#### *4.3.1.4 Lighting*

There are no plans to introduce lighting along the route at present. However, this can be reviewed in future should usage increase to a point where lighting would be fundamental to the safe use of the route. Any introduction of lighting would need to follow recommendations from ecological surveys.

#### *4.3.1.5 Permitted Users*

The Nickey Line is available for use by a foot and non-motorised vehicles such as bikes and wheelchairs. Mobility scooters are also permitted. Electric scooters are not permitted.

Access to the Nickey Line is not permissible for horse riders. The route presents a series of specific obstacles and safety concerns for horse riders, including road crossings, steep gradients and bridges with long drops either side. A change to this policy could potentially encourage horse riders to use the route in the belief that it is suitable and as such there are no plans to permit horse riding.

#### *4.3.1.6 Road Crossings*

The Nickey Line crosses roads at:

- the roundabout of Redbourn Lane and Redbourn Bypass
- Chequer Lane in Redbourn

- Redbourn Bypass at the western end of Redbourn

This GAP is written for areas under management by SADC. The road crossings fall under responsibility of Hertfordshire Highways and are therefore beyond the scope of this plan. However, discussions will be held with Hertfordshire Highways about potential options. SADC and CMS will engage positively with any proposals for improvements.

## **4.3.2 Interpretation and Signage**

### *4.3.2.1 Historical Features*

FoNL have regularly cleared vegetation to maintain good visibility of bridges and on the Roundwood Halt platform. This has helped to bring these features to prominence and continued management of the vegetation can be carried out when needed.

Larger scale vegetation works would be required to establish good views of the Ambrose Lane and Cherry Tree Lane bridges and would require a contractor. This will also encourage greater ground flora, diversifying the habitat of this section of the route. Note that responsibility for the bridge structures is with Hertfordshire Highways.

The Millennium Site is used as a picnic site and complements the leisurely use of the Nickey Line, however visibility into this area is poor and can easily be missed by users of the route. Cutting back the vegetation at the westernmost entrance would be an easy and effective way to improve its visibility.

### *4.3.2.2 Interpretation Boards*

Interpretation boards will be installed at a series of historical points of interest, such as former stations and sidings. They will seek to tell the story of the Nickey Line throughout the years and allow people to visualise how the route would have looked.

Collectively the interpretation boards will present the Nickey Line as a series of stops along a route. This will provide an overall orientation to the route, highlight positions of interest and connect the route back to its origins as a railway line.

The style of the interpretation boards will be designed to reflect the setting and the historical use of the route. This will be procured from an external design company.

Where possible and at notable locations, the interpretation can extend into the surrounding features. For example, installing a hut at Roundwood Halt reminiscent of the one that would have been present when it was an active railway platform. This could be used for displays such as educational material.

### *4.3.2.3 Entrance Boards*

With some of the existing entrance boards beginning to deteriorate these will be replaced with new entrance signs, matching the style of the interpretation boards. These can be relatively simple signs featuring a route map and key locations alongside some outline information about the route.

Any new signage installed at the Hollybush Lane steps should include clear signage to direct cyclists to the easier entrance point from Ambrose Lane.

#### **4.3.2.4 Leaflets**

Leaflets for the Nickey Line have not been updated for many years. Leaflets with updated information can help to introduce the site to new users and will be included within any interpretation project.

### **4.3.3 Access Points**

The Moreton End Lane/ Park Hill access point will be made as easier to navigate for cyclists whilst still restricting larger motorised vehicles by replacing the chicanes with bollards.

Steps at Ambrose Lane will be repaired should these deteriorate to an unsafe condition, or if funding can be found.

The access point from Cherry Tree Lane will ideally be converted into a full access ramp for cyclists and disabled users. This will become increasingly important with the proposed residential developments in the vicinity. This will be pursued if funding comes forward or will be supported by SADC if brought forward by another organisation. Short term repair to fencing and steps are proposed to improve the usability of the current provision.

At Fiveways the redundant gates will be removed.

During the previous GAP the ramps at Chequer Lane in Redbourn were improved with tarmac surfacing to enhance cycling access and dropped kerbs at road edges. There are a few remnant support poles protruding from the old timber sleeper edging. These are not on the route itself and do not present an unacceptable risk, however they will be removed if possible when works are carried out in the vicinity.

### **4.3.4 Benches**

Additional benches will be installed to allow for more rest points. This will make the route more accessible for older people and those with disabilities. The placement of benches will aim to have no more than 500m between rest points.

Benches will match the timber sleeper style introduced as part of the previous GAP. Where space allows two of these will be placed alongside one another to create greater capacity for seating. Ideally these will also have greater depth than those previously installed.

Existing benches will be replaced as and when required. This includes the current broken bench at Fiveways and near Woodend Farm

### **4.3.5 Bins**

Bins are located at intervals along the length of the Nickey Line and emptied as part of the ground's maintenance contract.

A new bin will be installed at the western end of Redbourn

The bins will include a sticker to state that they can be used for dog waste.

Whenever bins require replacement, they will be replaced in a style in keeping with the character of the Nickey Line.

#### **4.4 Funding**

Many items within this plan are dependent upon funding being sourced. CMS will lead on funding applications to external organisations. These will be developed alongside FoNL to ensure the effective delivery of community engagement aspects of funding bids. This is likely to include a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund early on within the GAP.

A notable source of potential income includes planning obligations from nearby developments (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy). This will be particularly relevant for projects to enhance access and sustainable transport.

## 5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

### 5.1 ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
0.1	Cutting grass verges	E1	Spring/ Summer	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.2	Clearance of organic matter from surfaced paths	E1	Late winter	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.3	Litter clearance	E3	All year	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.4	Bin emptying	E3	All year	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.5	Fly tip removal	E3	Ad hoc	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.6	Wildflower cut to orchard area in Redbourn	C1	September	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.7	Clearance of vegetation to maintain visibility of signage and road sightlines	A1	All year	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.8	Scallop maintenance	C1	Aug/Sept	FONL	Volunteers	-	-	Ongoing
0.9	Sycamore removal amongst hazel coppice in Redbourn	C1, C2	Autumn/ Winter	FONL	Volunteers	-	-	Ongoing
0.10	Monitor for OPM and other diseases	C3	All year, focus March- May	All	All	-	-	Ongoing
0.11	Maintenance of vegetation beside rail bridges	B4	Autumn/ Winter	FONL	Volunteers	-	-	Ongoing

0.12	Applications for funding	B3	Ongoing	CMS	Officers	-	-	Ongoing
0.13	Tree risk surveys and mitigation work	D1	All year	SADC	Officers	SADC	Internal budget	Ongoing
0.14	Maintain sightlines at Chequer Lane crossing	A5, D2	Autumn/Winter	SADC	GM Team	SADC	GM Budget	Ongoing
0.14	Continued hedge laying and infill planting south of Knott Wood	C2, C4	Autumn/Winter	FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£100	Ongoing
0.15	Ongoing graffiti removal as required		All year	SADC	GM Team	SADC	Internal budget	Ongoing

## 5.2 ASPIRATIONS UPON FUNDING

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
0.15	Install sealed surface to entire length of route	A2	Any	CMS	Contractor	External	£1.025m	Ongoing as funding identified – planned section at Harpenden
0.16	Full scheme of interpretation across SADC/DBC ownership, including new signage and leaflet	B3	Any	CMS	Contractor	External	£35,000	Lottery funding application in development
0.17	Further coppicing of overmature hedgerows in selective locations within Compartment 4	A4, C2	Autumn/Winter	CMS	Contractor	External	£20,000	No funding yet identified
0.18	Support any proposals from Hertfordshire Highways to improve road crossings at Redbourn	A2	Any	HCC	Contractor	TBC	TBC	Designs developed and funding

								applications submitted by Highways
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### 5.3 YEAR 1 2022-23

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
1.1	Scrub clearance to east of the M1	C1	Autumn/ Winter	FONL	Volunteers	-	-	Complete
1.2	Ongoing hazel coppice beside Knott Wood	C2, C4	Autumn/ Winter	FONL	Volunteers	-	-	Complete
1.3	Coppice overmature hedgerows at southern end of Rothamsted estate	C2	Autumn/ Winter	CMS	Contractor	SADC	£3,000	Not complete, subject to funding
1.4	Tree reduction beside rivers	C2	Autumn/ Winter	CMS/ VVS	Volunteers	-	-	
1.5	Agree code of conduct and develop designs for signage	B3	Any	All	Officers	-	-	Signage to be included in lottery bid
1.6	Develop design brief and procure initial set of interpretation	A1, B3	Any	CMS	Officers	SADC/ External funding	£3,000	Brief being developed for lottery bid
1.7	Remove gates from 'Fiveways'	E4, A5	Any	SADC	Contractor	SADC	£250	Works instructed
1.8	Install new benches. Review existing ones for repair/ replacement	E4	Any	CMS/ FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£1,250	Several benches installed.

								Lottery funding application may allow for further additions.
1.9	Hedgerow reduction on approach to Hemel Hempstead	C2	Autumn/Winter	FoNL	Volunteers	-	-	Complete
2.0	Repair work to steps and fencing at Cherry Tree Lane	A5	Any	CMS/FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£750	Complete
2.1	Carry out improvements to surfacing and drainage southwest of Roundwood Halt	A2	Any	CMS	Contractor	HCC	£25,000	Complete

#### 5.4 YEAR 2 2023-24

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
2.1	Coppicing overmature sycamore stools to west of M1	C2, C4	Autumn/Winter	CMS	Contractor	SADC/ External funding	£5,000	Can be completed if funding available – lower priority
2.2	Establish pocket of light around Owen's Siding	A4, B4, C1	Autumn/Winter	CMS	Contractor	SADC	£2,000	Completed

2.3	Infill plant gaps within hedgerow at Townsend Lane farm.	C1, C3, C4	Autumn/ Winter	FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£150	Ideally to be done alongside laying/ coppicing – to review with CMS vols lead
2.4	Widen entrance to Millennium Site	A5	Autumn/ Winter	FoNL	Volunteers	-	-	

### 5.5 YEAR 3 2024-25

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
3.1	Install new benches. Review existing ones for repair/ replacement	E4	Any	CMS/ FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£750	As per 1.8
3.2	Replace squeeze bars with bollards at Moreton End Lane/ Park Hill	A5	Any	CMS/ SADC	Contractor	External/ SADC	£750	Subject to funding
3.3	Hawthorn hedge laying near Ver Meadows	C1, C4	Autumn/ Winter	CMS	Contractor	SADC	£5,000	Subject to funding
3.4	Remove fencing from new meadow/ orchard at Redbourn when trees established	E4	Any	CMS/ FoNL	Volunteers	-	-	Ready to be progressed
3.5	Infill planting amongst sycamore coppice to west of M1	C2, C3	Autumn/ Winter	FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£100	Complete – establishment success to be reviewed

### 5.6 YEAR 4 2025-26

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
4.1	Reduce shading from tree cover over the route along Park Hill.	C1	Autumn/ Winter	CMS	Contractor	SADC	£5,000	Subject to funding

## 5.7 YEAR 5 2026-27

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Status
5.1	Install new benches. Review existing ones for repair/ replacement	E4	Any	CMS/ FoNL	Volunteers	SADC	£250	As per 1.8
5.2	Reduce tree cover to create views of Cherry Tree Lane bridge and improve light levels	B4	Autumn/ Winter	CMS	Contractor	SADC	£5,000	

**Task Responsibility**

- District led } Officer/ Contractor delivered
- CMS led } Officer/ Contractor delivered
- FoNL led } Volunteer delivered
- CMS led } Volunteer delivered

# Nickey Line

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 1 Action Plan

**Legend**

- Nickey Line Route
- Annual/ Regular
- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Aspiration


**Aspirations Upon Funding**

- Sealed surfacing to all sections ■
- Interpretation at key locations ■

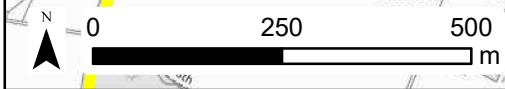
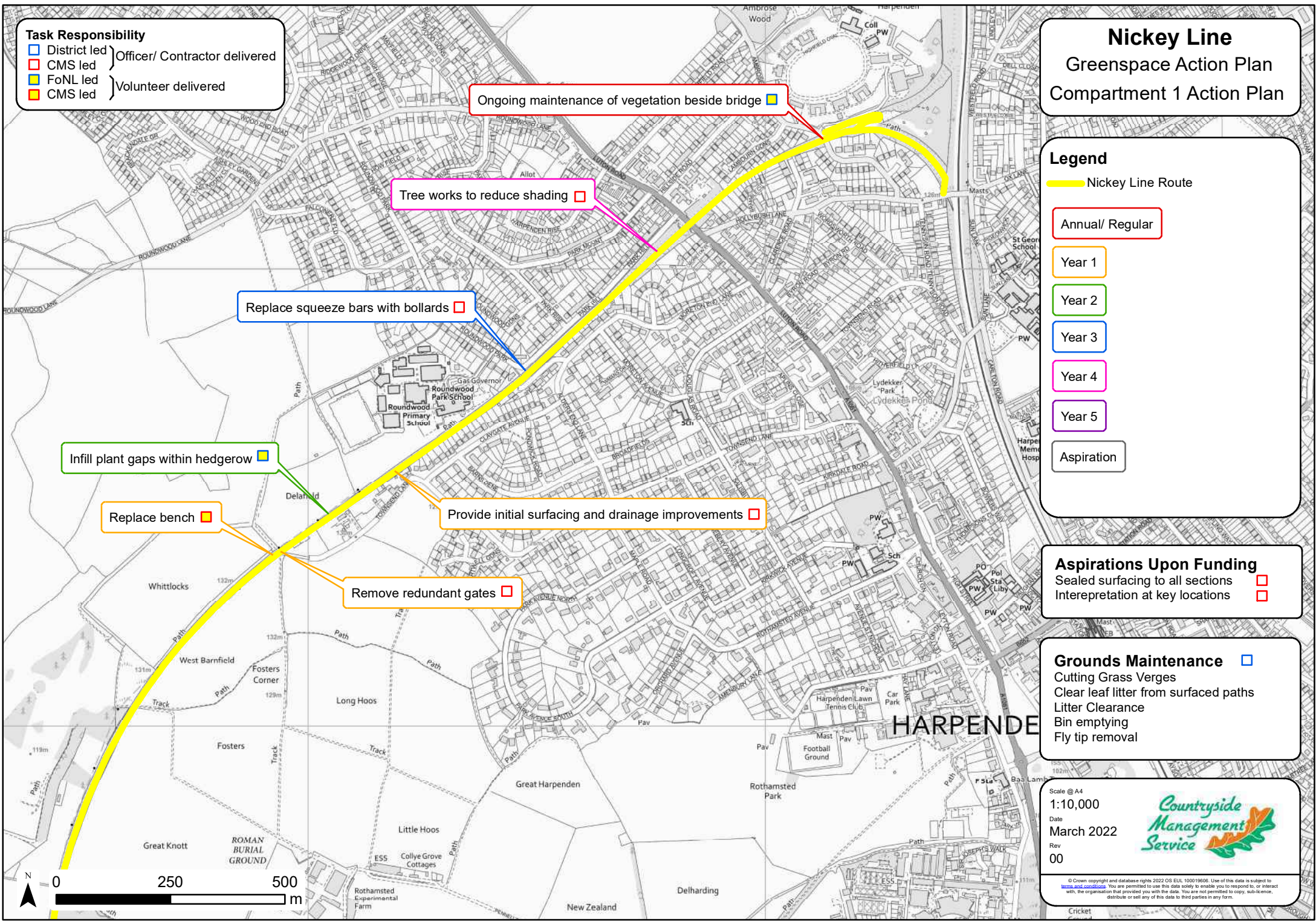
**Grounds Maintenance** ■

- Cutting Grass Verges
- Clear leaf litter from surfaced paths
- Litter Clearance
- Bin emptying
- Fly tip removal

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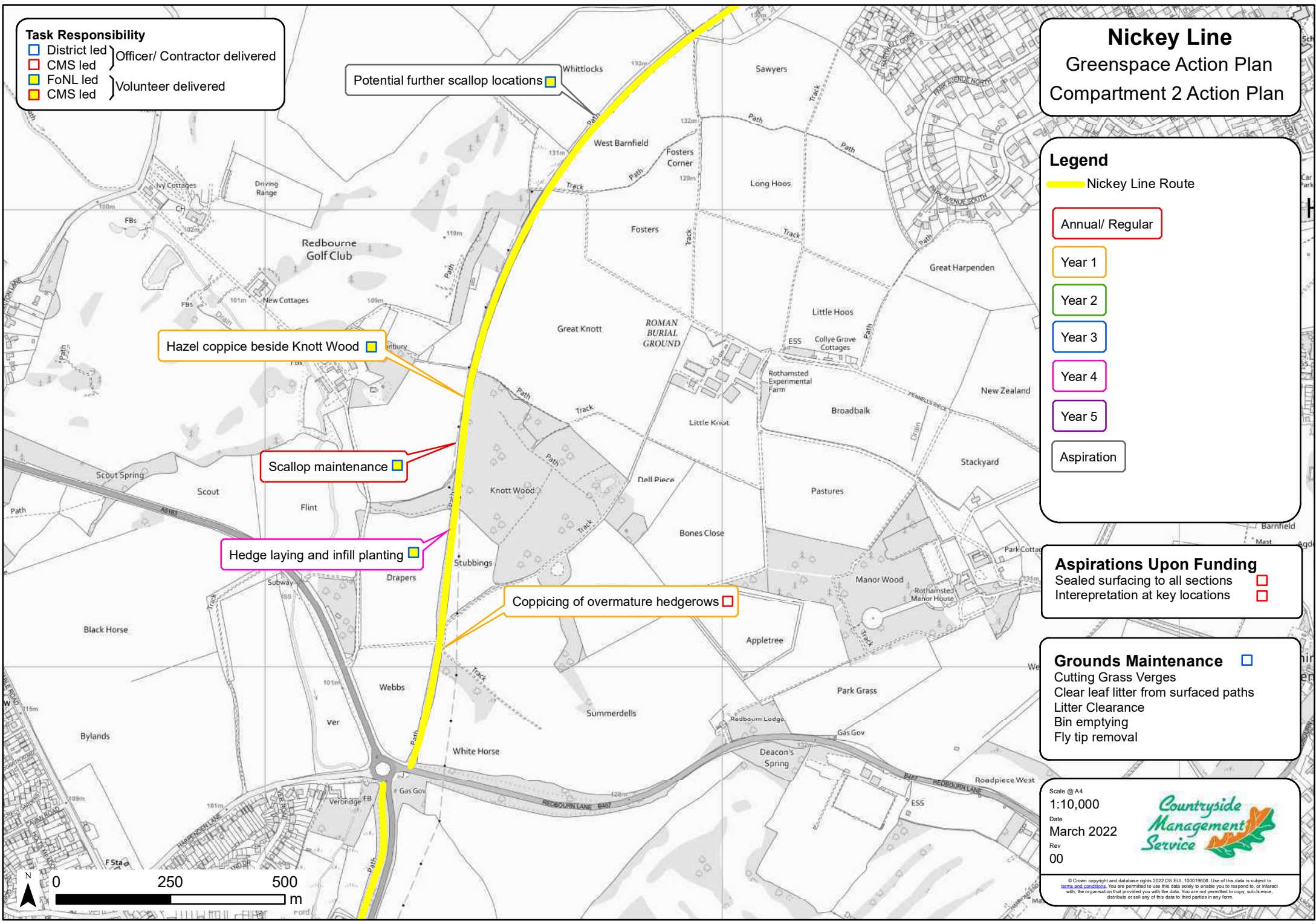
**Task Responsibility**

- District led } Officer/ Contractor delivered
- CMS led } Officer/ Contractor delivered
- FoNL led } Volunteer delivered
- CMS led } Volunteer delivered

# Nickey Line

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 2 Action Plan



**Legend**

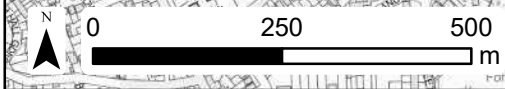
- Nickey Line Route
- Annual/ Regular
- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Aspiration

**Aspirations Upon Funding**

- Sealed surfacing to all sections ■
- Interepretation at key locations ■

**Grounds Maintenance** ■

- Cutting Grass Verges
- Clear leaf litter from surfaced paths
- Litter Clearance
- Bin emptying
- Fly tip removal



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**Task Responsibility**

- District led ) Officer/ Contractor delivered
- CMS led )
- FoNL led ) Volunteer delivered
- CMS led )

# Nickey Line

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 3 Action Plan

**Legend**

Nickey Line Route

- Annual/ Regular
- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Aspiration

**Aspirations Upon Funding**

- Sealed surfacing to all sections
- Interepretation at key locations


**Grounds Maintenance**

- Cutting Grass Verges
- Clear leaf litter from surfaced paths
- Litter Clearance
- Bin emptying
- Fly tip removal

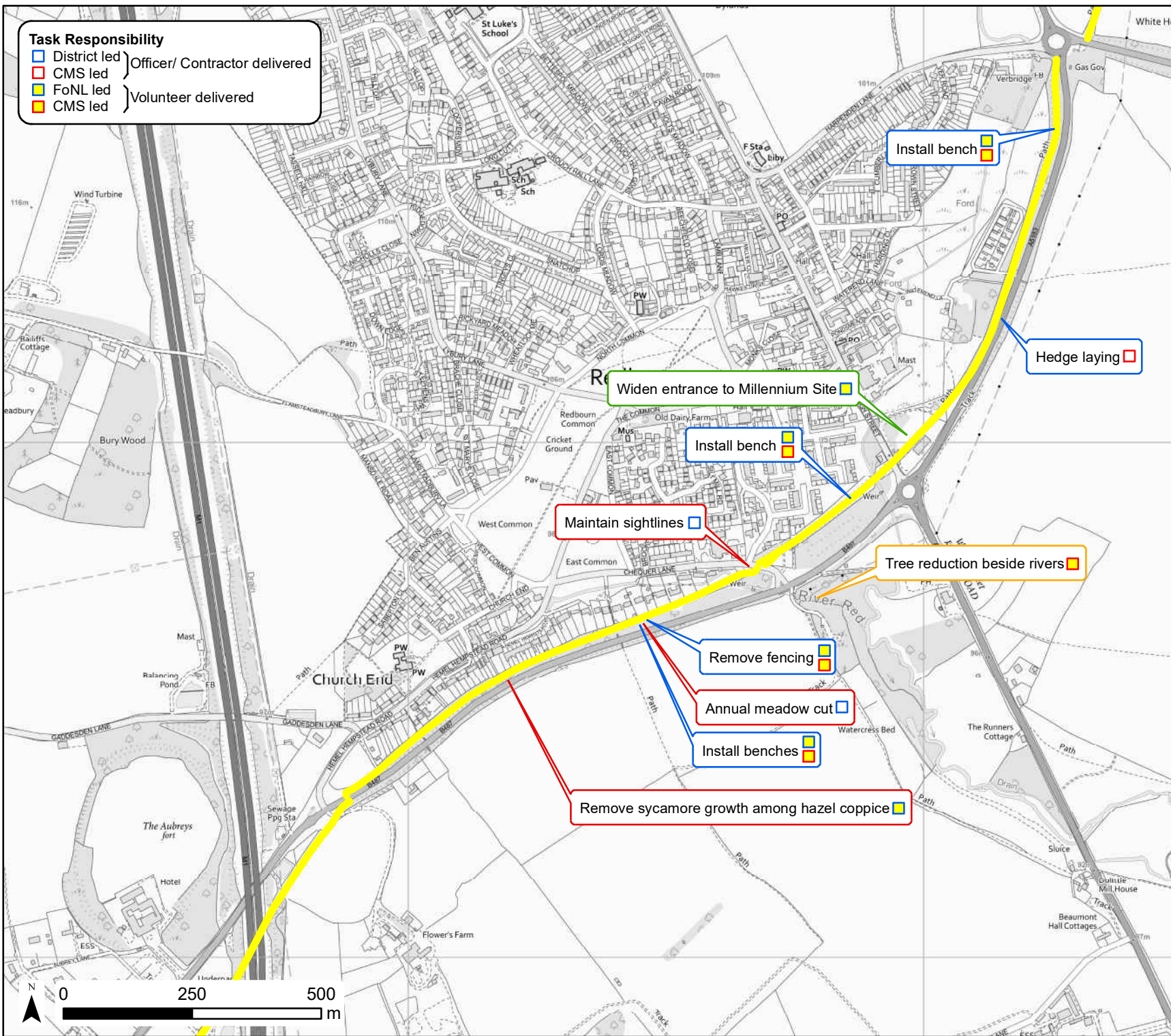
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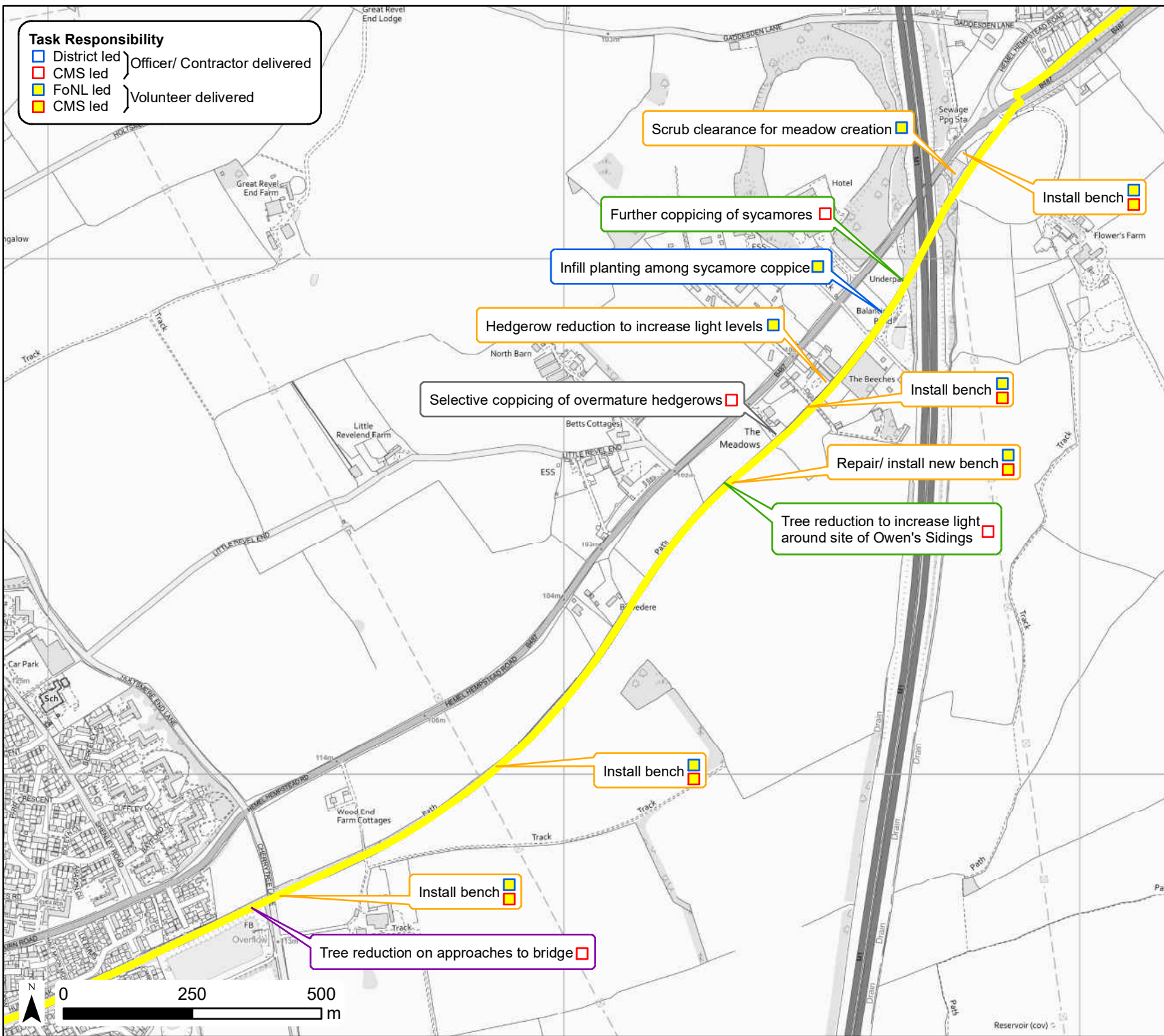
**Task Responsibility**

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<span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> </span> CMS led	
<span style="border: 1px solid yellow; padding: 2px;"> </span> FoNL led	} Volunteer delivered
<span style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 2px;"> </span> CMS led	

# Nickey Line

## Greenspace Action Plan

### Compartment 4 Action Plan



**Legend**

Nickey Line Route

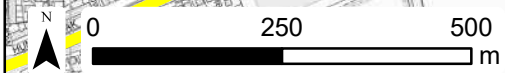
<span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> </span> Annual/ Regular
<span style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 2px;"> </span> Year 1
<span style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 2px;"> </span> Year 2
<span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px;"> </span> Year 3
<span style="border: 1px solid pink; padding: 2px;"> </span> Year 4
<span style="border: 1px solid purple; padding: 2px;"> </span> Year 5
<span style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 2px;"> </span> Aspiration

**Aspirations Upon Funding**

Sealed surfacing to all sections	<span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> </span>
Interepretation at key locations	<span style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;"> </span>

**Grounds Maintenance**  

- Cutting Grass Verges
- Clear leaf litter from surfaced paths
- Litter Clearance
- Bin emptying
- Fly tip removal



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## 6.0 APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Public Engagement Responses

Category	Comment (summarised)	Response/ Action
Wildlife	Wildflower areas are tiny and there must be scope for expansion	<p>The small orchard area within Redbourn will be managed for wildlife, including butterflies by taking a single cut from August onwards.</p> <p>There are no formal beds along the route however SADC take this approach where possible within other parks and greenspaces.</p>
	There are few butterfly records compared to equivalent parks of its size	
	New trees and replacement trees should be native and disease resistant elm	
	Formal flowerbeds and shrubs should be planned with the needs of pollinators in mind	
	Potential to tie in with the Wilder St Albans initiative and improve biodiversity, notably for butterflies. Seek a more varied habitat, with fewer dark overgrown areas (e.g. through coppicing). Reduce flower rich grasslands by removing scrub/ trees and reducing soil fertility, particularly in chalk areas. Increase trackside management to allow more open areas of woodland where sun reaches the ground for a significant part of the day.	
Potential to be a flagship site for Wilder St Albans initiative		
Road Crossings	Road crossings at either end of Redbourn need improvement. Aspiration for fly-over crossings at both junctions.	<p>The GAP is produced only for areas under the management of St Albans City &amp; District Council. The road crossings are the responsibility of Hertfordshire Highways and we will work with them whenever possible to improve safety.</p> <p>SADC will endeavour to improve crossings as much as possible within their ownership for example if issues arise around sight lines</p>
	Main deterrent are the crossings at Harpenden Lane/ Redbourn Lane roundabout. Welcome anything to improve safety and sight lines.	
	Motorists have priority at Redbourn Bypass and don't give way to cyclists. Needs to recognise safety. Requires lolly pop type sign so that they are aware it is a crossing or painted lines/ bicycle image. Should reflect pending changes to the Highway Code to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles.	
	Improve safety at major road crossings. Crossings in Redbourn disincentivise many users. Needs to be a priority if it is to become a safe route for schools and commuting.	
	Better crossing arrangements at the Harpenden Lane roundabout	

	Schoolchildren and adults use the Nickey Line at busy times, following government advice to cycle. Rely on goodwill of traffic to stop and let them cross. Apply pressure to Highways to remedy the precarious crossing at Redbourn Lane roundabout.	
User Management	Make all categories of users aware of their obligations to each other. Concerns around fast cyclists reducing the enjoyment of others.	Installation of a sealed surface will include the introduction of new user management approaches to reduce conflict between users.  This includes installing a path to 3m width where possible and developing and promoting a code of conduct.
	Notable increase in use of the Nickey Line during lockdown period. Support aims and objectives.	
	The plan needs to acknowledge that there will be conflict, e.g. between increased public use and wildlife; fast cyclists and those meandering with children, dogs and relatives. Need to either expressly balance conflicting objectives or provide a frank approach to prioritising some over others.	
	Increase path width so that cyclists and walkers can pass each other safely	
	Sealed surfaces can encourage faster cycling with hazards and inconvenience to walkers. Paths require adequate width, with a possibility to have separate surfaces for walkers and cyclists. To follow guidance document LTN 1/20 where possible.	
Access	Enable access for horse riders to provide safe off road route and to connect with the bridleways at Rothamstead and Holtsmere.	Horse riding is not currently permitted on the Nickey Line.  The terrain in certain locations is not suitable, whilst steep drops present unacceptable risk.
	Install additional benches as rest stops to support less able and elderly people	Proposals have been included within the plan to install additional benches, with a greater number within the urban sections.
	Support aims & objectives but want greater emphasis on ensuring safe and sustainable transport route, notably for the several schools along the Nickey Line.	Improved surfacing will enable greater use for school transport.
	Improve access points where necessary	Improvements included including removing squeeze bars.  We will support any forthcoming proposals linked to nearby developments for improvements to Cherry Tree Lane access.
	Improved access at Cherry Tree Lane, such as a ramp for improved cyclist/ pushchair access	
Surface	Requires improved surfacing to enable all bikes, including road bikes. To encourage commuting and safe travel.	There is an aspiration within the plan for sealed surfacing along the entire

		length of the Nickey Line. Delivery of this is dependent upon the sourcing of funding.
	Ensure route is well surfaced over its whole length, e.g. asphalt as Alban Way and NCR6. Would encourage greater use, both for leisure and for transport. Although costly, a plan for obtaining funding should be developed.	We do not typically install dividing lines as these are rarely adhered to and can be a source of tension between users.
	Could the route be tarmacked to support both walkers and cyclists with a line to divide cycling and walking sides.	
	Oppose more tarmac or equivalent surface: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The route is a green lung. You are in the countryside, tree roots, puddles and mud included. Not a spectator of the living world but part of it.</li> <li>• Increase in cycling speeds to dangerous levels, particularly on the downhill straight past Knott Wood. Likely to deter existing users. Dangerous for families with children, learner cyclists, dog walkers, elderly or less mobile pedestrians.</li> <li>• Better accessibility for wheelchairs and pushchairs is not sufficient reason for road standard surfacing. Wheelchairs unlikely to use long stretches between towns. Modern pushchairs can cope with the existing surfaces.</li> </ul>	We acknowledge that each choice of surfacing has different benefits and drawbacks. A core aim is to increase usage and support non-motorised transport.  Whilst the route is in the countryside, we feel the high usage along with the route's transport heritage justify a harder wearing surface.
	Improve surfaces, in keeping with the rural nature of the path	The plan has included a conversion of the route to a sealed surface in its entirety.  The majority of this is proposed to be asphalt/tarmacadam. However, at key locations and where funding allows, we will install a tar & chip or resin based surface, e.g. that installed within Harpenden.
	Structural improvements should anticipate the greater need brought about by future nearby housing developments.	Greater usage of the Nickey Line brings about welcome challenges of managing higher usage. We have sought to do this through our proposals to the surfacing and user management.
Signage & Interpretation	Signage and interpretation marked within the ground as done along the Alban Way.	Whilst recognising the success of this approach we would like to take a consistent approach to signage along the route. Until all sections are surfaced this would not be possible.

		We will however include proposals to increase signage through structures such as sign posts and monoliths, with these designed to be in keeping with the heritage of the route.
	Signage at Roundwood Halt to show the name of the station (similar to Hill End platform on Alban Way)	We have included proposals to include signage and other interpretation at Roundwood Halt and other historical points along the route.
	Information boards need cleaning. Fiveways signpost is broken and requires replacement.	Aspiration to replace old signage has been included within the draft plan.
	Signage should be discreet and in keeping with the landscape of woodland, hedges and field. Large metal or plastic boards reduce joys of a green corridor relatively free of artificial constructs.	The proposed signage is vital to meeting the heritage aspirations. It will be designed to be in keeping with the route, but will reflect the historical use as a railway line as well as its predominantly rural character.
	Consistent and comprehensive signage at the junctions with public rights of way and other informal paths is more important than interpretation and heritage boards.	We agree with the need for consistent signage at rights of way and other paths (e.g. Ver Valley and Chiltern Way). An item has been included within the plan that as Rights of Way signage requires replacement they will be updated to the modern style that includes destination information.  These are of different scale and cost to the interpretation boards so will not apply priority to one or the other.
	Cut back and manage foliage regularly	Regular verge maintenance included within plan.
Other	Better use of the Millennium Site and the old station yard	The Millennium Site is not owned by SADC but widened access into the site has been included within the plan.

	Items from previous plan not implemented for financial reasons should be brought forward unless no longer relevant and appropriate.	We will take this approach. Unfunded items will remain in the GAP as aspirations and we will seek funding for these.
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