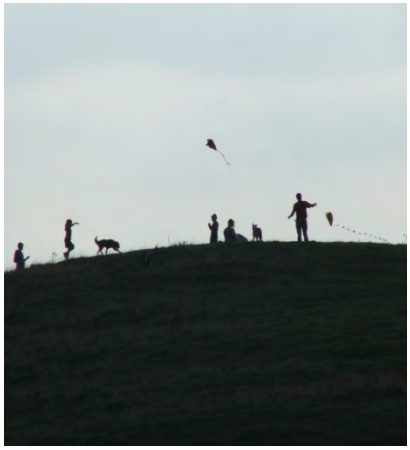
Draft Oxfordshire Countryside Access Management Plan 2014-2024



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Foreword

Oxfordshire's countryside, urban and rural rights of way and landscape contribute to it being an outstanding place in which to live, work and visit.

Access to these provides significant economic, health and well-being and environmental benefits. Economic benefits come from spending on goods and services in the local area when people are on walks and rides, and whilst people are staying in local accommodation. Health and well-being benefits come from walking, riding and the many ways to actively enjoy the countryside and being able to connect with the natural environment. Environmental benefits come from choosing to walk or ride instead of using cars for short and longer journeys. Many routes also provide ecological benefits as green corridors allowing movement of wildlife and the provision of a linear habitat that is an intrinsic part of the Oxfordshire landscape.

A well-maintained and connected public rights of way network, with information and improvements that meet the needs of users and potential users, offers almost unlimited potential for residents and visitors to enjoy all of Oxfordshire's countryside and landscape on foot, by bicycle and on horseback.

County Council finances are severely restricted and this is likely to continue over the life of this Plan. Despite this we will aim to manage the public rights of way and countryside access network effectively and efficiently, working with communities, farmers, landowners, partner organisations, volunteers and users. We will also try to improve the connections, responsible use, and economic benefits of the network and work to adapt it to help limit the impact of climate change, and address the changing needs and demands of users, non-users and landowners.

Councillor David Nimmo Smith
Cabinet Member for Environment
Oxfordshire County Council

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Introduction

This document is the second statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) for Oxfordshire. This iteration of the plan has been called the Countryside Access Management Plan (CAMP) to bring more weight and focus to the management of access to, as well as the use of, the existing Public Rights of Way network whilst identifying opportunities for improvements, and to include the other access resources that the public use, regardless of which organisations manage them. The plan covers public rights of way and accessible natural green spaces within settlements and urban areas as well as the - public rights of way and countryside surrounding villages, towns and Oxford.

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is required to produce a RoWIP under s60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This plan is one of the 'daughter' documents of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP sets out the County Council's vision for roads and transport.

The first section forms the *Assessment of Need*, and sets the CAMP within the policy framework and shows how the CAMP helps meet the aims of some of the strategy themes that are most relevant to the CAMP. It then provides a relatively light touch update to the background and analysis of the countryside access and public rights of way network in Oxfordshire undertaken for the first RoWIP and required under RoWIP legislation. More mapping and analysis work has been undertaken as part of the implementation of the first improvement plan and there is also more mapping of access at the district council and key locality scales.

The second section is the *Statement of Action*, that introduces and sets out what the authority will aim to do over the life of the plan to secure better management and improvement of the countryside access network in Oxfordshire. The overall vision and aims are set out, together with sections on the Definitive Map and Statement as well as Countryside Access Management. A new '*Countryside Access Framework*' is provided that summarises the main areas of responsibility and how this may change over the life of the plan.

The *Appendices* contain the detail of the county's countryside access resources and additional background information.

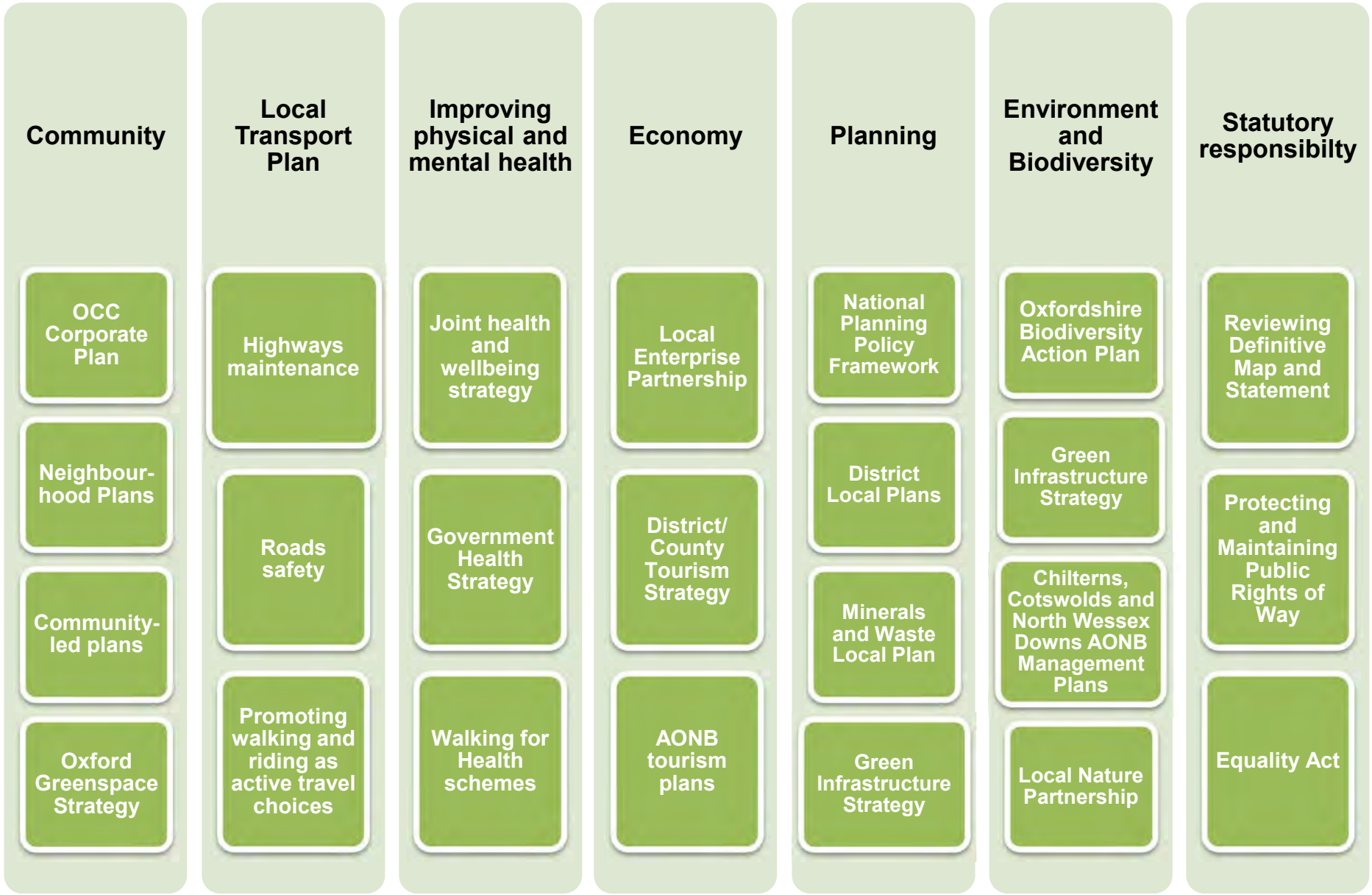
Contact details for the Team are provided at the end of the main body of the document.

Access for all on the Swan's Way at Swyncombe Down (Chilterns Conservation Board)

Section 1

Assessment of Need

The main policy and strategy areas influencing/influenced by the Countryside Access Management Plan



The CAMP and the Oxfordshire County Council Corporate Plan

Oxfordshire County Council's overall ambition is to deliver '**A Thriving Oxfordshire**' through its Corporate Plan 2013-2018:

> *"We want Oxfordshire to continue to be recognised as a great place to live, and as a county which combines the best of the past with a clear vision for the future. We aim to deliver the best outcomes for today, and for tomorrow. In working towards our overall ambition, we will deliver efficient and reliable services, and help people to help themselves."*

The Corporate Plan has three strategic objectives and the CAMP helps meet all three:

Building a world-class economy
Oxfordshire's countryside, urban and rural rights of way and landscape contribute to it being an outstanding place in which to live, work and visit. Many businesses and residents choose Oxfordshire because of the quality of this environment.

Access to this landscape using the countryside access network provides significant economic, health and well-being and environmental benefits. Economic benefits come directly from spending on goods and services in the local area when people are on walks, cycles and horse-rides, and whilst people are staying in local accommodation. Properties in close proximity to green spaces can be more attractive to purchasers resulting in increased values or speed of purchase. Improving the environment and access around workplaces can increase active commuting on foot and by bicycle, and give opportunities for healthy and stimulating lunchtime activities.

Supporting healthy and thriving communities
The use of the countryside access network has a valuable role to play in the physical and mental health of the people of Oxfordshire. The Countryside Access Management Plan aims to maintain and improve public access and open-air recreation, including walking, cycling and horseriding, for the benefit of all in order to help the people in Oxfordshire to live healthier and happier lives.

Countryside access benefits physical, mental and social wellbeing. Access to green space, through well planned and properly linked walking and cycling routes, enables people to choose healthy lifestyles, and improve mental health and wellbeing.

In a county with an increasingly ageing population and large differences in income levels, some areas of deprivation and inequality gaps exist. Countryside access and opportunities for walking can improve people's quality of life and this is a freely available activity. The public rights of way network is a part of the Oxfordshire living landscape and the network forms part of people's day to day lives – whether when walking their dog, exploring their local area or somewhere new, or going for a family walk or ride. The more connected and easier to use a network is then the more people will choose to use it and gain the health and social benefits.

Enhancing the environment
The Corporate Plan states that "*We want our residents to get the most value from all accessible countryside and public rights of way in the county. We will work towards: ensuring the rights of way network is usable and accessible to all; helping people to understand and enjoy the network; increasing public and community engagement; meeting community needs by securing resources and funding from developments and grants*". This ties in to the development of a 'Green Infrastructure' Strategy. The priority will be working with partner organisations, volunteers, community groups and local communities to protect the natural environment, and maintain the rights of way network as an important part of the rural economy.

The Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire

The Countryside Access Management Plan (CAMP) is a 'daughter' document to the Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire (LTP) – which sets out the strategy for delivering national transport goals at a local level. The LTP's four transport goals to meet the ambitions of the OCC Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy are:

1. to support the local economy and the growth and competitiveness of the county;
2. to make it easier to get around the county and improve access to jobs and services for all by offering real choice;
3. to reduce the impact of transport on the environment and help tackle climate change;
4. to promote healthy, safe and sustainable travel.

The CAMP is an intrinsic part of most of the LTP goals and the following strategic objectives:

- **Develop and increase cycling and walking for local journeys, recreation and health** - This is a core outcome of the CAMP and the plan's main focus along with equestrian access.
- **Secure infrastructure and services to support development** - As resident population and commercial activity in a location increases, so does the likelihood for increased use of local public rights of way and countryside access resources, which can be an opportunity as well as a threat. New sites benefit from being integrated with the internal and surrounding public rights of way in ways that allow the continued and increased use of the routes as part of a wider network and to meeting shared sustainable transport, healthy living and healthy environment goals.
- **Reducing congestion -** A good local rights of way network in urban areas can provide alternatives to car use for short local journeys and longer recreational trips, especially at weekends.

Walkers and horseriders sharing minor road to the White Horse (OCC)

- **Reducing casualties and dangers associated with travel** - Walkers, cyclists and equestrians are all vulnerable road users and may be affected by vehicle speed, frequency and driver behaviour. Promoting and increasing the amount and location of traffic free routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, especially families, can help build confidence in public places and help to reduce accident levels. The availability of off road networks can reduce the conflict with motorised vehicles, particularly in more congested urban areas.
- **Improve accessibility to work, education and services** - A good local rights of way network can form part of a journey to neighbourhood services like schools, surgeries, bus stops, railway stations and shops which can increase choice and reduce the dependence on private cars or taxis.
- **Reduce carbon emissions from transport** – Where it can offer a realistic alternative for local journeys, the access network can help reduce emissions through less car use.
- **Improve air quality, reduce other environmental impacts, and enhance the street environment -** By offering alternatives to vehicle use, the countryside access network can help reduce emissions as people use cars less often. Paths and green spaces can form part of the urban street scene.

Health and wellbeing

The use of the countryside access network has a valuable role to play in the physical and mental health of the people of Oxfordshire. The Countryside Access Management Plan aims to maintain and where possible improve public access and open-air recreation, including walking, cycling and horseriding, in order to help the people in Oxfordshire to live healthier and happier lives.

What are the benefits of physical activity?
Physical activity improves both mental and physical health. Walking, riding or cycling in the countryside is an enjoyable, sustainable way to improve general mental and physical fitness. In addition, access to the natural environment is important to people and promotes a feeling of wellbeing.

Being physically active can reduce the risk of premature death by 20-30%, and the chance of developing major chronic diseases by up to 50%. In older people it helps promote independence and reduces the likelihood of fall related injuries. Nationally the levels of physical activity are declining. The white paper published in 2004 'Choosing Health, Making Healthy Choices Easier' identifies that over a third of people are not active enough to benefit their health. Increased physical activity does not just have benefits to physical health. The mental health charity MIND reports that regular physical activity can make people feel better about themselves. It helps relieve depression and anxiety, reduces stress and increases feelings of well-being.

What are the recommended levels of physical activity?
It has now been clearly defined that for general health benefit, adults should aim to achieve '*a total of at least 30 minutes a day of at least moderate intensity physical activity on five or more days of the week*.' Any type of physical activity can contribute to the daily target and a moderate intensity level of physical activity is defined as 'all types of physical activity that makes your breathing and heartbeat faster and you feel warmer.'

For most people, the easiest and most acceptable forms of physical activity are those that can be incorporated into everyday life. Recreational walking, trips to the countryside, walking and cycling to work, and active volunteering can all contribute to the recommended levels of moderate physical activity.

Runner and cyclist on footpath and cycle track in Marston (OCC)

Physical activity and access to the countryside
The link between easy access to the countryside and the uptake and continuation of physical activity has been well documented. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds report '*Natural Fit, Can Green Space and Biodiversity Increase Levels of Physical Activity*?' states that 'The countryside can be seen as a great outpatient department whose therapeutic value is yet to be fully realised.'

Oxfordshire County Council can play an important role in this agenda particularly in encouraging physical activity and wellbeing. The countryside access network offers enormous potential to deliver public health benefits and improve outcomes at a local level by:

- Maintaining and extending accessible public rights of way and green space areas to provide healthier green landscapes.

- Ensure access to up to date and relevant information about the public rights of way network.
- Supporting and enabling community and volunteer involvement in practical access initiatives

What type of activity takes place in Oxfordshire?

The Oxfordshire countryside access and public rights of way network is used by huge numbers of people for many different sports and physical activities based around walking, cycling or horse-riding. These range from geocaching and Duke of Edinburgh Award training to cross-country running and cycling; and from using the structures found on paths as an outside gym to Nordic walking using assistance poles. A large number of led and guided walks are undertaken by the Ramblers and other walking groups for existing members and to encourage less confident people to access the countryside.

Mother and toddler enjoying the countryside (P. Harris)

Many people choose to volunteer with organised groups such as the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails, the Green Gym, Cotswolds Wardens, Chilterns Society, British Horse Society, Trail Riders Fellowship and the Ramblers amongst many other local community and neighbourhood groups, to undertake physical work to maintain and improve the Oxfordshire countryside access and public rights of way network at the same time as improving their levels of physical activity, and sharing time and a sense of achievement with like-minded people. Some of these run independently and some are facilitated through experienced project leaders.

The very first 'Green Gym' was set up in Sonning Common in 1998 and most of them are now independently run by local people in the areas where they are based. The scheme inspires people to improve both their health and the environment at the same time - experienced leaders guide people through a range of practical projects, giving them the opportunity to tackle physical jobs in the outdoors. This improves their strength and stamina, boosts their practical skills and confidence and benefits their local green spaces.

All of these factors have direct and indirect economic benefits for the individual, the wider population, and the health authority

Volunteers installing gate (Howard Dell)

Community access notice board at Aston Rowant (OCC)

Population and demographic issues

Oxfordshire has a 2011 Census population estimate of 653,800 and this is projected to rise by 59,500 to 713,300 by 2026. The Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire, and South Oxfordshire are projected to have the greatest proportion of this population increase (29.7%, 26.2% and 22.6% respectively) whilst Oxford City and Cherwell districts have smaller proportions of that population increase (14.9% and 6.2%).

The 2011 Census found that Oxfordshire's population grew by 8% (48,500 people) between 2001 and 2011 with population growth unevenly spread around the County. The largest increase in population at ward-level was in Carterton North East, which more than doubled, from 3,140 in 2001 to 6,134 in 2011. Other areas with significant rates of growth were Witney East (75.4%), Cowley Marsh (42.8%), Banbury Hardwick (41.4%), Witney Central (35.7%) and Bicester North (24.1%)

Overall, the proportion of older people is increasing with 16% of the population over 65 – but this is slightly less than the rest of the south east region at 17.3%. The age profile changes indicate that more needs to be done to consider the needs of an ageing population in rural areas so that they can continue to access and enjoy the benefits of the countryside access network. In urban areas work needs to be done to inform and educate non-users about the countryside and responsible access to it and make it easier and safer to access countryside and green spaces from where people live.

From the 2011 Census, in Oxfordshire 594,000 people (90.9%) were White and 59,800 Non-White (9.1%).The greatest number of non-white people were Asian/Asian British broad ethnic group (4.8% of the total population. From 2001–11 there was a population increase of 48,300 (8.0%) (ONS, 2011).

This increasing proportion presents an opportunity to increase access and participation in countryside access amongst non-white ethnic groups.

There are around 20,200 'Blue Badge' parking permit holders in the county (DfT 2012). This gives an indication of the need to provide for users with disabilities. In addition there are innumerable parents and guardians with children in pushchairs, plus people that are less agile and may or may not need a walking aid. On horseback, the most recent National Equestrian Survey (2010-11) found that of the 3.5 million people have ridden a horse at least once in the past 12 months, 8% of riders considered themselves disabled in some way. A quarter of all GB riders are under 16 years old (BHS, 2013). This indicates a need to provide for less physically strong riders in the provision and management of access, especially bridleway gate installation and maintenance.

Under the Equalities Act 2010, the County Council has a responsibility to make sure that policies and practices do not unfairly prejudice people with protected characteristics. See separate Service and Community Impact Assessment, Appendix A. Many of these users require additional provision over and above the authority's statutory duty, in order to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable. This provision is dependent on funds being available, and relies on the goodwill and cooperation of land managers.

Runners near Juniper Valley area of access land (OCC)

Economic benefits of countryside access and levels of use

Oxfordshire's countryside, paths and landscape, and the way that farmers manage it, contribute to it being an outstanding place in which to live, work and visit.

Access to this countryside provides significant economic benefits from encouraging businesses to locate within Oxfordshire by enabling both the direct and indirect facilities that make the County an excellent place to work and do business. In addition, the economy is assisted by spending on goods and services in the local area when people are on walks and rides, and whilst visitors are attracted to the area to make use of the countryside. Environmental benefits come from the impacts of choosing to walk or ride instead of using cars for short and longer journeys. Many routes also provide ecological benefits as green corridors allowing movement of wildlife and the provision of a linear habitat that is an intrinsic part of the Oxfordshire landscape.

A well-maintained and connected public rights of way network, with information and improvements that meet the needs of users and potential users, offers almost unlimited potential for residents and visitors to enjoy all of Oxfordshire's countryside and landscape on foot, by bicycle and on horseback.

The national Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey in 2012 identified that:

- Nearly 2.7 billion visits were made to English countryside, coast and open spaces last year - around 65 visits per adult.
- An estimated £20 billion was spent during visits to the natural environment in 2011/12.
- 87% of people spent £5 or less on their visit, and 83% of people spend nothing
- The mean amount of money spent was £5.92 in Oxfordshire compared to £7.12 for all England.

The Countryside Access Team has undertaken its own web-based surveys of Oxfordshire residents every two years as part of the RoWIP's development and this is available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip. In terms of use and spending the survey found that a high proportion of people use the countryside and public rights of way with nearly all respondents using the countryside for leisure in the preceding year.

The Oxfordshire survey identified that people regularly spend money whilst out and about in the countryside. The spend is mostly on food and drink, whether this is refreshments at pubs and cafes or bought from local shops. The amount of spending between £5 and £20 would indicate that spending is relatively small scale and regular. Higher spending rates are noticeable for food at a pub and higher value spends are also made on cycle, walking or riding equipment.

Spending by people using the countryside helps towards keeping local services viable and could form the basis of entrepreneurial work by businesses to combine offers in key areas.

The Chilterns Cycleway benefits the local economy with a high quality product (Chilterns Conservation Board)

In terms of the levels of use of the countryside access network, the MENE survey found that:

- Volumes of visits to paths, cycleways and bridleways have increased by 20 per cent since 2010/11
- 68% of visits were to places within two miles of the respondent's home (72.5% in Oxfordshire)
- 93% of the population agreed that having open green spaces close to where they live is important and 86% agreed that spending time out of doors was an important part of their life.
- 54% of people visit the natural environment more than once a week, and only 16% visit the natural environment twice or less a year

Table 1: Types of natural environment that people use

	England (%)	Oxford-shire (%)
Path/cycleway/ bridleway	14	21
Park in a town/ city	23	18
Another open space in the countryside	12	18
A village	7	18
Farmland	8	12
Woodland	12	9
River/lake/canal	9	6

Implications: Oxfordshire is a south east county with much rural character. Linear routes and all greenspace areas are well used, as are small rural villages.

Table 2: Distance people travel to enjoy nature and method of travel to get there

	England (%)	Oxford-shire (%)
Less than 1 mile	41	51
1-2 miles	26	21
3-5 miles	15	14
	England (%)	Oxford-shire (%)
On foot	63	70
Car/van	30	21
Bicycle	3	5

Implications: An accessible natural environment close to where people live or work is especially important in Oxfordshire. People tend to walk to where they want to go when visiting the natural environment, even more so in Oxfordshire.

Table 3: Top 3 motivations for people to access natural spaces

	England %	Oxford-shire %
Exercise the dog	48	48
For health/exercise	36	30
For fresh air/to enjoy the pleasant weather	18	23

Implications: Exercising the dog and deliberately using green spaces for health and exercise show the direct benefits of the countryside access network for many people.

Table 4: Reason for not visiting the natural environment more often

	England %	Oxford-Shire %
Too busy at home	18	15
Too busy at work	26	13
Poor health	14	28
Old age	12	21
Physical disability	8	13
Not being interested	6	17
Lack of public transport	0	0
Concerns about where allowed to go	0	0
Lack of suitable places or paths	0	0
Lack of information	0	0

(All source MENE survey 11/12 Natural England)

Implications: Poor health and old age are cited as the main reason for not accessing green spaces – yet these two groups could benefit greatly from this access. Easier and more pleasant to access green spaces, especially in company, and better communication of the health benefits could reduce these figures. For those 'too busy' there can be multi-tasking that can take place whilst on a countryside visit and time spent in the outdoors can lower family stress levels and may increase the amount of constructive 'together time' that a family has. At work taking a 'walking lunch' break in a natural space can often allow creative thoughts to flow and stress levels to reduce.

Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure (GI) in terms of countryside access includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, river and canal corridors, public rights of way and unsurfaced roads. It needs to be planned and delivered at all spatial scales from national to neighbourhood levels. The greatest benefits will be gained when it is designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Why is Green Infrastructure important?

Green Infrastructure can provide many social, economic and environmental benefits close to where people live and work including:

- Space and habitat for wildlife with access to nature for people
- Places for outdoor relaxation and play
- Climate change adaptation - for example flood alleviation and cooling urban heat islands
- Environmental education
- Local food production - in allotments, gardens and through agriculture
- Improved health and well-being – lowering stress levels and providing opportunities for exercise

Green Infrastructure and economic growth

Literature and case studies across the world show that investment in green infrastructure can act as a catalyst to local economic growth of an area through:

- Increased investment in the built environment in the surrounding area
- Attracting businesses and residents to the area through increasing its attractiveness
- New developments contributing to increased local taxation revenue
- Increased number of visitors coming to and spending in the area
- Business expansion or start-up on the back of increased visitor spending
- Improving the physical and mental health of the population leading to increased productivity and reduced medical expenditure
- Providing an appreciable contribution, at lower cost than would be possible through grey infrastructure, to environmental management, such as alleviation of urban heat island effects, carbon sequestration, improved air quality and reduction of flood risks
- Increase in disposable household income or business surpluses due to cost savings or lower taxation as a result of environmental and health gains
- Growth in direct and indirect employment from provision, maintenance and associated services
- Local multiplier effects of increased income and spending

(Defra, 2011)

Oxfordshire County Council is leading on the production of a county-wide strategic Green Infrastructure Strategy and the aims of the CAMP will be an intrinsic part of this. The district councils have produced linked plans such as the Oxford Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2027 and the CAMP ties in to these too.

The extent of local rights of way and other access resources

What types of resources make up the Oxfordshire 'Countryside Access Network'?

Access to Oxfordshire's countryside is predominantly achieved through the 2,600 miles (4,200km) of public rights of way in the county. These public rights of way have evolved over many years, and continue to evolve today through the modification order and public path order processes. Public rights of way do not always meet today's recreational needs because originally these and other highways were the ways used for travel and trade. Some of these ways evolved into the surfaced roads network and some of which stayed as unsurfaced minor routes, often just for walkers and equestrians.

In 2013 and according to the status of public rights of way as recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement, walkers should be able to use 100% of the network, figure 1. Horse riders and cyclists should be able to use 879 miles, 1,417km (33.5%) of the network as bridleway, restricted byway and byway open to all traffic (BOAT), figure 2. Horse carriage drivers should be able to use 204 miles, 330km (7.8%) of the network on restricted byways and BOATs, figure 3. Motorised users should be able to use 48 miles, 78km (1.8%) of network on BOATs, figure 4.

However all of these figures must be taken in the context of a sometimes disjointed, fragmented and obstructed network as, although it is similar in length to the county roads network, there is less connectivity between individual rights of way, and people in settlements are not always able to access a right of way to enjoy an environment of traffic-free or quiet countryside. The main reason for this is because the roads originally used as part of a walking or riding journey are now busier and with faster moving vehicular traffic. Other reasons include some landholdings and estates that never had public access, and possible omissions in recording the first definitive map following the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Even from a glance at the network diagrams it can be seen that the distribution and density of the network differs widely between different areas of the county and especially for the different user types. Relatively small links or status upgrades could go a long way towards making the network more usable. It should be recognised however, that nearly all of the public rights of way network passes over private land and therefore such improvements must be undertaken in negotiation with the landowner. The County Council will however actively seek to enable these links as and when opportunities through development arise or where landowners are agreeable to the necessary access to their land and where resources are available.

Fig. 1: Complete network of all public rights of way, available for walkers

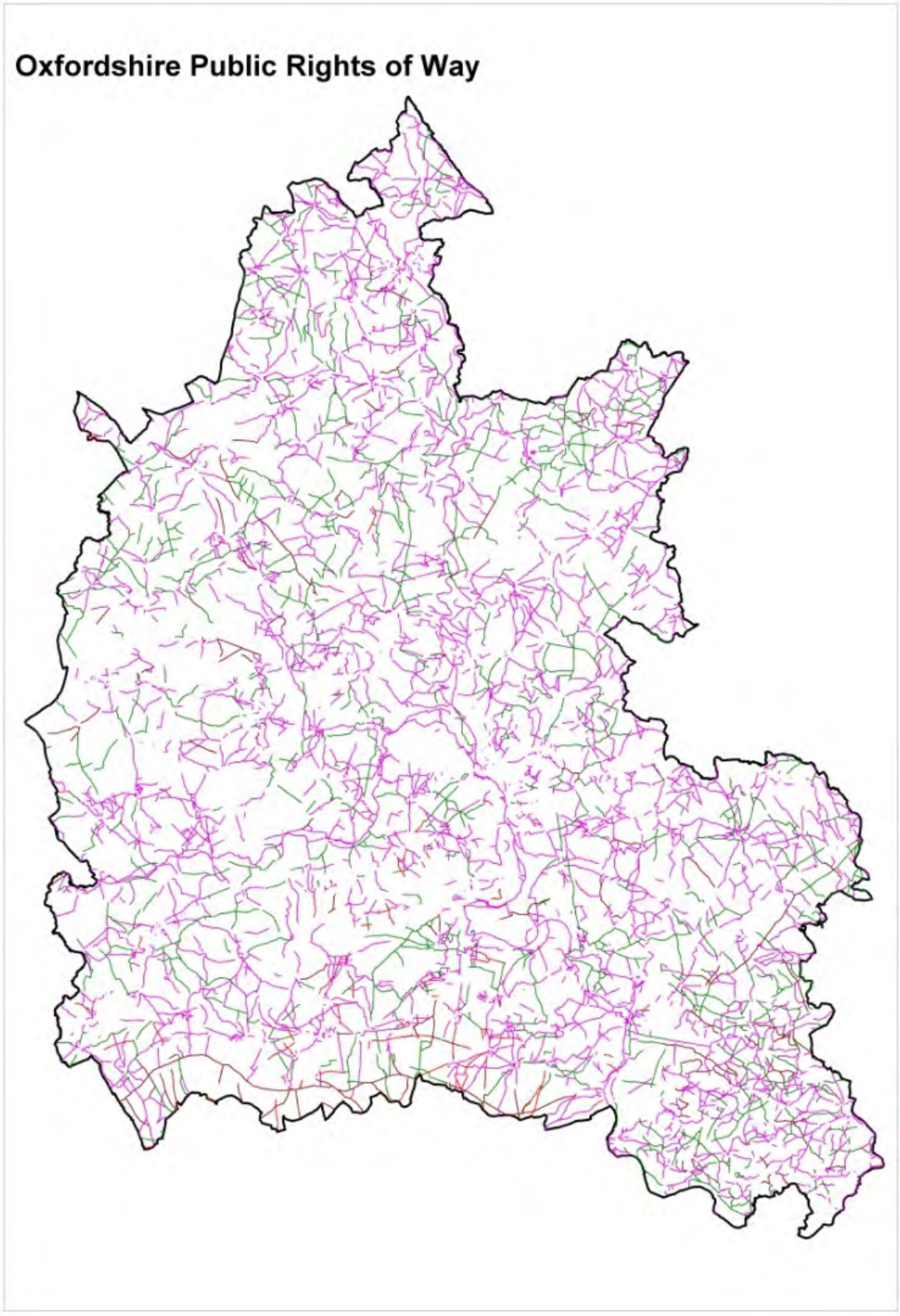


Fig.2

Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way available to horse riders, cyclists and walkers

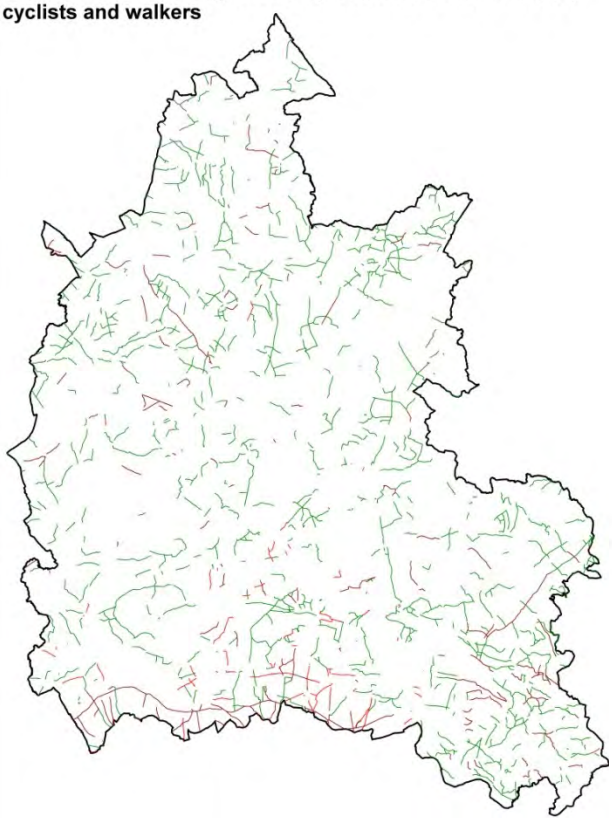


Fig.3

Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way available for carriage drivers, horse riders, cyclists and walkers

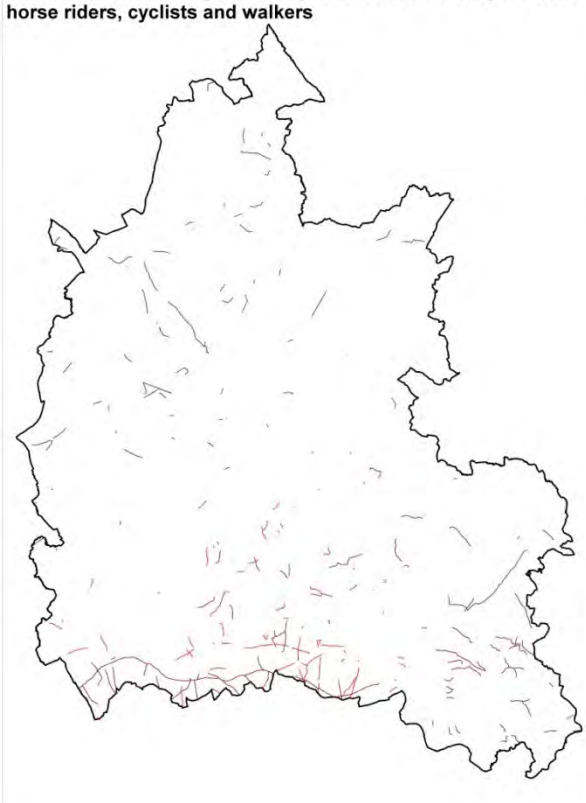
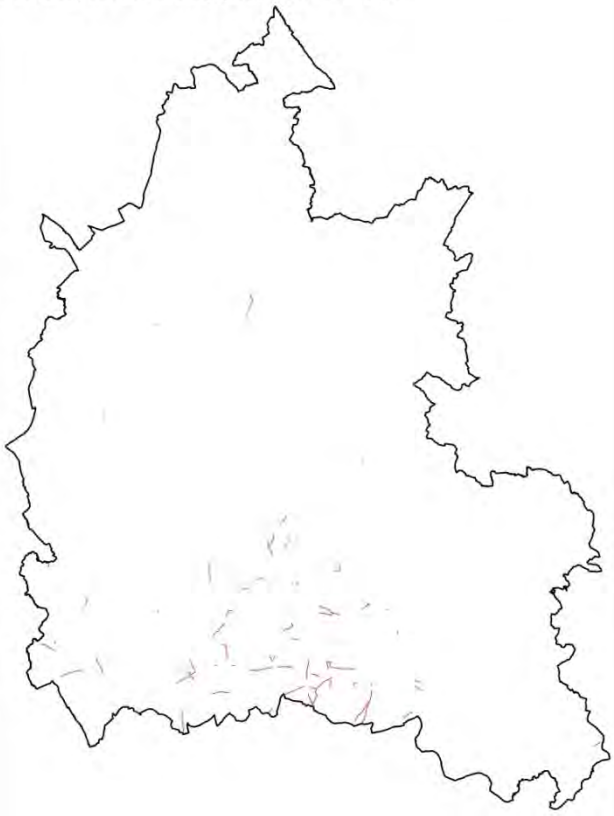


Fig.4

Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way available to all users including mechanically propelled vehicles



Other access resources

Access Land: The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) granted rights to walk on Access Land - areas of 'open country' and registered commons. Open country is defined as: mountain, moor, heath or down. Only downland and common land are present in Oxfordshire. There is no right of access to cultivated fields or other areas of 'excepted land' such as gardens, quarries and golf courses. Access land is shown on up to date 'Explorer' Ordnance Survey maps and as local information on the Countryside Access Team's webpages. In Oxfordshire there are 455 hectares (ha) of 'open country', 940 ha of common land and 463 ha of dedicated land. In total there are 1,858ha of Access Land out of the total land area of 260,595ha.

Unlike on public rights of way, land owners can suspend access for up to 28 days a year. Restrictions and closures information can be found on Natural England's website and sites will also display notices advising when restrictions are in place. The right to enjoy access land is only for walking or quiet recreation. Some sites require that dogs must be kept on a lead between March 1st and July 31st, or at any time when near livestock.

Cycle tracks: Cycle tracks are the routes that often run parallel to roads or they may be a stand-alone route in urban or rural areas. They are not the designated cycle lanes you find marked on roads with white lines. Cycle tracks are often surfaced with stone or asphalt to make them easier for year-round cycle journeys. The organisation Sustrans has created many cycle tracks where they form part of the National Cycle Network or local cycle networks. Cycle tracks are not a category of highway that are recorded on definitive maps and are usually managed by OCC's Highways Team and/or Sustrans. .They are however, shown on up to date Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger Maps.

National Trails and longer distance routes: Throughout Oxfordshire there are a number of longer routes that enable a themed suggested walk or ride to be followed over a number of days or in stages. The two most important are the National Trails running through the county. The Thames Path National Trail is a walking route which follows the river for 180 miles from its source in the Cotswolds through Oxfordshire nearly to the sea east of London. The Ridgeway National Trail is one of the oldest walking or riding routes in Britain and runs for 87 miles from near Avebury in Wiltshire through the south of Oxfordshire before crossing the Thames at Streatley and heading north along the Chilterns scarp.

Other longer themed routes are usually accompanied by a leaflet or booklet with some also providing additional circular walks. These routes may also be signed or waymarked with special badges. Just some of those for walkers include:

- Oxfordshire Way
- d'Arcy Dalton Way
- Wychwood Way
- Oxford Canal Walk
- Oxford Greenbelt Way

Whilst riders and walkers can enjoy the Judges Ride. In addition the County Council promotes shorter walks and rides on the webpages: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/walks-and-rides

Green Lanes, ORPAs or white roads - Occasionally you may come across other terms for ways such as 'green lanes', 'white roads' and 'ORPAs': 'Green lane' is a purely descriptive term just meaning an un-surfaced route, usually between hedges or walls. A green lane might be of any of the four types of public right of way, or not

a right of way at all. 'White roads' are found on older Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. These are simply un-coloured routes that may or may not carry public rights. Later OS maps show 'ORPAs' – Other Routes with Public Access. These are often un-classified and un-surfaced roads but the actual status of them may not be recorded.

Permissive access: Permissive access comes in two forms – formal and informal. Formal permissive access is sometimes included in Agri-environmental grant schemes. Details of current access can be found on Defra's website at http://cwr.naturalengland.org.uk/walk-ride.aspx. As at July 2013 there were 52 such agreements in Oxfordshire. Annual payments for this access were stopped in 2012 and it is expected that many of these routes will not be kept open once the funding agreements end, normally after 10 years. Since the 2012 RoWIP extension was published, seven schemes have stopped being promoted. There are no plans to replace the current permissive access routes at the end of their agreement. There may be opportunities for access within a new Environmental Land Management Scheme proposed by Natural England to form part of the UK Rural Development Programme.

Formal access to land may also be provided under Inheritance Tax Exemption schemes. www.hmrc.gov.uk/heritage/lbsearch.htm. Local councils, including Parish Councils, might also provide permissive countryside access on land that they own or manage.

Town and Village Greens and Commons: Town and Village Greens are places that the public have customarily enjoyed for exercise and recreation. They and Common Land are recorded by the county council. There is a right on foot to most areas of Common Land.

Roads: In addition to rights of way, permissive access and areas of green space, walkers, cyclists, and horse riders are legitimate users of the road network, and these roads often form part of their journeys. They are vulnerable road users and so should have measures put in place to ensure their safety and consideration by vehicular traffic.

'Other Access' Many charitable, private and public bodies including the Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Earth Trust, RSPB, universities and colleges, Oxford Preservation Trust, district, town and parish councils and private estates may own and manage land which can have varying levels of access. Sometimes this is free and unrestricted and sometimes access is subject to an entrance fee or restrictions for member access only. All of these areas contribute to the wider green space and provide access to more natural areas.

Minor roads are often valuable for recreational users (OCC)

Figure 5: The Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way and green spaces network

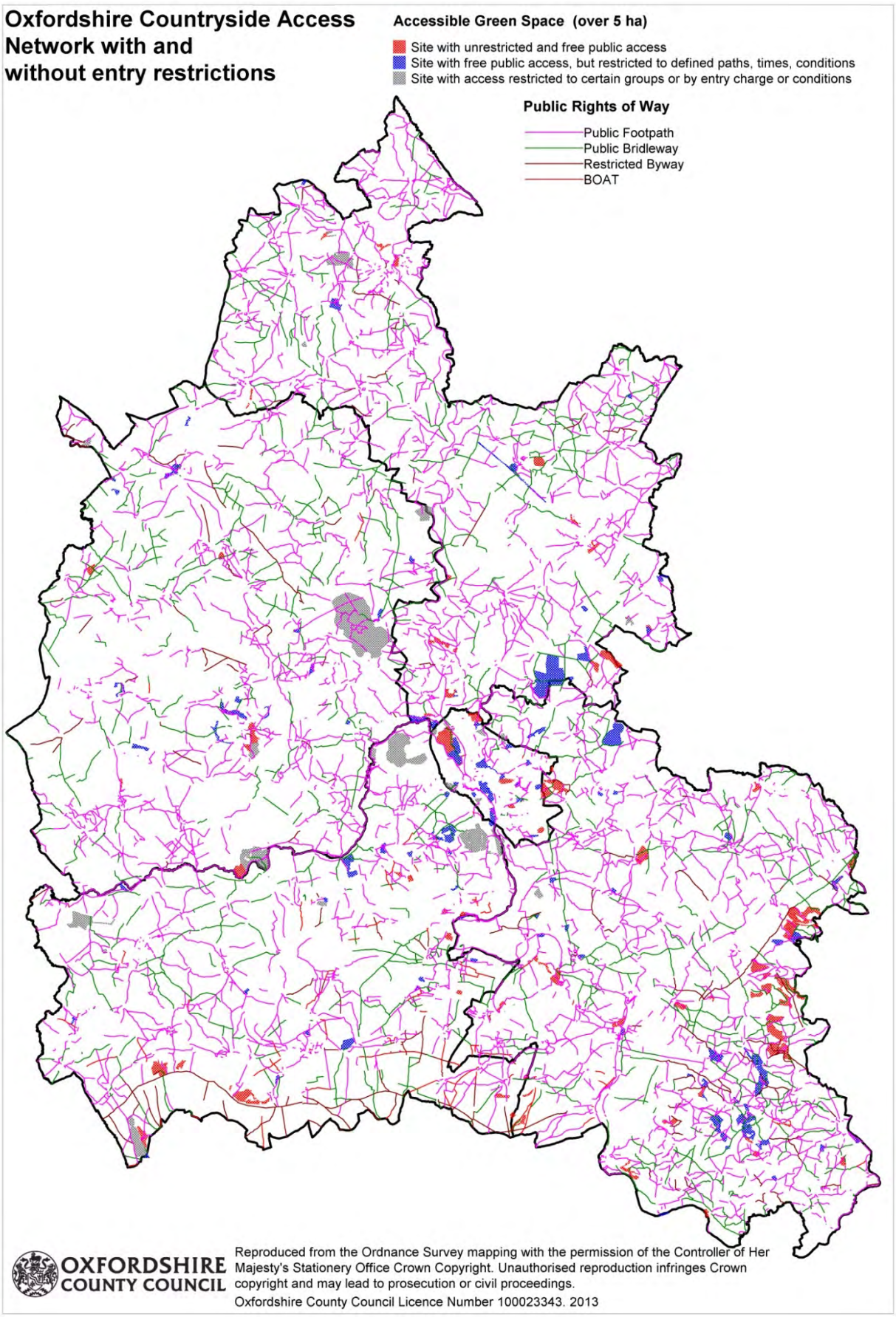
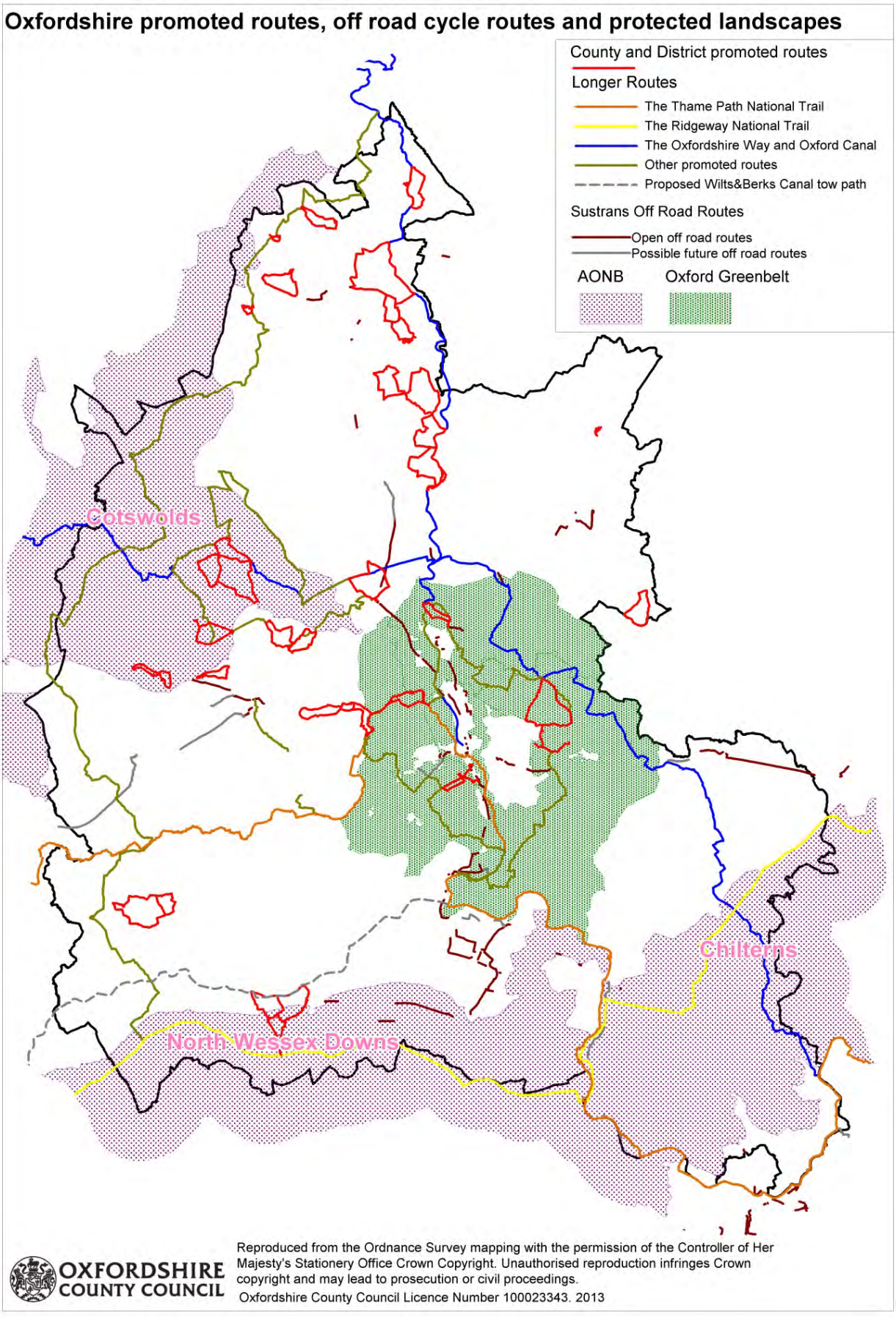


Figure 6:


Oxfordshire promoted routes, off road cycle routes and protected landscapes
County and District promoted routes
Longer Routes
The Thame Path National Trail
The Ridgeway National Trail
The Oxfordshire Way and Oxford Canal
Other promoted routes
Proposed Wilts&Berks Canal tow path
Sustrans Off Road Routes
Open off road routes
Possible future off road routes
AONB
Oxford Greenbelt
Cotswolds
Chilterns
North Wessex Downs
OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
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The accessibility of local rights and natural greenspace areas to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems

The public rights of way and wider access network can have barriers that prevent equal access for many members of the public. These barriers may include man-made and natural *physical* issues as well as information and understanding *knowledge* issues.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been replaced by the Equalities Act 2010. The Act broadly requires that in carrying out their functions, public authorities must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that it is not impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with disabilities or other 'protected characteristics' including age, gender and ethnicity to benefit from those functions as others would do, or to show that there are good reasons for not doing so.

Whilst there is no specific reference in the Equality Act to any aspect of rights of way management, it is clear that authorities are required to have regard to their obligations under the Act wherever changes or additions to the rights of way network are proposed and are encouraged to make improvements to structures wherever appropriate opportunities arise.

The Department for Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) has issued guidance about structures on public rights of way: (http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/countryside/prow/gpg-equality.pdf:). The purpose of this is to show good practice to public authorities on the way that equalities legislation impacts on their functions in relation to structures on public rights of way.

Oxfordshire County Council seeks to enable a public rights of way and countryside access network that offers as few restrictions as is reasonably possible through its own work and that of partner organisations, farmers and landowners. These groups and individuals, especially parish councils, the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers, and the voluntary Cotswolds Wardens, have initiated, negotiated, obtained funding for and delivered many improvements over the life of the original RoWIP and it is hoped that this will continue.

The Countryside Access Team has undertaken a Service and Community Impact Assessment of the CAMP and this is available in a separate annex, available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip. The assessment's summary judgement is that "*The public rights of way network is freely available, subject to the provisions of the various legislation. The network has developed historically and may not always be suitable for modern use. Stiles and other features on public rights of way can restrict and sometimes even prohibit access for some users, in particular the disabled, mobility impaired, visually impaired, the elderly and the very young could be at a particular disadvantage. The County Council will work with others to limit restrictions and encourage responsible access and try to manage and improve the network to meet current and future needs.*"

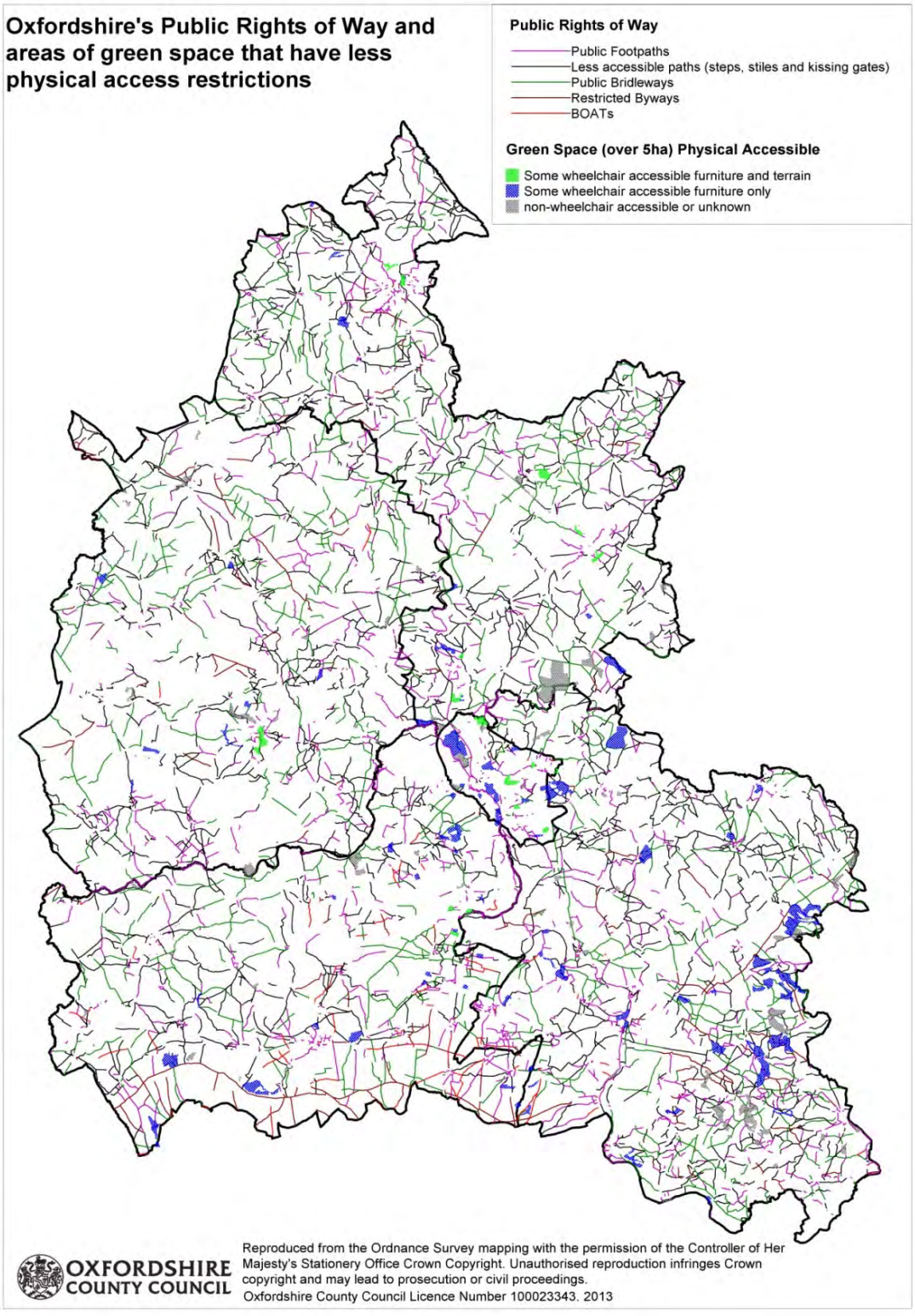
Wheelchair users in Milham Ford Park (OCC)

As well as providing a small range of short routes suitable for wheelchairs the

Countryside Access Team provides an interactive web map of access www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countrysidemap to show all rights of way and access land areas together with a switchable path gradient mapping tool, so that slopes along a chosen path can be assessed. In time it is hoped that more accessibility information can be displayed on the map – such as path furniture (stiles, gates etc) and the surface type, and other non-rights of way access resources. This, combined with more access improvements on the ground should help to make longer routes possible.

Figure 7 shows the relative accessibility of the county's public rights of way and green space access areas over 5 hectares. Maps of the five districts are in Appendix A.

Figure 7:



Users' needs and demands

The Countryside Access Team has undertaken a wide range of information gathering and primary research in order to contribute local perspectives to the CAMP, and also for the day-to-day management and improvement of the network. This helps us to consider the needs and circumstances of people with a range of expectations, interests and levels of ability, and includes both local people and visitors to the area. Some of the ways we have gathered information include:

- Ongoing receipt of reports about path problems, through email, website and telephone
- Focus groups and surveys to inform the first RoWIP and user surveys every two years since RoWIP1 was adopted
- Developing the CAMP by continuous discussion and liaison with key stakeholder groups, neighbouring and local authorities, OCAF and professional access practitioners
- Making use of national and local needs based research such as Natural England's Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment

What does this research tell us?

Overall, from all survey sources, there was strong and encouraging support for all aspects of the County Council's work on public rights of way. Most suggestions were all centred around "*doing more of what the service does already*".

The top four suggestions for better maintenance and improvements are regularly:

1. **More vegetation cutting** Users would like a greater frequency of summer and winter vegetation cutting, especially targeted on paths closer to settlements or on promoted/linking routes.
2. **Increasing path surfacing and drainage** Users want easier surfaces so OCC needs to balance the benefits of surfacing path for users, especially families and lower agility people, against the risk of urbanising or over-managing the countryside. We also need to guard against conflicts on multi-use paths (such as between cyclists and walkers on narrow routes).
3. **Path protection** Users say that OCC should be making access easier for people with mobility impairments; including wheelchair users, older people and families with pushchairs. OCC need to speed up the removal of obstructions and work with land managers to prevent ploughing problems. Litter is seen as a problem on many routes, as is dog fouling and the loss of green spaces as a result of housing and commercial developments.
4. **Access to information** Users want OCC to improve this, as well as on-path and off-path signs and information. Many users say that they lack confidence and knowledge regarding their rights and responsibilities when out in the countryside.

Importantly, all of these factors will affect the likelihood of <u>non-users</u> wanting to, or being able to, access the countryside access network.

Oxfordshire County Council tries to meet these user needs as resources allow. The next section shows to what extent the Countryside Access Team manages the network and links to the second part of the CAMP, the 'statement of action'.

The extent to which the rights of way network is managed to meet the needs of users

State of the network

This section covers the practical aspects of managing routes on the ground, the condition of the network's infrastructure, and how this affects users and non-users.

The nature of public rights of way is that they are a dynamic and complex system of seasonal, regular and random, natural and man-made interactions so perfect 100% access cannot be guaranteed or really expected at any one time. Reasons for this may include for example, the right of the farmer to disturb the path under certain conditions, seasonal or cyclical vegetation growth, random third party impacts such as flytipping and vandalism, or elemental impacts such as flooding or earth shifting.

Whilst the Council can and does aspire to all paths being open all of the time, in reality all it can do is to prevent and manage these impacts to the best that resources and technology allow.

The Countryside Access Team has developed a comprehensive database of rights of way management information. This database allows the following information, Table 5, regarding the state of the path network to be detailed.

Twice a year in spring and autumn, staff from the Countryside Access Team undertake a survey of 2.5% of the network. As well as recording condition information the surveyors also replace faded waymarkers, report hazardous situations, and undertake small scale clearance of stiles and fingerposts in order to 'improve as they move'.

Since 2008 the Team has used the Countryside Access Management System, linked to a Geographical Information System (GIS) which allows the records to be shown on a map, Figure 8, and north/south halves of the County at Appendix B.

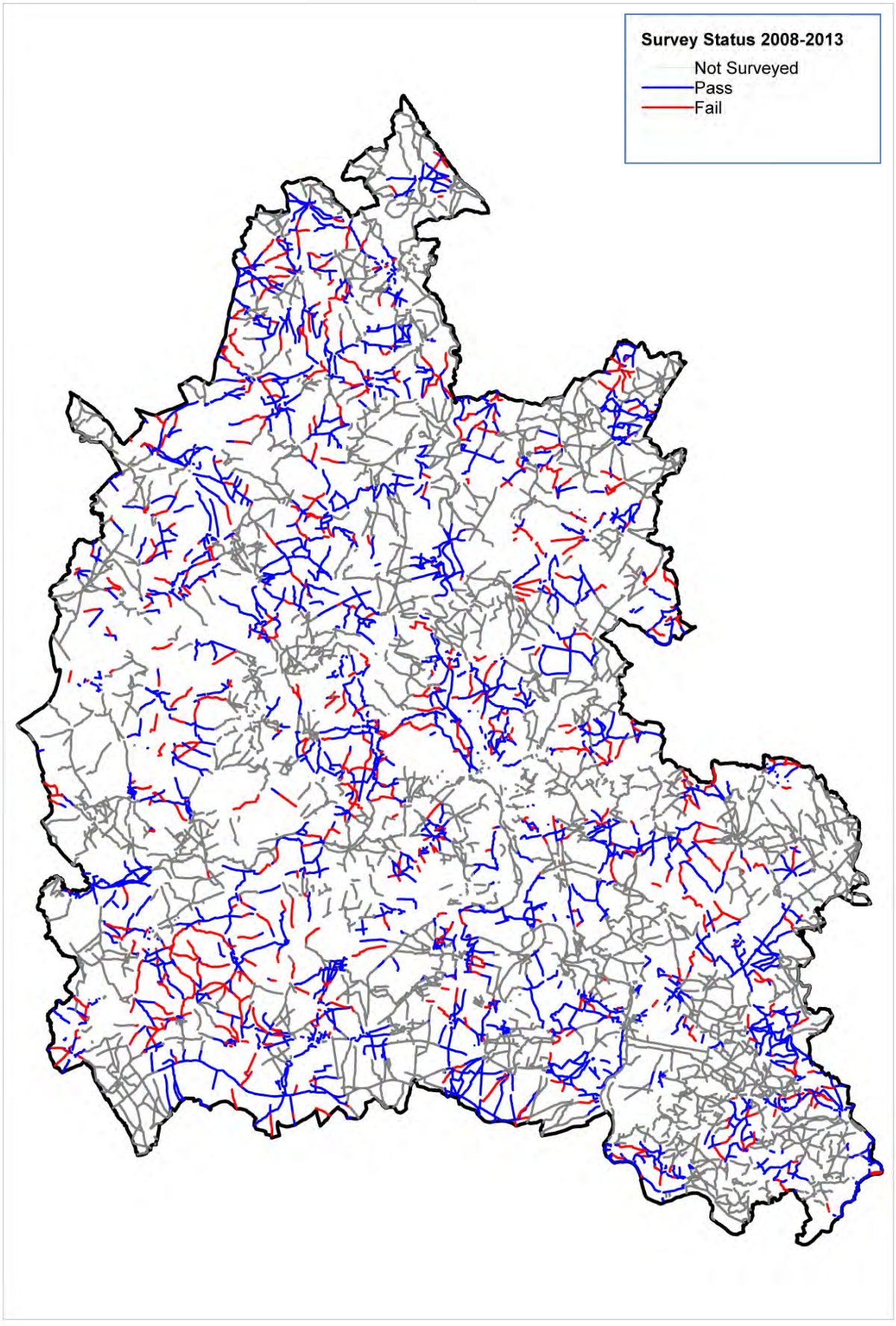
Table 5: Snapshot comparison of OCC RoW network availability data, 2006 and 2012
(Source: OCC Access Management System January 2006 and December 2013)

	2006	2013
Paths easy to use	63% of paths were found to be easy to use*	76.7% by length of paths passed, 81.7% by number of paths passed.
	**the 'easy to use' figure adopts the Audit Commission's quality standard (BVPI 178, now discontinued) for position , furniture, signing, surface and vegetation. OCC survey methodology surveys a random 2.5% of network twice a year. Routes assessed according to definitive line, rather than alternatives used on the ground such as paths the 'wrong' side of hedges or bridges that are off line.*	
Signing	89% of 5073 roadside locations were signed	93% (5290) of 5711 roadside locations were signed
Waymarking	33% of 'easy to use' links would benefit from waymarking	**2013**: 41.6% of easy to use links surveyed in 2013 would benefit from

	40.6% of 'not easy to use' links would benefit from waymarking	waymarking (total passed links 680) 58.9% of not easy to use links surveyed in 2013 would benefit from waymarking (total links failed 151) (Total Links 831)
Stiles	85% of 4834 stiles were in useable condition, 14% unsatisfactory, 1% dangerous	67.9% of 4108 stiles were useable (Good/Fair), 13.7% unsatisfactory, 5.9% redundant ,<0.2% Dangerous , c1% obstructed, 1% Missing
Gates	88% of 5784 gates were in useable condition, 12% unsatisfactory	73.6% of 7492 gates were useable (Good/Fair). 7.4% unsatisfactory, 6.3% redundant , <0.02% dangerous , <2% obstructed, <0.5% missing
Bridges	93% of 2050 bridges in place and in useable condition,7% unsatisfactory, 5% missing, 1% dangerous	82.06% of 2247 bridges useable (Good/Fair). 4.8% unsatisfactory, 0.6% redundant, <0.3% dangerous, <0.02% obstructed, 4.5% missing
Surfacing	408 instances of unsatisfactory surfaces, 8 dangerous, 239 surfaces causing obstruction to passage	93.54% of Surfaces easy to use (Good/Fair)

Access improvements	**2001-2005**	**2006-2013**
	stiles *decreased* from 4999 to 4834	*Stiles decreased* from 4834 to 4108
	gates *increased* from 5117 to 5784	Gates *increased* from 5784 to 7492
	bridges *increased* from 1924 to 2050	Bridges *increased* from 2050 to 2247

Figure 8: Snapshot of public rights of way surveyed between 2008 and 2013 meeting 'easy to use' standard



What the first Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) achieved

The consultation on the initial review of the first Oxfordshire RoWIP took place in winter 2012. It contained an assessment of the achievements and shortcomings of the plan and its delivery and set out an outline structure for the second RoWIP. This section repeats the assessment information and summarises the implications for the Countryside Access Management Plan (CAMP).

The first RoWIP and the annual delivery action plans focused on achieving better provision and improvements over and above the 'day to day' work of recording, protecting, and maintaining the public rights of way and access land network. Despite the impacts of cuts and starting from a low base in terms of funding and staff, the authority, partners and members of the public managed to achieve a significant amount since 2006.

More practical action by communities & volunteers - Over £300,000 Places for People funds allocated from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) built on OCC's pilot scheme and which have together enabled over 60 communities and organisations to improve their access to the countryside and also help meet RoWIP aims. Funds were gained from Viridor, Waste Recycling Group and Grundon's Landfill Communities Funding. The replacement charity TOE2 has access to the countryside as one of its three aims alongside biodiversity and renewable resources.

Work with the two main volunteer groups, the South Chilterns Paths Maintenance Volunteers and the Cotswolds Voluntary Warden Service, has increased significantly. These two self-managing groups have helped us with our day to day work and have also been proactive in generating, negotiating and achieving access improvement schemes in their areas. Other groups such as the Ramblers, British Horse Society, CPRE, Oxford Fieldpaths Society and the Open Spaces Society have also helped with path work and path issue reporting. Some of these groups have also donated their own funds towards access improvement projects.

A large number of local communities have produced Community-Led Plans, and access and rights of way have featured in many of them. There can be misunderstandings about the rights and responsibilities of local councils which is why the Service commissioned the production of the *Oxfordshire Local Council Guide to Countryside Access* in 2010. It was devised as a comprehensive information resource about the historical development of rights of way, roles and responsibilities, how to undertake improvements, the legal processes and key contacts.

More practical action by Oxfordshire County Council – the RoWIP provided a framework to bring management and improvement of countryside access together in a more coordinated way with staff able to make use of external funding for improvement projects and new connecting rights of way. For example a road verge linking route at Ducklington used highway land to create a safer margin from a bridleway to a minor road. This used Oxfordshire's Highways Team's expertise and contractors but benefited from external funding. On new areas of downland access land, officers negotiated links to island sites with landowners or agents and secured funding for access point gates and signs from the government scheme.

Secured financial provision – The first RoWIP provided the basis to negotiate significant public countryside access measures with major residential, commercial, and minerals/waste developments across the county which will be implemented over the next few years. These include sites at Barton, Ardley, RAF Upper Heyford, Wallingford, Bicester, Witney, Faringdon, Wantage, and Grove. For smaller sites developers work with the Countryside Access Team to provide for access improvements on public rights of way and greenspace areas and help their

development site be more accessible by non-car modes of travel as well as protecting the line and amenity of existing rights of way across the site.

Informed policies - The first RoWIP helped to inform and steer the development of policies covering walking, cycling and public rights of way in the second and third Local Transport Plan. Other policies and strategies that have been able to benefit from the RoWIP are the Local Development Frameworks and Infrastructure Delivery Plans, emerging Green Infrastructure plans, rural and tourism strategies, and the three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty management plans.

Improved awareness and understanding - The RoWIP helped improve user, landowner, parish and councillors' awareness and understanding by making our website better structured and updating content, including development of the interactive countryside map and the online reporting tool, making all walking leaflets downloadable and putting the definitive map and statement online.

The RoWIP enabled better understanding across the authority and in partner organisations of how public rights of way and access to the countryside can contribute to better quality of life for residents and visitors – including running regular residents' surveys and making sure the Service's work remains relevant and of value to Oxfordshire's residents and visitors.

The Team has developed increased awareness of the rights of way network's characteristics through being able to commission spatial assessments of the network including connected and density mapping, and path gradient mapping.

How did the first RoWIP fall short of expectations?

Although Oxfordshire's RoWIP won a national award for being one of the most innovative and enterprising RoWIPs in 2009, it has faced a number of challenges and it is felt that it fell short in a small number of areas:

Funding has always been in short supply – from government as well as what the county council can allocate and it is recognised that such pressures will only increase over the life of this CAMP. Although there is a statutory duty to produce and review a RoWIP there is no duty to implement it. This was a deliberate strategy by the government of the day as it was felt that this would encourage councils to innovate and seek alternative funding and partnership schemes. Unfortunately this has meant that a number of the actions in the RoWIP, although deemed necessary to address issues in the assessment of need, have ended up not being able to be achieved as they relied on additional staff and budget to be provided to enable increased activity to be undertaken, including definitive map modification orders and maintenance work. Unfortunately external sources of funding cannot usually be used for these core activities. Despite this, there have still been many improvements undertaken, such as volunteer groups replacing stiles with gates, which have had the added benefit of reducing the enforcement and maintenance work on those paths.

Longer term planning and implementation of improved countryside access as well as better public rights of way at road junctions across the county and at key locations has not really been achieved. The RoWIP has influenced the incorporation of supportive wording and policies in the third Local Transport Plan and further work will need to take place to transform these into action on the ground.

Fewer new rights of way and upgrades to existing routes put in place on the ground than anticipated. The expectation from participants in the development of the RoWIP was that new routes and upgrades would be a key benefit arising from this document. For the development planning work areas there have been fewer path improvements implemented by now because new residential and commercial developments take a long time to move through the stages from design to planning permission to build and occupation. Some significant new routes, upgrades and funds have been

secured from major planning developments, but most works on the ground have not yet commenced. This is because the development hasn't started or the 'trigger point' of the development (that would release funds or require action on the ground), such as number of dwellings occupied or period of time after planning conditions met, has not yet been reached.

It can be a challenging process to create new links or upgrade status outside of the definitive map modification, diversion or planning processes, and especially where there is no immediate or clear benefit to the landowner and no proven safety factor that might mean compulsory purchase processes could be used as a last resort. Communities and staff can come up against blockages which can cause frustrations with the legal processes or options that are available. For example one community has been trying to secure a safer family cycling route for years across marginal farmland in order to avoid a busy road. Although council officers have advised and helped all parties as much as possible, it has proven impossible to negotiate a solution – as a 'quid pro quo' of a diversion of the existing route and corresponding upgrade to allow cycling would likely not meet statutory tests for a diversion, and compulsory processes would probably not be feasible.

Similar issues and conflicts can arise between negotiations for a logical connecting link between paths where there is a modification order for a route on a historical alignment waiting to be processed – as few landowners would be comfortable with two 'new' routes serving the same purpose across their land. For cases like these it may be that only national changes to legislation can provide a solution or if the land use is proposed to change through the development planning system.

Summary

A report reviewing the first RoWIP was issued as a report for consultation in the winter of 2012. The comments received showed broad agreement with the review and support for the development of a replacement RoWIP that had similar overall vision but that placed more emphasis on the management of the existing access assets as well as their improvement. The full consultation document and review report is available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip.

The Countryside Access Management Plan aims to build on the successes and experiences of the first RoWIP. The following Statement of Action sections sets out how this is intended to be achieved over the life of the Plan.

Section 2

Statement of Action

Achieving better countryside access through the Countryside Access Management Plan

The first Rights of Way Improvement Plan was delivered in a climate of high expectations, which encouraged aspirational outcomes and actions. Although no Governmental grant funding was provided specifically for achieving the aims of the plan, by working closely with the Countryside Access Team, local communities, volunteers and other organisations, and the County Council itself, were still able to achieve a great deal by their own efforts and making use of external sources of funding.

Since the economic crisis of 2008 there has been increased scarcity of resources both within the public sector and volunteers. Promoting the network and seeking to improve the network's quality and accessibility are still important however, as they contribute directly to the local economy, give opportunities to walk and ride instead of using the car, as well making a big difference to the local environment and residents' sense of place and wellbeing..

By working closely with other authorities and organisations, local communities, developers, volunteers and other stakeholders and partners it is hoped that we can bring added value to the rights of way and access network to evolve it into one that best suits local needs within the constraints on resources that the authority faces.

An annual CAMP delivery/ business plan will set out aspirations and programme of activity for the coming year and this will help inform performance plans, targets and reports to stakeholders. All information will be on the dedicated website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip.

Vision Statement

The Countryside Access Management Plan's vision statement broadly reflects that contained in the first RoWIP and sets out the authority's ambition:

***Vision*:** To record and maintain the existing public rights of way and countryside access network for all users and would-be users, and where possible improve the extent, facilities, use and understanding of the network, so that public rights of way fulfil their role as a vital part of life in the County.

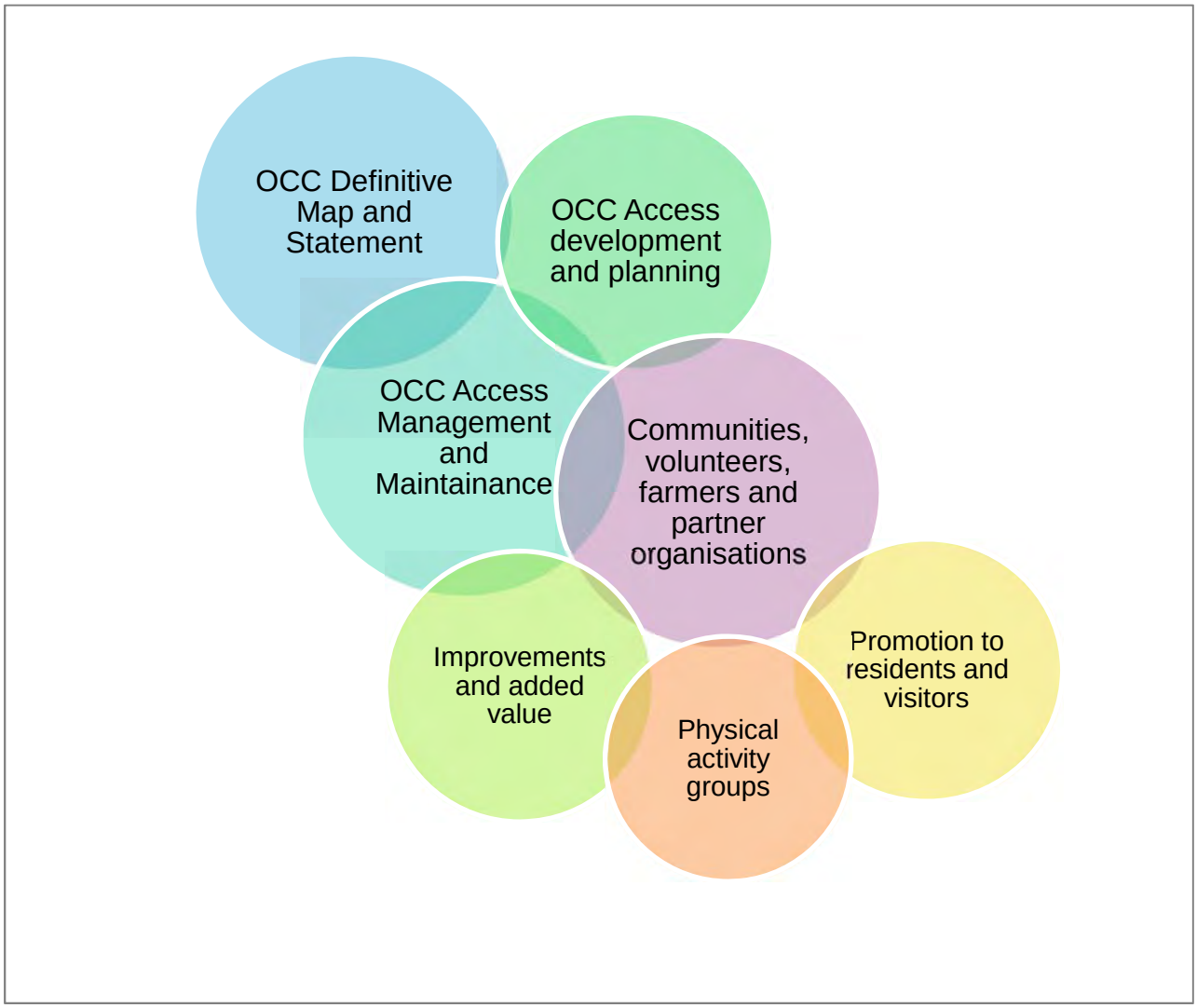
***Aims*:**

1. Public rights of way are recorded, protected, maintained and promoted.
2. A public rights of way and countryside access network that adapts to balance the current and future needs of communities and users, farmers and landowners and the natural environment
3. A public rights of way and countryside access network which is as accessible as reasonably as possible to those with limited mobility, vision or understanding
4. Countryside access contributes to a thriving local economy and communities are able to be actively involved in caring for and promoting responsible walking and riding in their area.

The Oxfordshire Countryside Access Management Framework

In order to achieve the vision and aims a countryside access framework has been produced, illustrated in Figure 9 and outlined in the following sections. This framework summarises the main areas of responsibility and how this may change over the life of the plan. The reason for developing a framework is to reinforce the interconnectedness of the areas of work undertaken and to set out how the aims of the CAMP will be achieved, but without being too prescriptive. This will allow the flexibility to evolve more detail based on available resources and any changes to legislation or the operating environment. The framework has evolved from experiences gained from the first RoWIP, research undertaken since the first RoWIP was adopted, the responses to the review consultation, and from work to develop the revised content for the assessment of need. The framework links into other strategies such as the Local Transport Plan and the Highway Asset Management Plan.

Figure 9: Oxfordshire's Countryside Access Management Framework



i. Definitive Map and Statement

The legal record of public rights of way is called the Definitive Map and Statement (DM&S) of Public Rights of Way. It is an important document that records the 2,600 miles of public rights of way across every parish and town in Oxfordshire, plus those in the City of Oxford. In 2006 the DM&S was updated for the fourth time since 1949.

Inclusion of a way on the DM&S is conclusive evidence of the existence of that right at the relevant date. The *Definitive Map* shows the location of public rights of way and also their status (i.e. whether they are footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways or byways). The *Definitive Statement* gives a description of the public rights of way, including any limitations, conditions or defined width. This legal record underpins the majority of the day to day countryside access work on the ground as well as improvements undertaken by local communities.

The DM&S is looked after by the County Council's Definitive Map and Commons Team. The Team keeps the DM&S and other associated documents available to the public, investigates applications to add new rights to the DM&S (modification orders), processes applications to change existing public rights of way or create new paths by agreement (public path orders and dedication agreements), maintains registers of processes, and provides help and guidance.

Availability of the Definitive Map and Statement

The DM&S is available to view as a paper copy or at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/definitivemap.

Paper copies of the DM&S are kept at the Countryside Access Team offices in Eynsham and can be viewed during standard office hours by appointment (tel: 01865 810808). Copies can also be viewed at the Reference Library in Oxford Central Library and at the Oxfordshire History Centre in Cowley. Each parish and town council has also been supplied with a paper copy of the DM&S covering their area. Extracts are also available at a number of district council locations as well as at some of the larger libraries. Details are available on our website.

Electronic copies of the DM&S are available online at the website address above.

Note that the record shows the position as at 21.2.2006, i.e. the relevant date. Legal changes made to the network and the definitive map since this date (through diversions, extinguishments, creations or modification orders) will not be shown. However this information is available on a separate list and up-to-date information is available on our interactive web map at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countrysidemap

Flowcharts showing the outline processes for modification orders and creation agreements can be found in Appendix C.

Modifications to the Definitive Map and Statement

The DM&S can be altered if it meets certain legal tests. As the County Council, we are responsible for maintaining an accurate record of all public rights of way in Oxfordshire. Anyone who has evidence that the DM&S is incorrect or incomplete may apply for it to be legally changed using a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application.

DMMO applications are usually made to establish that rights exist which are not shown on the DM&S – either a public right of way is not recorded at all or it is believed to be at the wrong status e.g. as a footpath instead of a bridleway because horse riders have acquired rights. Sometimes a right can be deleted but this is very rare and hard to prove.

Diversions or stopping up of public rights of way

A footpath, bridleway or restricted byway can be diverted if it meets certain legal tests, by applying for a Public Path Order (PPO) under s119 of the Highways Act 1980; occasionally applications for stopping up can be made under s118 of the same Act. Other processes exist for byways via application to Magistrates' Court.

The County Council sometimes needs to divert a public right of way itself due to decisions on planning proposals that are concerned with the management of waste or extraction of minerals, as well as proposals for its own operational use such as extensions to schools or libraries. Applications for PPOs associated with these types of proposal must be made under s257/261 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Statutory registers

All applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders, including those that have been completed, can be viewed on the DMMO register which is available online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/definitivemap. This is the statutory register of all applications for DMMOs received since 31 December 2005, as required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 53B. The DMMO Pending Case List will help people track the progress of applications not yet completed. There is also a register of plans, statements and statutory declarations deposited by landowners, available to view online, to protect against future rights of way and village green claims.

Providing help and support

The Definitive Map and Commons Team provide guidance and support for all aspects of their work, and much of this guidance is available online at the above website address.

STATEMENT OF ACTION TARGETS

Changes to legislation and the operational framework 'direction of travel'

It is expected that proposed new legislation will bring about major reforms to DM&S processes over the ten years of this Countryside Access Management Plan. Once details are confirmed, the Authority's existing priorities and operations will be reviewed and incorporated into the CAMP through the annual update or delivery plan.

Action for the next two years

- business as usual
- review operations and priorities once legislation changes have been made

Action for the next five years

- adapt operations to any alterations in budgets or staff resources

Meets CAMP aims 1 and 2

Footpath with potential to be upgraded to bridleway (OCC)

ii. Countryside Access Management

Public rights of way are predominantly for the Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Team to manage in partnership with farmers and landowners, user groups and local communities. Each of the Team's area officers manages a defined area and a specialised small unit undertakes the majority of the maintenance work. The Team's role is to help people enjoy legitimate use of rights of way and ensure that all people and organisations involved with rights of way understand their responsibilities and are able to meet them effectively. Issues tackled on the network vary from simple signing issues, to complex areas such as providing access for people with disabilities, development control, public safety, or land management.

The peculiar challenge of rights of way work is that generally, public rights exist over private land that is still 'worked' or farmed. This contrasts with country parks and greenspace areas where access is the principal function, or roads management where the road itself is the only land use. Therefore although the highway is legally vested with the highway authority (controlling as much of the land as is necessary to ensure the right of way can be exercised), it is necessary and desirable to work closely with land managers, users and local communities so that work is done in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation and that the exercise of public rights does not unnecessarily interfere with agricultural operations.

As other sections in this document show, the network is in reasonable condition. The work the Team does to keep the network open and available includes:

- investigating reports of issues and taking appropriate action as necessary to ensure paths remain open and available
- removing excessive natural vegetation growing on public rights of way
- providing and maintaining bridges over natural watercourses and ditches. There are over 2,000 bridges on rights of way in the county
- signposting routes where they leave a metalled road and waymark along them where required. There are over 7,500 public rights of way signposts in Oxfordshire
- working with planners and developers to protect and enhance access through the development process
- considering, under the Equality Act 2010, the needs of those with mobility impairments when maintaining the network and authorising structures on the Rights of Way network and seeking removal and improvements to existing structures where it would be beneficial
- providing information to assist users, visitors, landowners and others to manage and enjoy access. This includes the interactive web-based map
- having due regard to protecting sensitive habitats and biodiversity in managing and improving access
- providing financial contribution to the maintenance of stiles and gates. There are over 11,000 gates, kissing gates and stiles in the county
- working with community groups and parishes to find local solutions to local challenges
- offering free access advice and encouraging land managers & occupiers to make access easier on public rights of way, using BS5709:2006 as the standard sought.

Managing and prioritising issues on the network

Oxfordshire County Council's public rights of way management functions need to centre on ensuring that a basic standard of provision is maintained across the county's public rights of way network. Where possible, Oxfordshire County Council will seek to add value to that basic standard by working to secure additional resources and support and encourage farmers, land managers, local communities, groups, volunteers and individuals to improve the network for all users.

The basic level of provision is that, as far as reasonably practicable and where resources allow, public rights of way and associated routes are not made impassable by natural or man-made features, or their absence.

Where an issue is identified, Oxfordshire County Council will prioritise action to remove and resolve issues that impede or are likely to obstruct public access in accordance with the resources available. In order to do this an issue impact assessment(a) and a path categorisation model(b) will be used in combination alongside operational standards to enable decisions on relative priorities so the authority can make the best use of available resources.

a) Public rights of way issue impact assessment

Public rights of way issues reported to the County Council or identified through inspections will normally be assessed with regard to their impact. This assessment usually forms the main basis for priority setting, Figure 10. The impacts considered are:

- Overall level of hazard or risk that the issue represents
- The degree of obstruction, encroachment or inconvenience
- The cause and likely duration of problem
- The character of the route, its normal traffic and the route's normal state of repair
- The impact of the issue looking at the wider network

b) Public rights of way categorisation

Category 1

- Routes used as key routes to schools or local facilities and that are used by many people for daily commuting journeys
- Thames Path & Ridgeway National Trails and 'corridor' (the key routes that connect the trail to villages or facilities) in partnership with the National Trails Team

Category 2

- Key recreation or exercise routes near to settlements
- Oxfordshire County Council promoted routes
- District Council promoted routes
- National Cycle Network route (non-asphalt sections)
- Oxford Canal Walk and corridor in partnership with the Canal & Rivers Trust
- Named routes promoted and managed by a user group or organisation in liaison with OCC

Category 3

- The remainder of the network

Path categories by themselves will not normally define the management of an issue, but they will assist in deciding on the relative order or action for similar priority issues.

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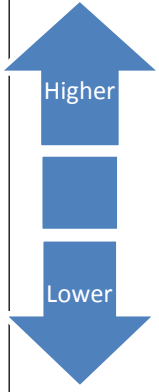
Figure 10: A small number of examples of possible higher and lower priority issues



- **Accident/Incident where injury has occurred**
- Any matter that poses an immediate and likely high risk to the public e.g. hung up tree, subsidence, dangerous animals, broken bridge
- Path recently obstructed/made impassable where no lawful alternative is available, or wilful action that prevents access to a PRoW
- Local issue which generates significant concern/reports
- Seasonal vegetation clearance on priority routes (see below)
- PRoW infrastructure fault where there is no risk of serious injury
- Path improvement projects, unless the project can resolve higher priority issues

Keeping public rights of way available

For countryside access management and maintenance functions, Oxfordshire County Council works to the information contained in the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS). The DMS will be kept under review as required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The DMS is conclusive proof of the existence of the recorded rights at the date of its production. However the DMS is conclusive without prejudice to the existence of higher rights and can be changed through due process if evidence is provided that the line or status recorded in the DMS is incorrect.

In very exceptional circumstances, and where budgets allow, we may undertake maintenance on routes not on the DMS.

The deliberate obstruction of any Public Right of Way will not be condoned by OCC and action will be taken to remedy any instances in line with operational standards.

STATEMENT OF ACTION TARGETS

Changes to legislation and the operational framework 'direction of travel'

It is not expected that legislation will bring about significant changes to public rights of way management over the ten years of this Countryside Access Management Plan. If these do affect how the authority carries out its public rights of way functions they will be incorporated into the CAMP through the annual update or delivery plan and revisions to operations.

The biggest area of challenge is the pressures on funding and resources available to the authority either directly or through third party support to undertake the full range of maintenance or improvement works that the authority would like to aspire to. . This means a continual revision of operating practices and priorities is necessary as well as making the best use of technology and enabling experienced and skilled officers to provide support to partners.

With this in mind, the Countryside Access Team's direction of travel is to, as far as reasonably practicable, protect and manage the existing public rights of way network working with communities and stakeholders, and emerging developments, and where possible, improve involvement, extent and understanding of the network, so that public rights of way fulfil their role as a vital part of life in Oxfordshire.

Action for the next two years

- Maintain business as usual as far as practicable.
- adapt operations and policies to any alterations in budgets or staff resources
- revise operational standards and data management to reflect the path categorisation and impact assessment approach so that it can be fully incorporated during 2015/16
- pilot Parish Path Warden approach and support expansion across county
- encourage and support the development of community-led improvement projects that can access external funding
- review operations, policies and priorities if legislation changes have been made

Action for the next five years

- adapt operations and policies to any alterations in budgets or staff resources
- work with Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum to improve processes

Meets CAMP aims 1, 2, 3 and 4

iii. Countryside access and the development planning process

Countryside Access Team priorities for working with developments are to protect existing countryside access and where possible and reasonable to mitigate the impacts of development to enhance the network for all users in three key areas:

i) Responding to individual developments

For most applications, large or small, standard conditions, Appendix D, will be promoted to the Local Planning Authority to protect existing routes through a development site. Mitigation measures will be sought to limit the impacts on public rights of way in and around an individual development site, and to contribute towards measures for improvements that are likely to be affected by developments in a wider catchment if their location or attributes making them likely to be used. These measures are normally:

a) Making existing routes on the development site easier to use and more attractive, by providing surface treatments, landscaping and planting measures and better infrastructure items

b) Providing additional linking and recreational/transport routes within and surrounding a development site's area of influence to make the network more joined up and easier to use.

ii) Seeking pooled contributions towards important county and district countryside access route assets

Certain access routes are considered to be of high value at the county and district scale because of their quality, length, availability or status. This makes these routes likely to be used by more people than the residents and workers in the vicinity of the route which means they will be affected as population in districts and across the county increases, See Table 1 in Appendix D.

iii) Supporting growth, the economy and quality of place in the priority development and growth areas

Oxfordshire has six areas that are priorities for economic growth and housing. These are Bicester, Oxford, Science Vale UK, Banbury, Witney and Carterton. Each of these key areas plus the other areas with significant growth are shown in maps in Appendix D with the broad areas of access measures highlighted. These tie into the network connectivity assessment in Appendix E.

STATEMENT OF ACTION TARGETS

Changes to legislation and the operational framework 'direction of travel'

The planning system is continuously evolving at all scales, and it is expected that this rate of change will continue. If planning issues significantly impact on how the authority carries out its public rights of way functions then the authority's approach will be reviewed through operational changes and linked to the CAMP's annual update or delivery plan.

Action for the next two years

- manage responses to all planning aspects alongside other demands
- promote the infrastructure needs of countryside access
- review operations, policies and priorities if legislation changes have been made

Action for the next five years

- work with Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum to improve processes and prioritise targeting at the district and locality level

An example of 5 metre wide new path creation (OCC)

Meets CAMP aims 1, 2, 3 and 4

iv. The role that key existing organisations play in countryside access

The main organisations and their current roles are summarised in Table 6 – plus some possible options for how the relationship or role might be able to change in the future to maximise benefits to the public. Importantly, individual farmers and other land managers will need to be included as they often play a vital role in meeting the access ambitions for most of these groups.

Table 6: Key organisations and roles

Organisation	Current role with rights of way and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)	Possible changes over the life of the CAMP
Local councils (parish and town councils and parish meetings)	• Many undertake monitoring and maintenance work on rights of way • Some also promote routes and provide maps and other local information • Some 'path champions' collate reports on path condition and issues and contact OCC officers to seek resolution	• Work to combine existing rights of way representatives and other organisations with the new Parish Path Warden scheme to ensure full coverage across the county • Seek to add 'value' to the maintenance work that OCC undertakes as highway authority, possibly using parish precept or available Community Infrastructure Levy funds from local developments (see Fig.11) • Improve access and promotion of their areas by applying to external funding sources such as charities and Lottery
District councils	• Consult officers directly on planning matters that affect rights of way • Some undertake promotion of access and rural tourism • Manage own areas of countryside • Local Development Framework and policy work	• Encourage contributions from the Community Infrastructure Levy to improve area rights of way in liaison with OCC and local councils • Greater coordination of improvements and volunteer working • OCC moving to more effective response to major planning applications
Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (a Local Access Forum)	• Statutory advisory group to OCC and other bodies about access to the countryside • Brings together representatives of landmanaging and farming interests alongside user and other relevant Oxfordshire-specific interests	• Taking more responsibility in promoting and increasing sustainable access to the countryside - following other LAF examples • Acting as access 'champion' to encourage highway, transport and surveying authority to modify policy strategy and delivery
Landowning'	• Have to focus on	• Include these access facilities as

charities like the Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), National Trust, Woodland Trust, Canal & River Trust, Sustrans and Oxford Preservation Trust etc	management of own sites or areas to meet charitable objectives and as part of wider remit • Rights of way may be regarded as cross-site liabilities or integrated with site management for maintenance or ecological purposes	a county-wide access asset and promote them • Increase joint working and project partnerships across boundaries to meet shared aims • Use rights of way and improvements as key connections to enable traffic-free access to the sites • Enable shared learning by users
Chilterns and Cotswolds Conservation Boards and the North Wessex Downs AONB office	• Protect the character and special qualities of their areas • Promote and support access, tourism and understanding in their areas • Produce management plans and policies that OCC has to take account of • A RoWIP should take account of the local distinctiveness, character and quality of AONBs in its development and delivery of access to the area	• Continue all existing work • Increase joint marketing activities to support and develop sustainable tourism and contribute to the local economy • Help to deliver CAMP objectives through own initiatives • Target grants to communities seeking access improvements • Encourage 'Access for All' so that people of all levels of mobility can use and enjoy the countryside • Maintain and increase volunteer work on countryside access
National Farmers Union and Country Land and Business Association	• Represent interests of their members and wider industry • Will promote best practice to their members • Assist with liaison between their members and OCC staff on specific issues	• Encourage to think of access and local communities positively in terms of small link creation and providing targeted improvements and facilities that could provide services and generate goodwill and revenue
Oxfordshire Rights of Way Monitoring Group	• Longstanding group that meets twice a year and receives six monthly reports from rights of way Teams on delivery of services • Provides forum for airing issues directly between groups and the Countryside Access Team • Links to OCAF and Local area RoW Forum meetings	• Include issues and 'horizon scanning' in meetings • Combine normal meeting agenda with an occasional discussion workshop to encourage collaboration to solve a particular problem or address a current issue
Local area rights of way	• Meet twice yearly in each rights of way area. Bring	• Include more forward planning and shared reporting

meetings	together local people with varied interests so local issues are discussed and solutions agreed on	• Invite local community representatives where possible
National Trails Management Group/ Trails Partnership	• OCC hosts the National Trails Team. • National Trails Team coordinates the management and promotion of The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails • Extensive use of volunteers to maintain and monitor the Trails and circular routes	• Review management of National Trails in line with Natural England's review and the 'New Deal' strategy • Develop more inclusive National Trail Partnerships for both National Trails.
Associated groups	• Countryside access is currently a relatively marginal part of their work in cycle tourism, conservation, biodiversity, economy or health. These groups include as CTC, the Local Nature Partnership, the Local Economic Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council etc	• Increased understanding and shared working so these groups increase wider recreational access provision and understanding of landscape, farming and nature
Natural England	• Temporary permissive access was included in many agri-environmental schemes and this includes the areas of downland access land Support for Local Access Forum and partnership work • Provides majority funding for National Trails	• Continuing support and guidance for National Trails Management Group and Trail Partnerships. • Promoting access creation through use of Common Agricultural Policy funds or schemes such as Paths for Communities • Commission and share research on use of countryside and health • Higher level support and links between partner organisations • Continuing support for Local Access Forum

v. Local community, neighbourhood and volunteer participation in countryside access maintenance, improvement and promotion

The County Council retains overall responsibilities for funding and maintaining the definitive map, and the operation of maintenance, enforcement, promotion and improvement activities.

However, many local communities, user and interest organisations, individual users, farmers and land-managers play an active and valuable role in surveying, reporting, recording and managing public rights of way and countryside access in Oxfordshire. This involvement adds public benefit and quality to the network, demonstrates the importance of paths in people's local areas, and enables more people to enjoy access responsibly and safely. Oxfordshire County Council needs to continue to work with existing groups and individuals to make the best of their efforts and enthusiasm and to target resources where the work will make the most difference, and where possible, build up levels of new local participation across the county.

Needs and demands from existing groups and individuals as well potential new ones will have to be carefully managed so that the best outcomes for path users are achieved and demands on staff time are not excessive and ensure priority and legally-complex work can be undertaken.

It is hoped that three types of partnership with Oxfordshire County Council's

Local people in the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers improving their area (Howard Dell)

Countryside Access Team, outlined in the next sections, will become established and integrated with each other over time and lead to a countryside access network that enables partnership working to meet the needs of local people, as well as visitors and leads to more people becoming involved in the protection and improvement of an important part of Oxfordshire's cultural heritage.

When considering the application of any or all of these elements in an officer's area or across the wider authority area, OCC officers will need to assess available capacity, budgets and the expected outcome of such involvement. This work also needs to be balanced against existing responsibilities and priorities. The Team will seek additional external resources and capacity to enable a proper investment in this to be made in order to achieve the best outcomes for local communities, neighbourhoods and users of the public rights of way and countryside access network.

STATEMENT OF ACTION TARGETS

The Countryside Access Team wants to carry on working with existing organisations and bring in other organisations or expand to areas without any involvement as much as possible, and in a balanced way that meets shared ambitions.

<u>Action for the next two years</u>

- business as usual to support existing community groups and volunteers
- work with Ramblers to develop a county wide Parish Path Warden scheme to complement existing parishes' work
- review the self-help resources available to local councils and other groups

<u>Action for the next five years</u>

- adapt operations and policies to any alterations in budgets or staff resources, or the needs of local communities

Meets CAMP aims 1, 2, 3 and 4

a. Local Councils and neighbourhood/community groups – how their existing work or a new area of work could improve countryside access management

Figure 11: Activities and roles that could be undertaken – or are undertaken already

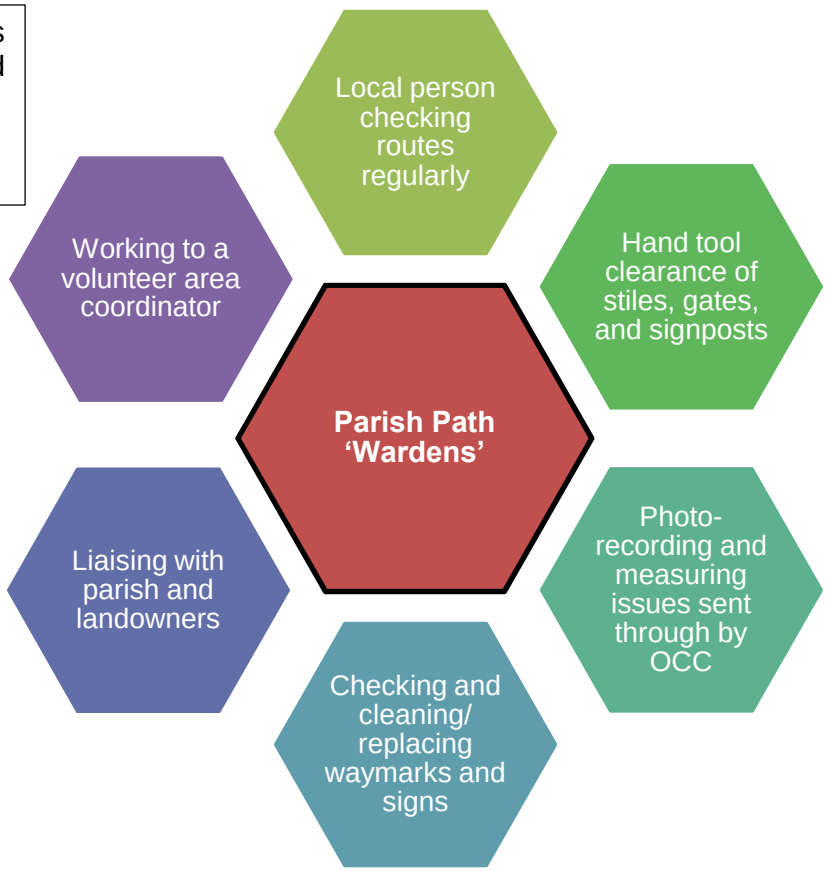
- **Key contact for local issues** – A group made up or local people can be the best single place for local people to report access issues to as it means that the group knows what is happening in their area and can use their local contacts and knowledge to take action when it can. It also encourages a sense of ownership of shared responsibility and pride in a local area. Local people can decide on their priorities through their Community-Led Plan or Neighbourhood Plan which can refine and reinforce community access to the rights of way network.
- **Survey routes and gather information** – Local groups can organise regular walks or rides of their local rights of way by individuals or groups to both check on paths but also as a fun social and recreational activity that brings all parts of the neighbourhood together. Using paths regularly means that knowledge about the route's location and condition, and the state of the vegetation, stiles, gates and bridges etc. can be monitored, and problems identified at an early stage.
- **Assess issues and send to OCC or manage locally** – The local group could assess what are the most important issues in their area and send these through to OCC. There would have to be a balance struck between the needs of the neighbourhood and the issues identified by all the other neighbourhoods in an OCC Field Officer's area. However there may be some issues found on surveys and reports that can be resolved at a local level by the group, perhaps by speaking to a landowner, householder or local business, without having to refer the issue to OCC. This might include overgrowing vegetation and repairs to stile and gates for example. Other issues reported might be considered so

temporary in nature that it is decided that nothing can be done, for example seasonal flooding of a riverside path, and it is not worth sending the issue through to OCC.

- **Undertake additional maintenance or improvements using precept and other funds** – Local councils have powers to undertake maintenance and improvement works on public rights of way and their own land. They can fund this through existing parish maintenance funds and third party funding sources, or they could increase their precept to cover this additional work or seek funding for improvement projects through organisation such as the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment. They can also work with volunteer groups such as BTCV, the Ramblers and other walking groups, British Horse Society or the Chiltern Society and Cotswolds Wardens. Some parish and town councils already do this to add to the work that the authority does. The County Council continues to undertake its duties to a standard as resources allow but this gives the option for local groups to 'add value' if their residents or visitors request this. OCC could assist by providing guidance and training to parish clerks.
- **Identify and undertake key upgrades and secure from planning applications** – As the group most 'in touch' with the needs of local residents, they are best placed to know where the needs and demands for safe links and access improvements are. This knowledge can feed into local action and how the local neighbourhood works with applications for new housing and industrial developments in their area as these might be able to provide the funding for these measures through developer contributions or local allocations under the Community Infrastructure Levy. Putting these access aspirations in the Community-Led Plan or Neighbourhood Plan can add significant weight to the requests for these measures to be provided from developments.
- **Promote best routes for locals and visitors** – Local councils and community groups are often best placed to promote their local area to residents, visitors and tourists, and encourage use of their local facilities such as village shops, cafes, accommodation, and pubs etc. Incorporating these into suggested walking and riding routes can increase use of the facilities and help keep them viable. Having a selection of routes with different 'themes' or reasons to use them can encourage visitors to stay for more nights, which usually results in an increase in spending. More interesting routes also encourages more local people to use them more often which has resulting health and social benefits as people make more active use of their local area.

b. Parish Path 'Wardens'– how this new concept could improve countryside access management

Figure 12: Activities and roles that could be undertaken – or are undertaken already



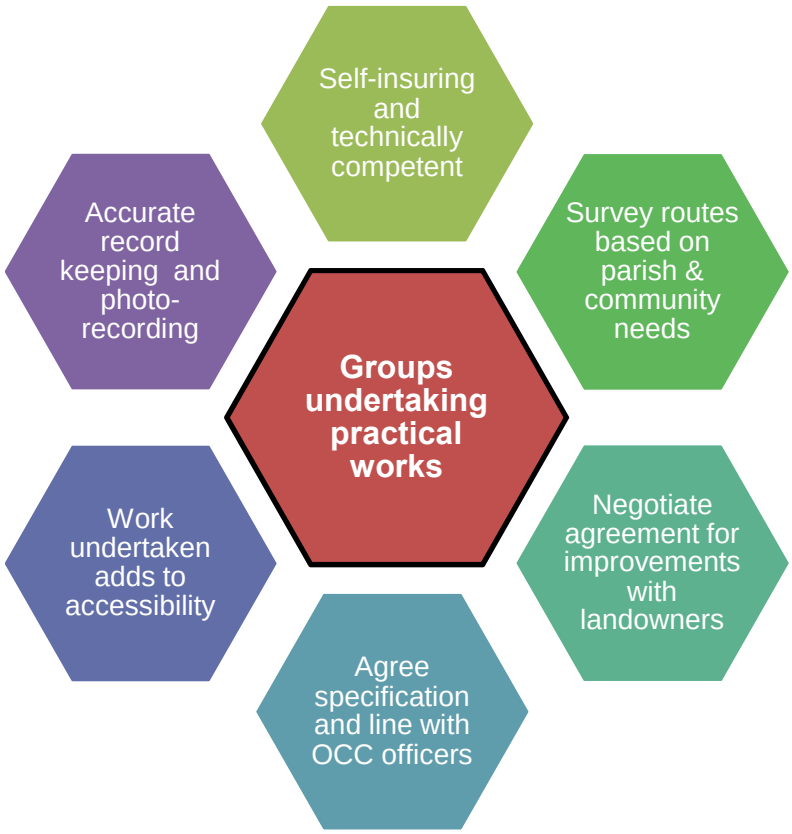
- **Local person checking routes regularly**– A Parish Path Warden (PPW) living reasonably locally to an area and working through the Ramblers or other group is able to check routes regularly. By undertaking to check all the rights of way in a designated area, problems can be spotted at an early stage and steps put in place at a local level before they escalate. More serious problems can be identified quickly and the appropriate information obtained so that OCC officers can minimise delays in resolving them, which encourages a sense of ownership of shared responsibility and pride in a local area.
- **Hand tool clearance of stiles, gates, and signposts** – Carrying a pair of secateurs is one of the best ways to keep paths clear of stray barbs of bramble, especially around stiles and signposts. Another useful item is a cloth to wipe signposts and waymarkers clear of algae or mud. These are usual practice for walkers and riders on paths and no special provision or permission is needed. A development of this is to form working groups of volunteers to undertake smaller scale clearances using hand tools like loppers and bowsaws but these activities normally require training and insurance from an organisation such as the Ramblers, and authority to undertake works on the County Council's behalf from the area Rights of Way Field Officer.
- **Photo-recording and measuring issues sent through by OCC** – The PPW could be in a better position to be the eyes on the ground which reduces the need for OCC officers based centrally to drive out to sites to inspect an item for risk assessment and prioritisation. By visiting the site and recording the item or issue with digital photography and taking

measurements and emailing these through it will enable the path warden to make a real difference in their local areas**.** This information could then be passed to the OCC officer or to the local community group as appropriate.

- **Checking and cleaning/replacing waymarks and signs -** Replacing existing faded or damaged waymarker discs is a simple procedure and, although a relatively low priority for officers, really helps enable people to be able to follow the line of a right of way more easily which reduces the likelihood of trespass. The PPW could be issued with a supply of waymarkers and this activity could be undertaken as part of their coverage of an area over a period of time. The same applies to replacing fingerpost plates and giving them a wipe over to enhance legibility.
- **Liaising with parish and landowners -** All PPWs should have a connection to the local council for the area they are checking so that there is a shared awareness of what the issues are in the area. This does not have to be a formal arrangement and the warden doesn't have to be an elected or co-opted member or officer of that council, but some councils already have such a person. The warden could feed back what they find to the council and this would allow the council to consider the next steps that members would like to see. There is also nothing to stop path wardens speaking to farmers they meet on the paths or making contact with farmers, landowners or householders provided certain guidelines are followed.
- **Working to a volunteer local coordinator** – To be most effective the PPWs should have a volunteer area coordinator to help the individual PPWs to feed into and who could then be the principle contact for OCC. The person or persons may enable a standard approach to be taken and help to manage expectations and increase the flow of information.

c. Groups undertaking practical improvements – how their work can improve countryside access management

Figure 13: Activities and roles that could be undertaken – or are undertaken already



- **Self-insuring and technically competent** – Depending on the level of work carried out, groups undertaking practical works on public rights of way need to be able to carry out their work with a minimum of risk to the public, themselves or the farming and natural environment they are operating in. Their work should also have limited need for OCC officer commitment. There are long-established groups such as the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers and the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens which have performed this practical role for a number of years and who work closely with OCC officers. New groups linked to user groups or local neighbourhoods and communities may be capable of emulating this work or working towards this, and this will generally be welcomed, providing there is an organisation behind the group that insures, trains and coordinates the group's work, there are enough members to be able to undertake work, that there is a need for the work to be undertaken in the group's local area, and that the OCC officer has capacity to work with the group.
- **Survey routes based on parish & community needs** – Working directly with the communities and neighbourhoods is one of the best ways for a group to meet the public's needs, especially if work is linked to community-led plans or statutory Neighbourhood Plans. The local group can identify potential routes or individual paths to be worked on, survey the routes to identify what is needed, meet with the OCC officer to agree what they can do and to ensure the correct timings and processes are undertaken. Groups might also encourage wider sections of the community to get involved.

- **Negotiate agreement for improvements with landowners –** When groups are confident and competent there is nothing wrong with them approaching landowners, householders and farmers directly to undertake improvement works on their behalf. This can be especially effective when a group member creates a relationship with an estate or property owner which means a greater number of improvements and works can be undertaken and there are efficiencies of scale for deliveries and access to the various sites. This type of work can also be attractive to external grant funders such as the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2).
- **Agree specification and line with OCC officers** - Before agreements are made the group should always liaise with the OCC officer to ensure that works are on the legal line, the specification and timings are reasonable and appropriate for the area, access to the site is agreed, and that on-going maintenance responsibilities are confirmed from the outset.
- **Work undertaken adds to accessibility –** Any proposed changes to furniture (gates etc) should meet Equalities Act tests for reasonableness and BS5709:2006 standard. Although farmers with public rights of way across their land are not generally classed as 'service - providers', it is important to assess the accessibility and the impact of the item of furniture when public funds are being spent. There is always a balance to be reached between controlling the movement of livestock, the terrain, and making the furniture as least restrictive as possible – and the OCC officer will be able to provide a professional opinion.
- **Accurate record keeping and photo-recording** – In order to optimise OCC officer time commitments to volunteer and community groups and demonstrate the value of these groups' work it is vital that record keeping is good. This will be the responsibility of the group to coordinate. A key part of this is taking digital photos at all stages in the projects - especially at path survey, when the works are being undertaken, and when the works are complete. If the images could be taken in the same locations with the same viewpoint then this makes comparison easier. For post-works publicity to the local community or wider media then images showing people working and using the paths are very good. Images are also essential to help funders decide on allocation of funds and they too need during and after shots for their records and on-going publicity. Lastly, any land-owners who have given permission should always be thanked after the work has been completed and acknowledged in any media item with their agreement.

Summary

This Countryside Access Management Plan sets out Oxfordshire County Council's assessment, vision and aims for the management and improvement of the public rights of way and countryside access network. The County Council will try to meet its responsibilities and, by working closely with other authorities and organisations, local communities, volunteers and other partners, it is hoped that significant added value and improvements can be achieved.

An annual CAMP delivery/business plan will set out aspirations for the coming year covering all service areas and this will feed into team and individual performance plans and reports to stakeholders. The content of each year's business plan will be directly dependent on the level of resources that are available at that time. All information will be on the dedicated web pages at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip.

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Glossary of terms

Access Land, Open Access Land,	Land that has been mapped and is subject to the new rights of access, mainly on foot. Land is either Mountain, Moor, Heath, Downland or Registered Common Land – sometimes known as the "right to roam".
AONB	**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** Oxfordshire has three - Chilterns, Cotswolds and North Wessex Downs, each with their own management team and management plan.
BHS	**British Horse Society**
BOAT, Byway	**Byway Open to All Traffic** a highway over which the public have a right of way for vehicular and all other kinds of traffic but which is used by the public mainly for the purpose for which footpaths and bridleways are used. Waymarked by red arrows
Bridleway	**Public Bridleway** A highway over which the public have a right of way on foot and a right of way on horseback or leading a horse, but with or without a right to drive animals of any description along it. Bicycles may also be ridden on bridleways. Waymarked by blue arrows.
BS5709:2006	**British Standard** Covers the specification for gaps, gates and stiles.
BVPI 178	**Best Value Performance Indicator** BVPI 178 related to 'ease of use' of public rights of way. Ceased being a statutory indicator but still used by many authorities to measure the state of the network.
CAMP	**Countryside Access Management Plan** Oxfordshire County Council's term for the second statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan
Citizens Panel/ Oxfordshire Voice	A panel of 3000 Oxfordshire residents run by the County Council that is used to gain an understanding of the public's opinion on a number of matters. Countryside Access questions were included in the September 2002, 2006 and 2008 Citizens Panel survey. Later surveys were internet based.
Common Land	Land usually held in private ownership but with certain rights of registered "commoners" to use it and with a right of access to the public on foot to most registered commons. Recorded in Commons Registers
CLA	**Country Land and Business Association**
CoAg/ Natural England	**Countryside Agency** Government agency that lead on countryside access. From 2006 renamed Natural England and combined the land, access and recreation part of CoAg combines with English Nature and the RDS
Countryside Access Team	The part of Oxfordshire County Council who's work includes protecting, maintaining, improving and promoting public rights of way and other countryside access resources. Close working with the Definitive Map and Commons Team
CRoW Act	**Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** – part I established the new right of access to access land, Part II set out improvements to rights of way legislation (including the duty to prepare RoWIPs), part III strengthened laws about wildlife and nature conservation, Part IV dealt with AONBs and Conservation Boards, Part V contained the provisions to establish LAFs.
Cycle Track	A way over which there is a right to cycle, and possibly also to walk.
CTC	**Cyclists' Touring Club**
DDA	**Disability Discrimination Act (1995 and 2005)**
de facto access	Access which is available on the ground, even though it may not be officially recorded.
Definitive Map and Commons Team	The part of Oxfordshire County Council wh whose work includes producing and keeping under review the DMS. Team undertakes DMMOs, PPOs, Public Path Agreements and also maintains statutory registers.
DM&S	**Definitive Map and Statement** Legal document comprising maps and written information, which records the existence of those rights. Other rights may exist, but may not be recorded. The DMS is not conclusive of the non-existence of

	rights which are not recorded. These may be recorded by means of a DMMO.
DMMO	**Definitive Map Modification Order** Legal order which changes the Definitive Map and Statement if confirmed.
Defra	**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** Government department whose responsibilities include rights of way.
de jure access	Access rights which are recorded legally ("based on law").
DfT	**Department for Transport** Government department responsible for highways other than rights of way.
Discovering Lost Ways Project	Project set up by the Countryside Agency to research historic rights of way before the Definitive Map closes to historic claims in 2026.
Diversion	The changing of the route of a right of way on the ground using a legal order.
ERDP	**England Rural Development Programme** The ERDP comprises seven separate but integrated schemes designed to help rural businesses and communities protect the countryside and adapt to the demands of an increasingly competitive rural economy – includes Environmental Stewardship.
English Heritage	Government agency responsible for the historic built environment and archaeology.
Environment Agency	Government agency responsible for river management, waste management, pollution control and other environmental matters.
Equalities Act 2012	Replaced the **DDA**
Finger post	A signpost placed where a public right of way leaves a metalled road. Shows the status, direction, and where appropriate the destination and distance.
Footpath	**Public Footpath** A highway over which the right of way is on foot only. Waymarked by yellow arrows.
Footway	A way set aside for pedestrians at the edge of a carriageway (a pavement).
GIS	**Geographic Information System** a computer system capable of assembling, storing, manipulating, and displaying geographically referenced information (ie spatial data).
Green lane	A common term with no legal meaning. A physical description of an unsurfaced track, often enclosed by hedges. The land may be a public right of way or may carry no public rights at all.
Highway	A way over which the public have the right to pass and re-pass
Highway Authority	The body responsible for the maintaining of highways and keeping them free of obstructions. In Oxfordshire it is the County Council.
Highways Agency	Government agency responsible for trunk roads and motorways.
LAF	**Local Access Forum** The countryside access advisory body established by the County Council under the CRoW Act 2000. Comprised of volunteers including land managers, users and other relevant interested parties. Oxfordshire's LAF is known as the Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (OCAF).
National Trail	Long distance route supported by Natural England.
NFU	**National Farmers' Union**
ORPA	**Other Route with Public Access** A non-statutory designation route shown by the OS on its Landranger and Explorer mapping. Generally includes unsurfaced UCRs.
OS	**Ordnance Survey** Government owned company that produces and licences map based information.
OCAF	**Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum** – see LAF

OCC	**Oxfordshire County Council**
Permissive path	Path made available through the goodwill of the landowner. It may be withdrawn at any time and the public have no permanent rights over it. Permissive Paths are not usually shown on the DMS or OS maps.
Private Right of Way	A right of way for an individual or any group other than the public at large.
PPO	**Public Path Order** Legal order which creates, extinguishes or diverts a footpath ,bridleway or restricted byway.
Public Right of Way	A right of passage by the public over the highway for the purpose of passing and repassing and for incidental reasonable purposes.
RA	**Ramblers' Association**
Recreational use	Using the rights of way network for informal enjoyment or exercise.
Restricted Byway	Highway open to all traffic except mechanically propelled vehicles waymarked by purple arrows.
RoWIP	**Rights of Way Improvement Plan** A statutory plan that assesses access and sets out an authority's ambitions to manage and improve this access. Oxfordshire's second RoWIP is called a **CAMP**
Spatial	Relating to distribution, distance, direction, areas and other aspects of space on the Earth's surface.
Surveying Authority	The body responsible for the preparation and upkeep of the DMS.
SUSTRANS	**SUSTainable TRANsport** A charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport. Also manages a national network of cycle routes.
Tourism providers	Includes tourist attractions, destination marketing organisations and tourism officers working for local authorities.
Town and Village Greens	Land which local inhabitants can use for recreation purposes
TOE2	**Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment** A charity that aims to support communities and other organisations through grant funding to improve biodiversity, access and make better use of renewable resources
UCR	**Unclassified Road or Unclassified County Road** These are minor highways, sometimes surfaced. They are generally maintainable at public expense.
Utilitarian routes	Path which is used by people going about their daily lives e.g. used to get to school, work, bus stops and local facilities.
Waymark	A means of showing the route of a public right of way. Oxfordshire uses round plastic discs with the status of the route and an arrow to show direction. Usually mounted on a wooden post or attached to stiles, gates and bridges.

Document produced by OCC Countryside Access Team, December 2013

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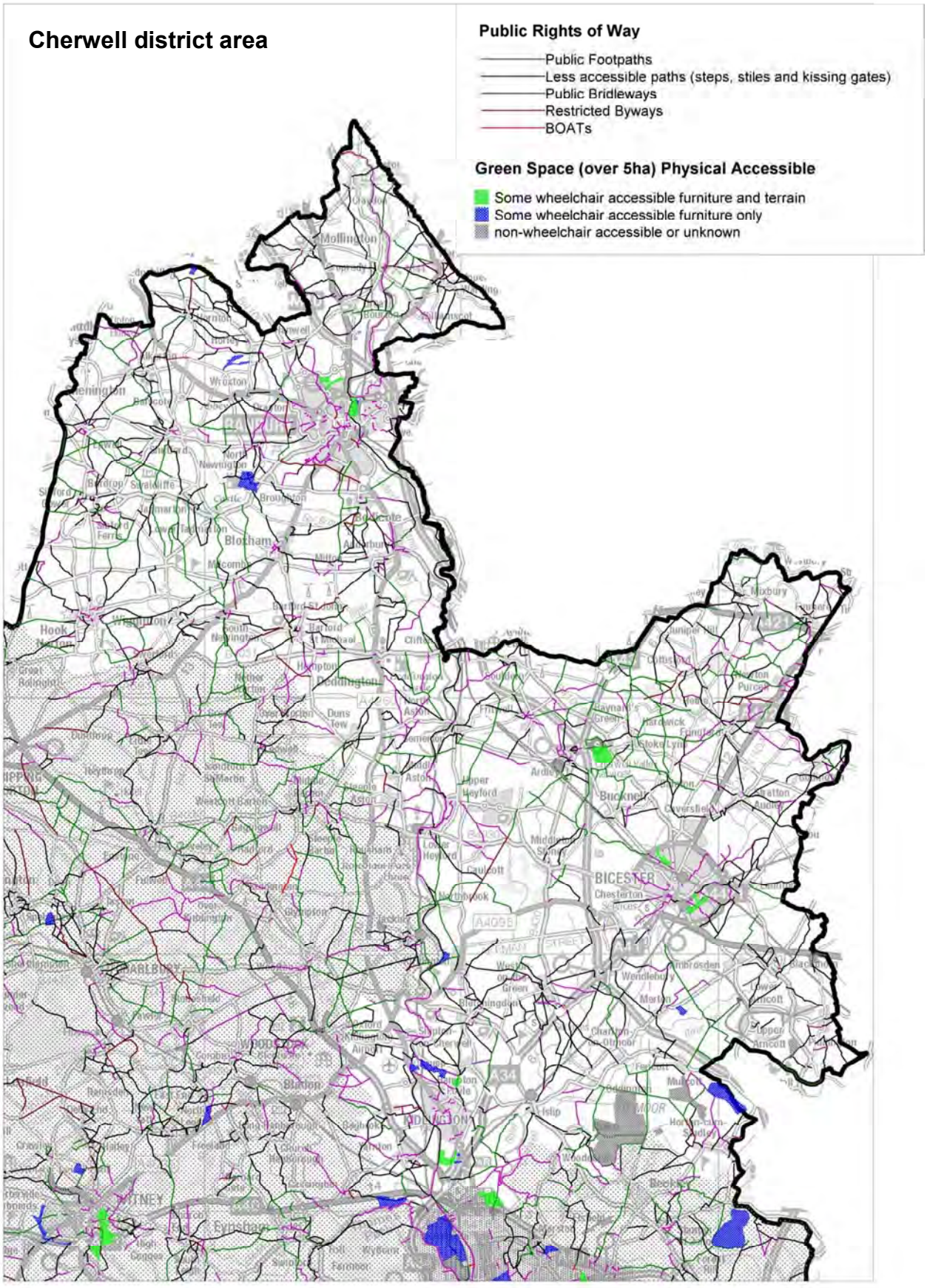
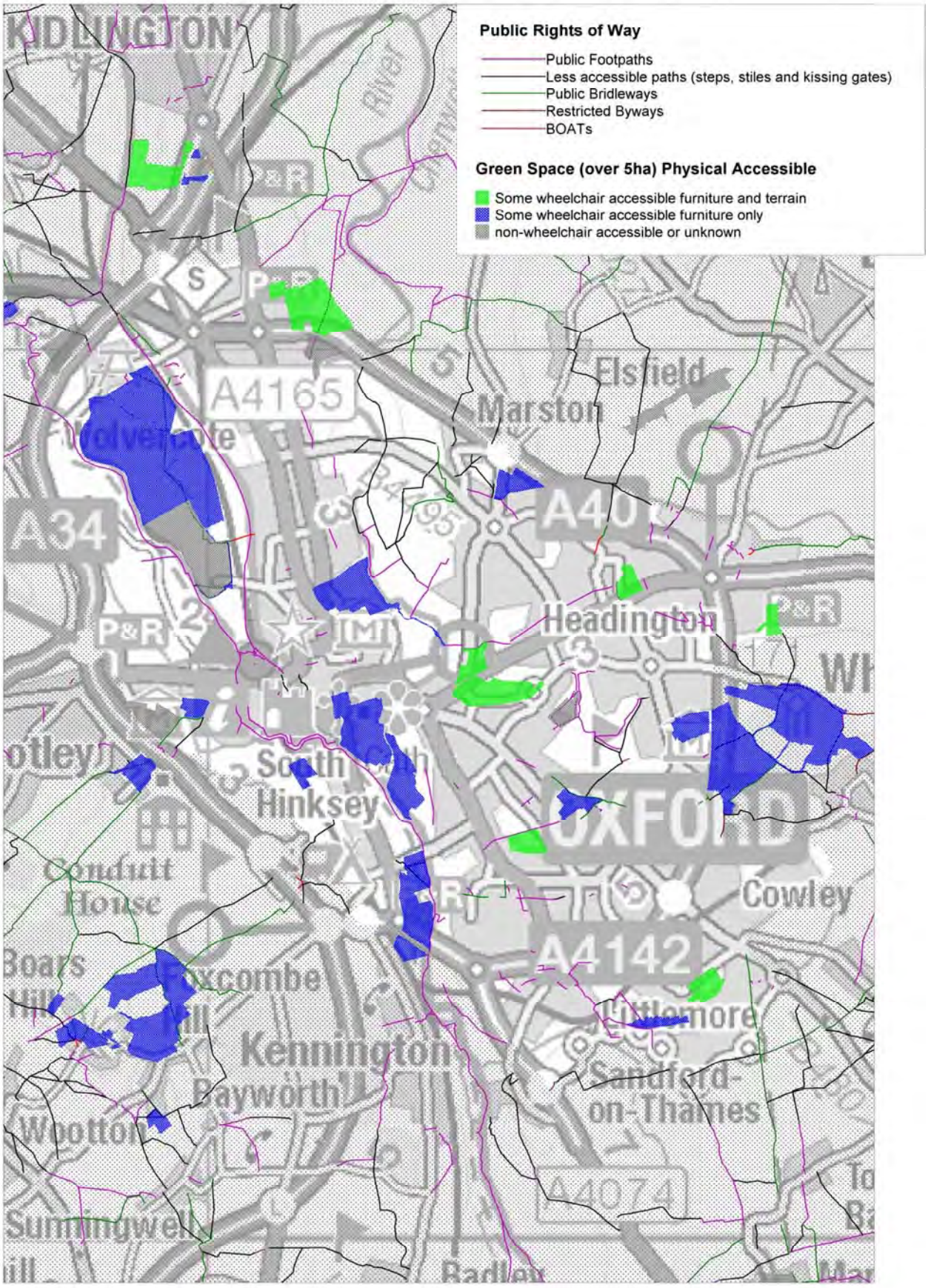
Appendix A: The Accessible Public Rights of Way and green spaces network (over 5 hectares) for each of the district areas

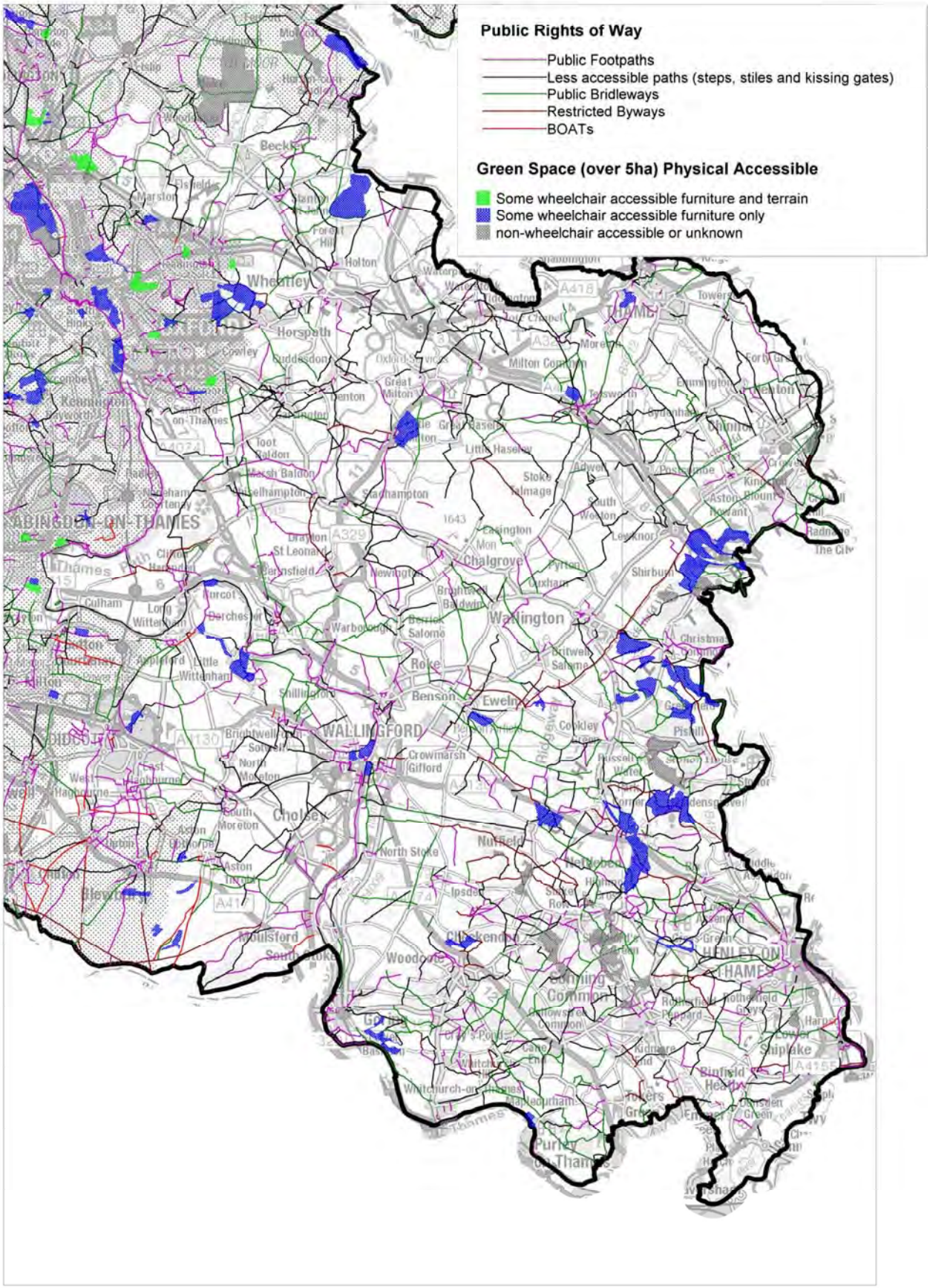
Cherwell district area



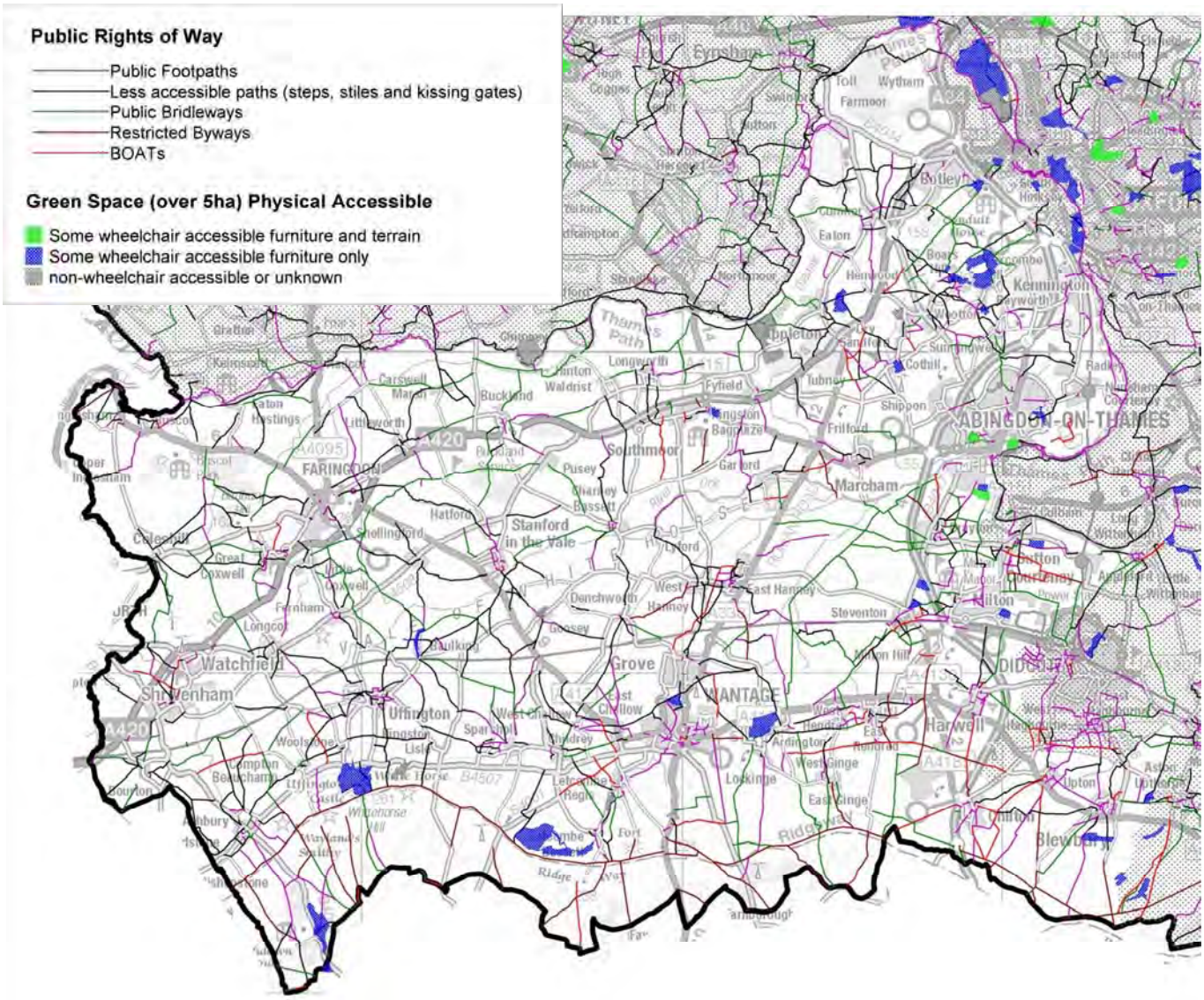
Oxford City district area



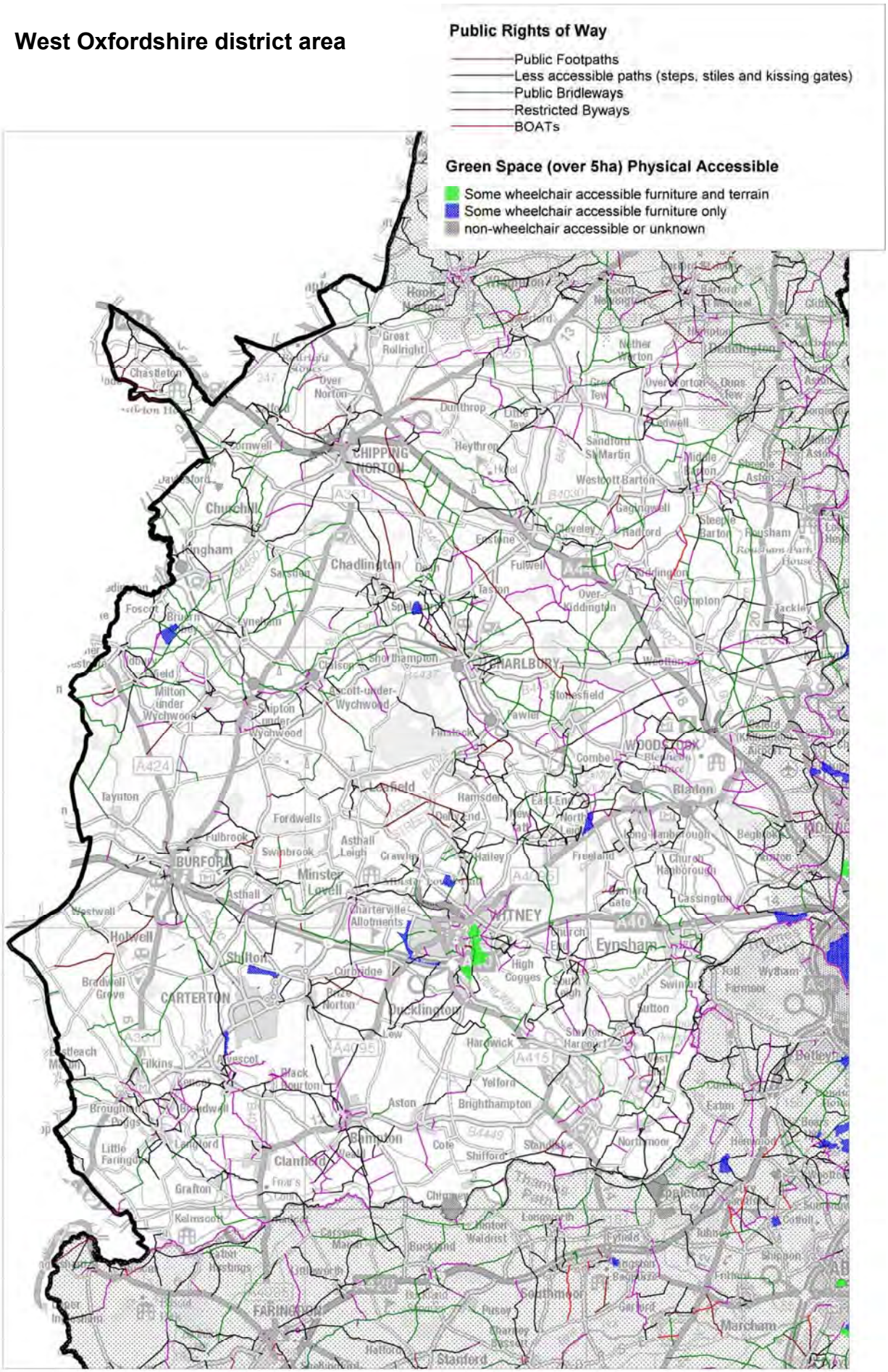
South Oxfordshire district area



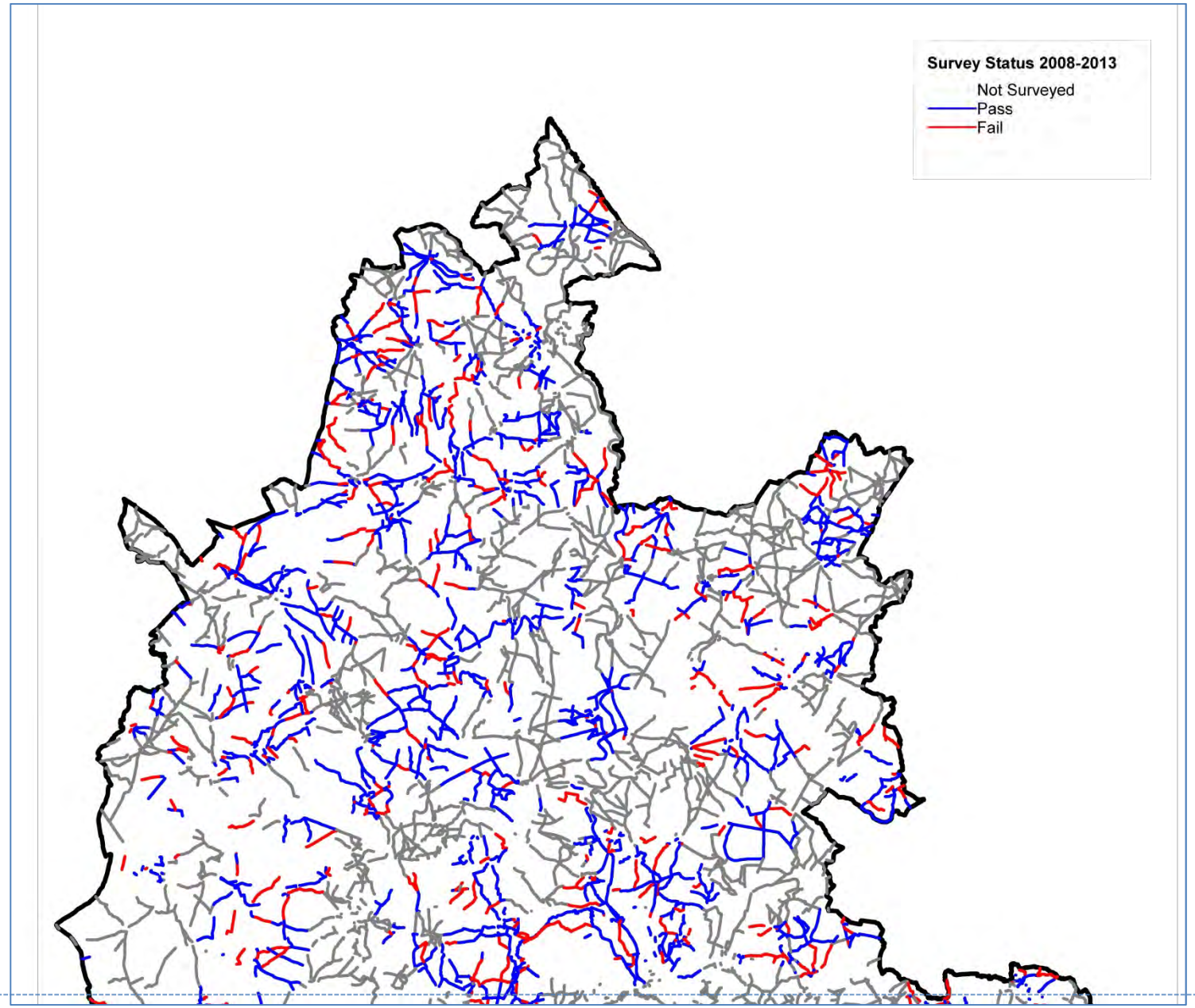
Vale of White Horse district area



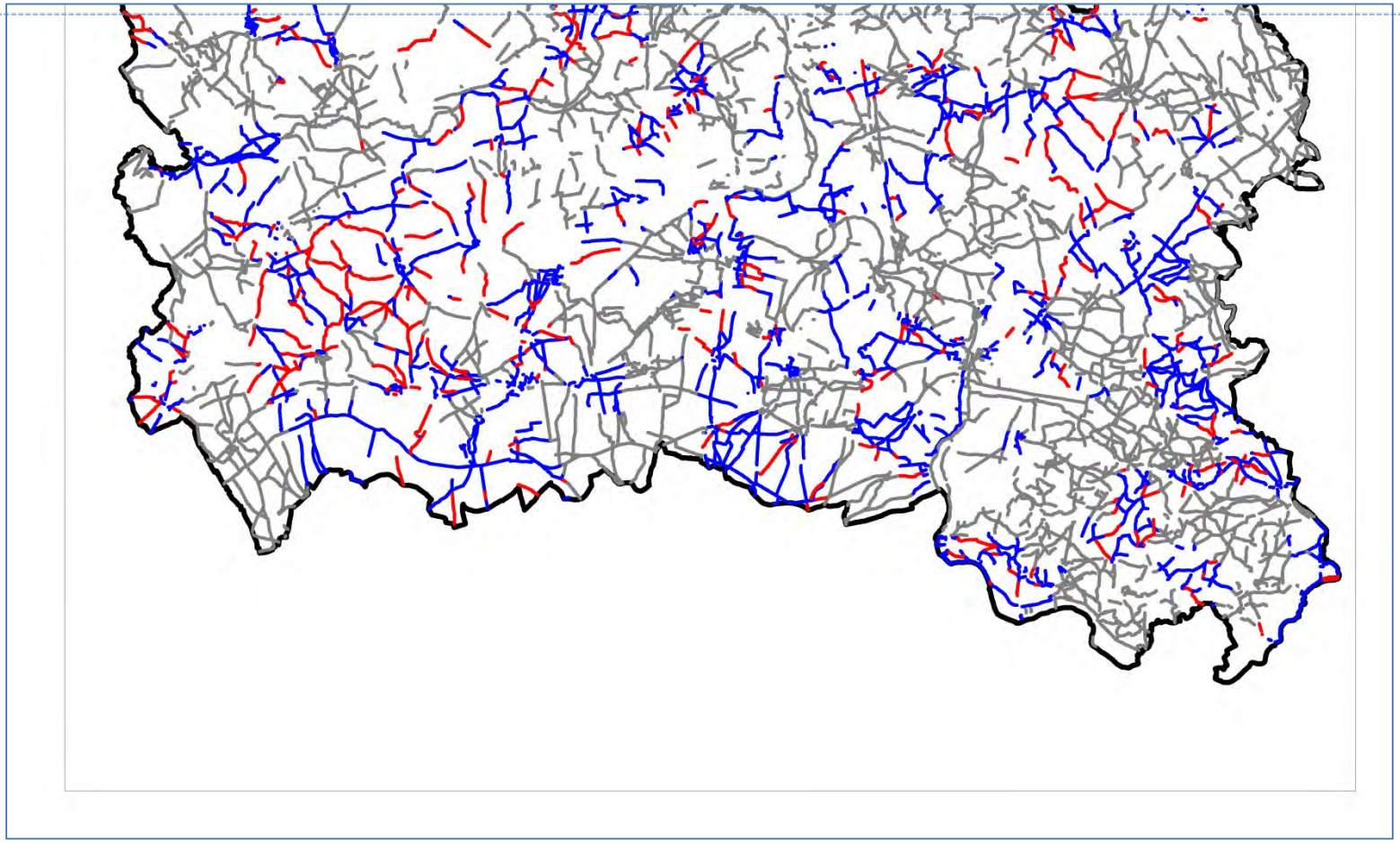
West Oxfordshire district area



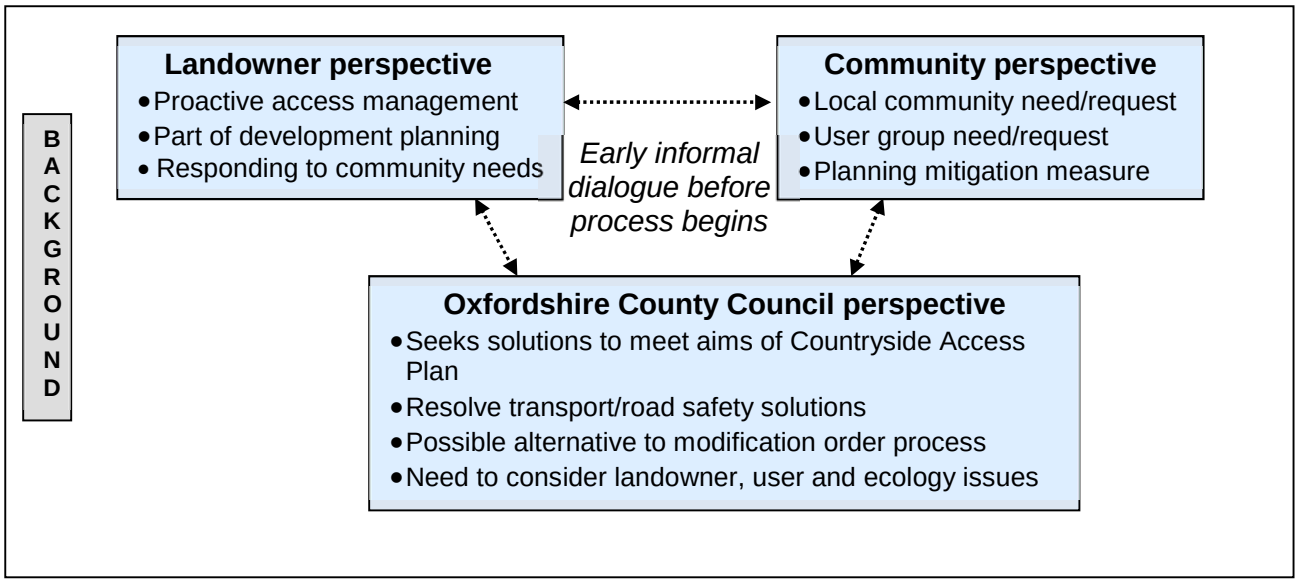
Appendix B: Snapshot of public rights of way surveyed between 2008 and 2013 meeting 'easy to use' standard - North and South of Oxfordshire



Overlap



Appendix C: Framework diagram for normal public right of way dedications by agreement



1. Access Officer assesses proposed path for feasibility – desktop and/or site visit:

- *Is there an achievable route on the ground? Does it provide a useful link or route?*
- *What are likely specifications? Can hazards/issues be removed?*
- *Are maintenance liabilities minimised? Are the landowner(s) in agreement?*

Feasible proposal? N → **Proposal rejected**

Y

2. Access Officer liaises formally with landowner

- *Agreement of route detail in principle, identifies any cautions or limitations*
- *Agrees outline specification and timings of works*

3. Definitive Map Team works with Access Officer to prepare dedication plan and schedule

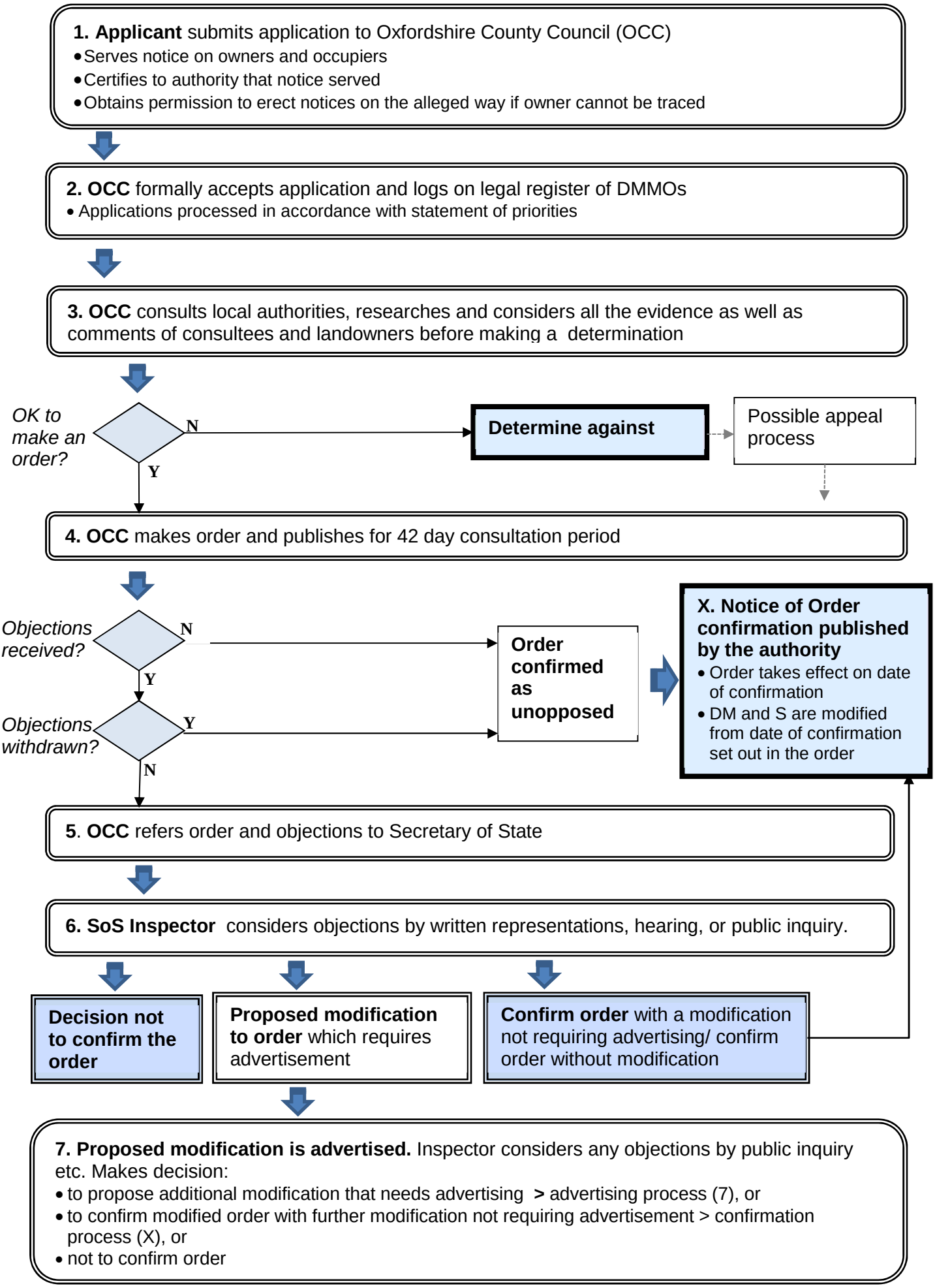
4. Access Officer obtains written approval in principle for the dedication plan and schedule from landowner/agent

5. OCC Legal Unit draft dedication deed incorporating plan and schedule and sends to landowner's solicitor. **Landowners solicitors** confirms details and landowner signs and returns deeds. **OCC Legal Unit** seal deed and provide copies to RoW office and landowner

6a. Definitive Map Team sends copy of deed to access officer, arranges advert and includes in annual Legal Event Order

6b. Access Officer works with landowner and contractors to ensure path is available on the ground, signed and publicised as available to use

Appendix C: Simplified flowchart of Definitive Map Modification Order processing**



Oxfordshire County Council Definitive Map & Commons Team

**Summary of process as at January 2013 – for up to date information please see our Guidance Notes at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/modificationsanddiversions

Appendix D: Oxfordshire key countryside access assets and developer contributions

Public rights of way (PRoW) and other local green space and countryside areas are part of Oxfordshire's heritage and landscape. They are valuable assets, particularly on the urban fringe, as they offer a means of access to appreciate and understand the surrounding local countryside, farming environment and green spaces. This access to green spaces gives direct and indirect health, social and economic benefits and can improve overall quality of life within a new development and for surrounding residents and visitors.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (para 75) states *"**Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails**".* Therefore it can be seen that public rights of way and countryside access form a part of the regional and local growth agenda and this needs to be considered as part of the changes that will be occurring in the Oxfordshire landscape over the life of the CAMP and beyond.

Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access and Definitive Map and Commons Teams manage access to the countryside in Oxfordshire through the public rights of way and access land network. In addition to the statutory functions of recording, protecting and maintaining public rights of way, part of these teams' role includes assessing residential and commercial developments to identify those that may have an impact on the public rights of way and access land network.

The Council's access and rights of way priorities for residential, commercial and minerals and waste developments are to safeguard existing countryside access where this is possible, adapt countryside access where necessary, and where possible and reasonable to mitigate the impacts of development to enhance the network for all users.

There are normally three areas of involvement and mitigation relating to access and the development planning process:. These are a)responding to individual developments, b) seeking contributions towards important county and district countryside access route assets, and c) supporting growth, the economy and quality of place in the priority development and growth areas.

A) Responding to individual developments

For most applications, large or small, the following standard conditions will be promoted to the Local Planning Authority:

A1) protecting routes through standard conditions

1. **Temporary obstructions.** No materials, plant, temporary structures or excavations of any kind should be deposited / undertaken on or adjacent to the Public Right of Way that may obstruct or dissuade the public from using the public right of way whilst development takes place. Reason: To ensure the public right of way remains available and convenient for public use.

2. **Route alterations.** No changes to the public right of way direction, width, surface, signing or structures shall be made without prior permission approved by the Countryside Access Team or necessary legal process. Reason: To ensure the public right of way remains available and convenient for public use.

3. **Vehicle access (construction)**: No construction / demolition vehicle access may be taken along or across a public right of way without prior permission and appropriate safety/mitigation measures approved by the Countryside Access Team. Any damage to the surface of the public right of way caused by such use will be the responsibility of the applicants or their contractors to put right / make good to a standard required by the Countryside Access Team. Reason: To ensure the public right of way remains available and convenient for public use.

4. **Vehicle access (Occupation):** No vehicle access may be taken along or across a public right of way to residential or commercial sites without prior permission and appropriate safety and surfacing measures approved by the Countryside Access Team. Any damage to the surface of the public right of way caused by such use will be the responsibility of the applicants, their contractors, or the occupier to put right / make good to a standard required by the Countryside Access Team. Reason: To ensure the public right of way remains available and convenient for public use

5. **Gates / right of way:** Any gates provided shall be set back from the public right of way or shall not open outwards from the site across the public right of way. Reason: To ensure that gates are opened or closed in the interests of public right of way user safety

A2). Securing improvements linked to individual development sites

Mitigation measures will be sought to limit the impacts on public rights of way in and around an individual development site, and to contribute towards measures that are likely to be affected by developments in a wider catchment if their location or attributes making them likely to be used. Contributions will normally be assessed on an application by application basis and with reference to the evidence base of network connectivity in **Appendix E.** Requests for contributions will be in line with Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Tests – 1) necessary to make development acceptable, 2) directly related to the development and 3) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind.

The key types of mitigation measures that will be sought through planning conditions, planning obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy, and other mechanisms includes:

a. Making existing routes on the development site easier to use and more attractive, by providing surface treatments, landscaping and planting measures and better infrastructure items
b. Providing additional linking and recreational/transport routes within and surrounding a development site's area of influence to make the network more joined up and easier to use.

B) Seeking contributions towards important county and district countryside access route assets

Oxfordshire has a 2011 Census population estimate of 653,800 and this is projected to rise by 59,500 to 713,300 by 2026. More recent population forecasting predicted an increase of nearly 100,000 to the population over the life of the CAMP and an additional 42,000 new dwellings being constructed. The breakdown of approximate increases for each district area over the life of the CAMP is:

Cherwell – additional 13,500 dwellings and population increase of 31,500
Oxford - additional 5,000 dwellings and population increase of 13,600

South, incl Harwell and Great Western Park – additional 13,500 dwellings and population increase of 31,400
Vale – additional 5,700 dwellings and population increase of 13,200
West – additional 4,000 dwellings and population increase of 9,900

(*figures rounded to nearest hundred and sourced from 2013 OCC PopCal data*)

Certain access routes are considered to be of high value at the county and district scale because of their quality, length, availability or status. This makes these routes likely to be used by more people than the residents and workers in the vicinity of the route which means they will need improving as part of preparing for the increases in population and number of houses in each district and across the county as a whole, Table 1.

Table 1: Key access route assets that require contribution for investment to meet the challenges of growth and that provide wide ranging economic, health and social benefits

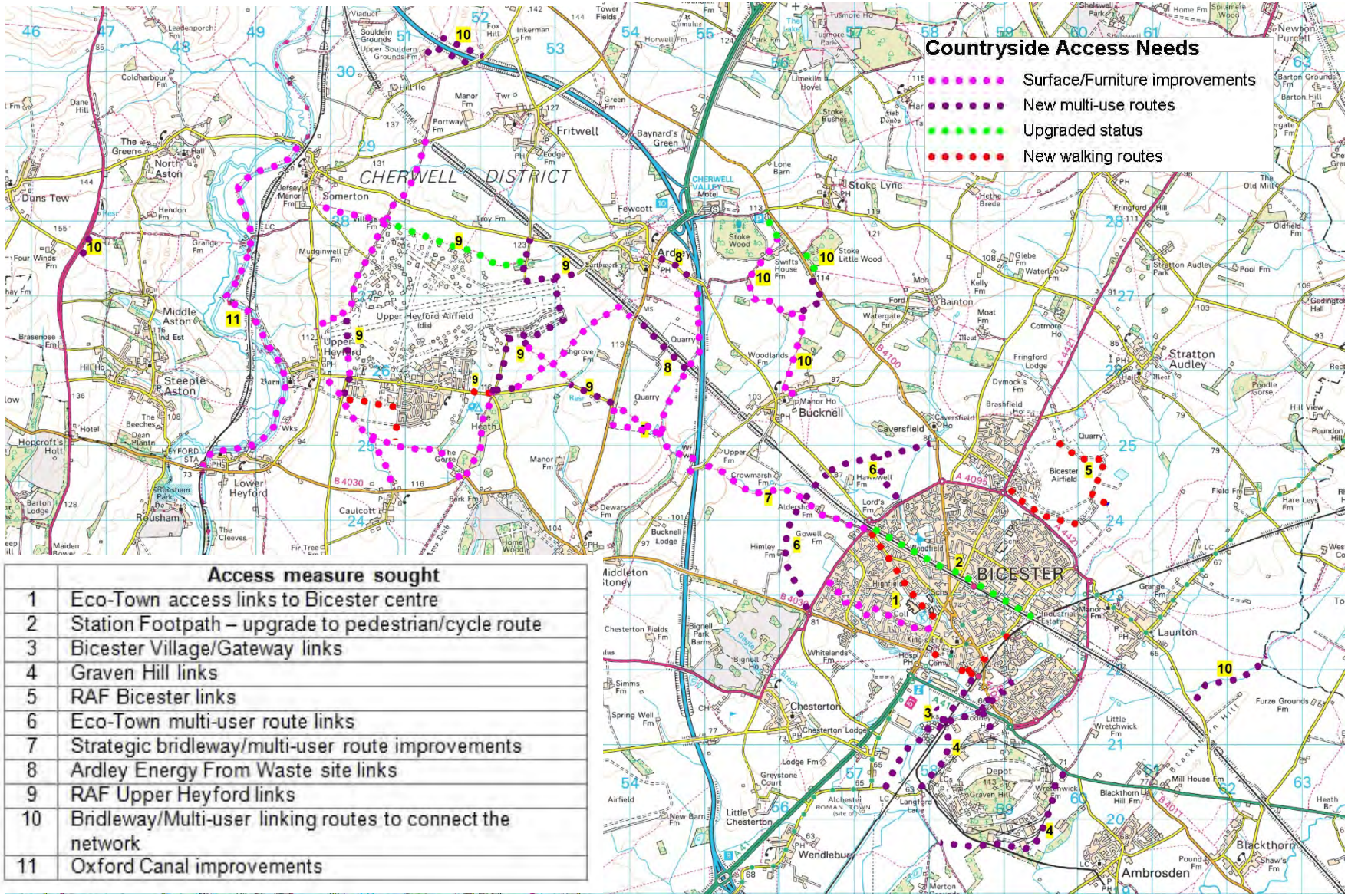
	Area contributions sought from
Thames Path National Trail corridor, Ridgeway National Trail corridor, Oxford Canal Walk corridor, Wilts & Berks Canal Walk corridor, Oxfordshire County Council promoted walks and rides	County-wide
Cherwell District Council circular walks and rides, Claude Duval riding route, Oxford Greenbelt Way	Cherwell District
West Oxfordshire District Council and Cotswolds AONB promoted circular walks and rides, Lower Windrush Valley Path, Wychwood Way, Oxford Greenbelt Way, Bablock Hythe crossing, d'Arcy Dalton Way	West Oxfordshire
South Oxfordshire District Council, Chilterns AONB and North Wessex Downs AONB promoted circular walks and rides, Oxford Greenbelt Way, Judges Ride, Swans Way, Chilterns Way	South Oxfordshire
Oxford Greenbelt Way, Oxford Greenspaces Walk, Bablock Hythe crossing	Oxford City
Vale of White Horse District Council and North Wessex Downs AONB promoted walks and rides, Oxford Greenbelt Way, Bablock Hythe crossing	Vale of White Horse

C) Supporting growth, the economy and quality of place in the priority development and growth areas

Oxfordshire has six priority areas for growth. These are Bicester, Oxford, Science Vale UK, Banbury, Witney and Carterton. In the first three the focus is on supporting regional and local economic growth through infrastructure development and housing, and in the second three the focus is on meeting local needs through increased housing provision.

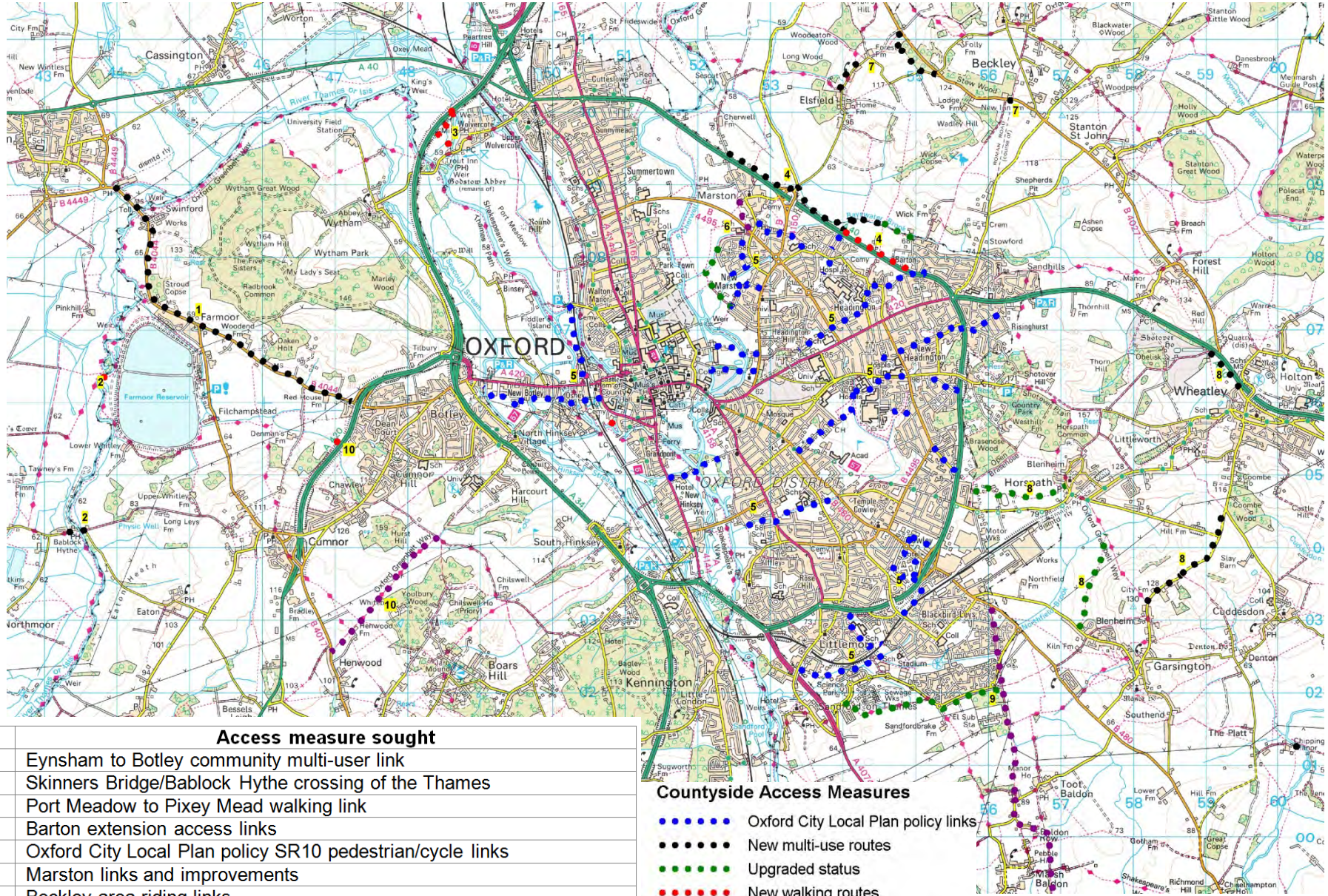
Each area is shown in the following pages, with the indicative access route measures highlighted. These are intended to make travelling safer or to better connect the network as a means to improve the local environment, health and wellbeing and 'place-making' for local residents and the local economy. These measures may be where developer funding agreements have already been secured or where there is a need for wider scale on-site measures or provision of developer contributions so that Oxfordshire County Council and others can improve provision. There are also maps for Thame, Faringdon, and Wallingford areas as these will all experience high levels of residential growth over the life of the CAMP. Proposed major development to the east of Swindon will impact on Oxfordshire's countryside and therefore a mitigation proposals map for this area is also included. Mitigation measures may also include those identified by the local community through its Neighbourhood Plan or other Community-Led Plan.

Bicester Key Area: Access Measures



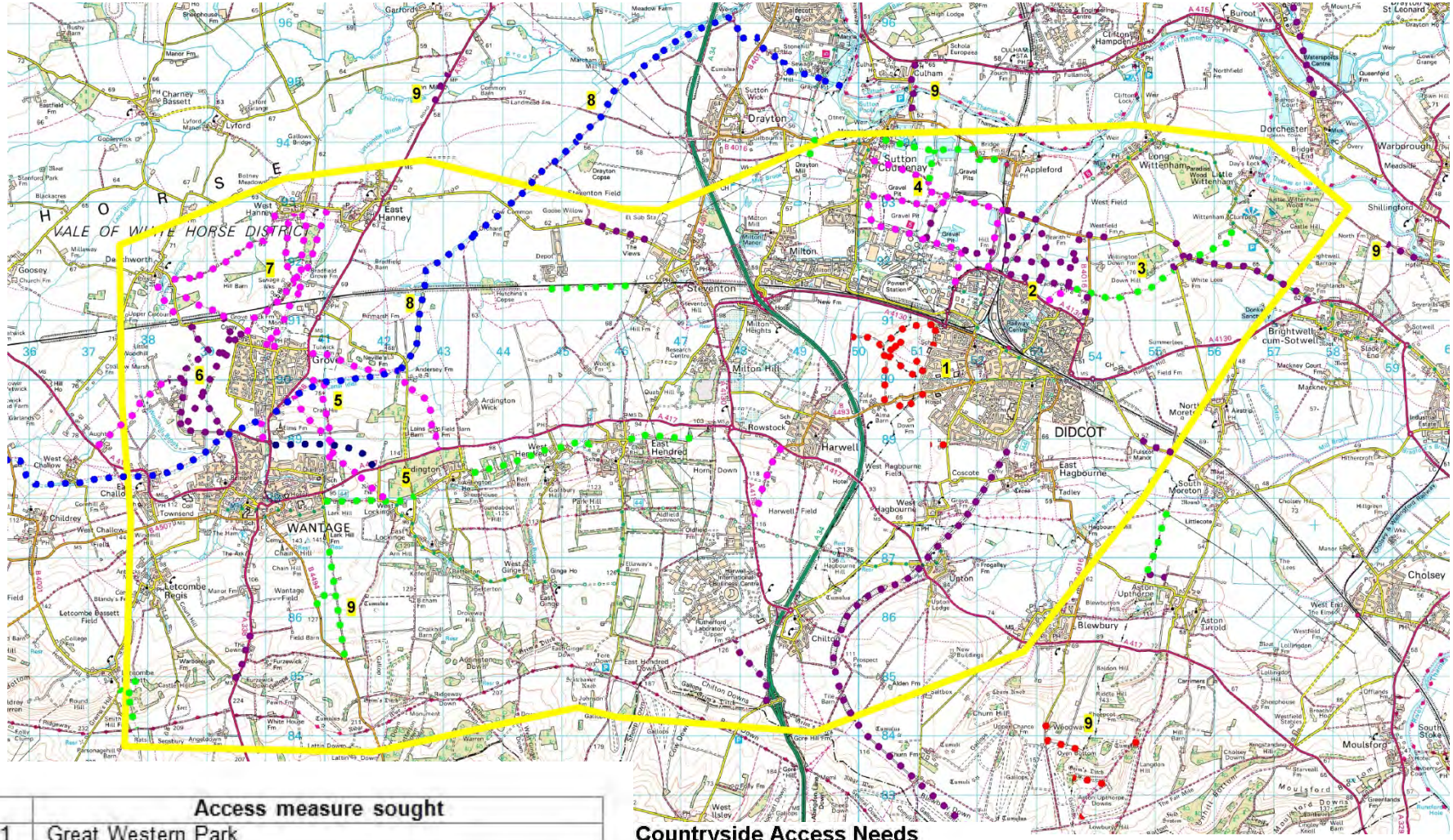
	Access measure sought
1	Eco-Town access links to Bicester centre
2	Station Footpath – upgrade to pedestrian/cycle route
3	Bicester Village/Gateway links
4	Graven Hill links
5	RAF Bicester links
6	Eco-Town multi-user route links
7	Strategic bridleway/multi-user route improvements
8	Ardley Energy From Waste site links
9	RAF Upper Heyford links
10	Bridleway/Multi-user linking routes to connect the network
11	Oxford Canal improvements

Oxford Key Area: Access Measures



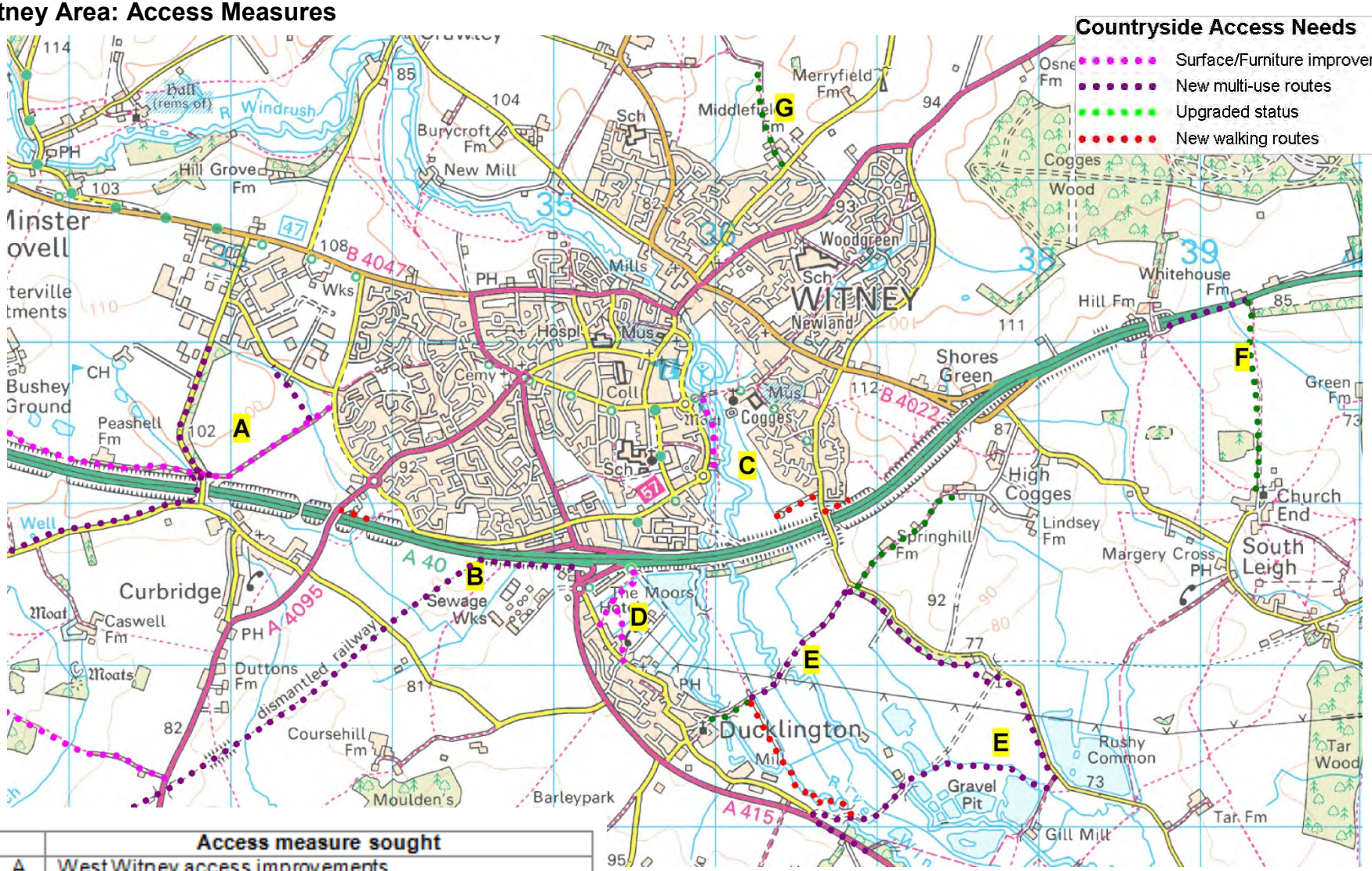
	Access measure sought
1	Eynsham to Botley community multi-user link
2	Skinners Bridge/Bablock Hythe crossing of the Thames
3	Port Meadow to Pixey Mead walking link
4	Barton extension access links
5	Oxford City Local Plan policy SR10 pedestrian/cycle links
6	Marston links and improvements
7	Beckley area riding links
8	Garsington and area riding links
9	South East Oxford countryside gateway links
10	Cumnor area access links

Science Vale Key Area: Access Measures



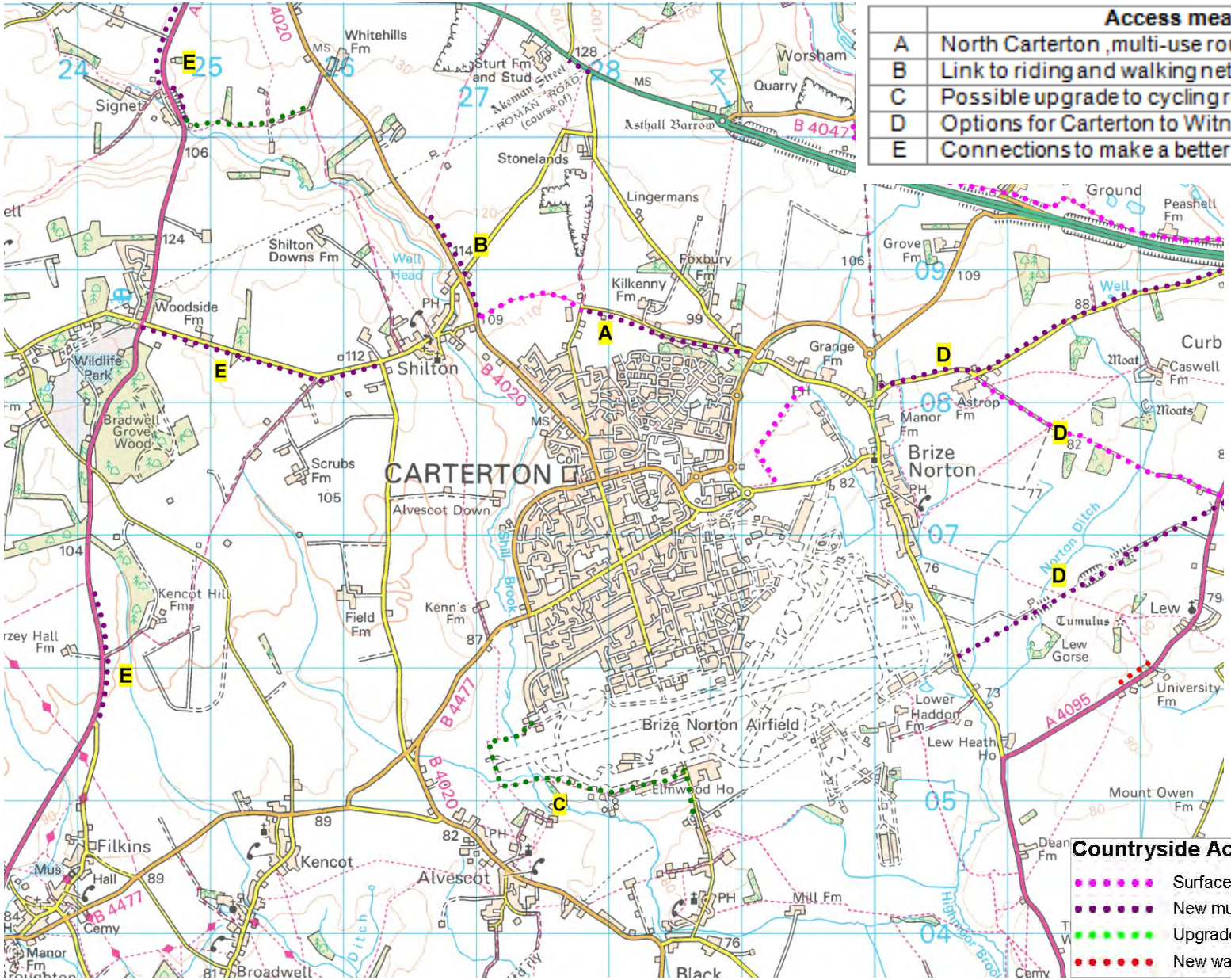
	Access measure sought
1	Great Western Park
2	Didcot Northeast
3	Earth Trust community link
4	Didcot Northwest
5	Wantage Northeast
6	Grove Airfield
7	Wantage North
8	Wilts and Berks Cana;/Towpath route
10	Strategic bridleway/multi-user route improvements

Witney Area: Access Measures



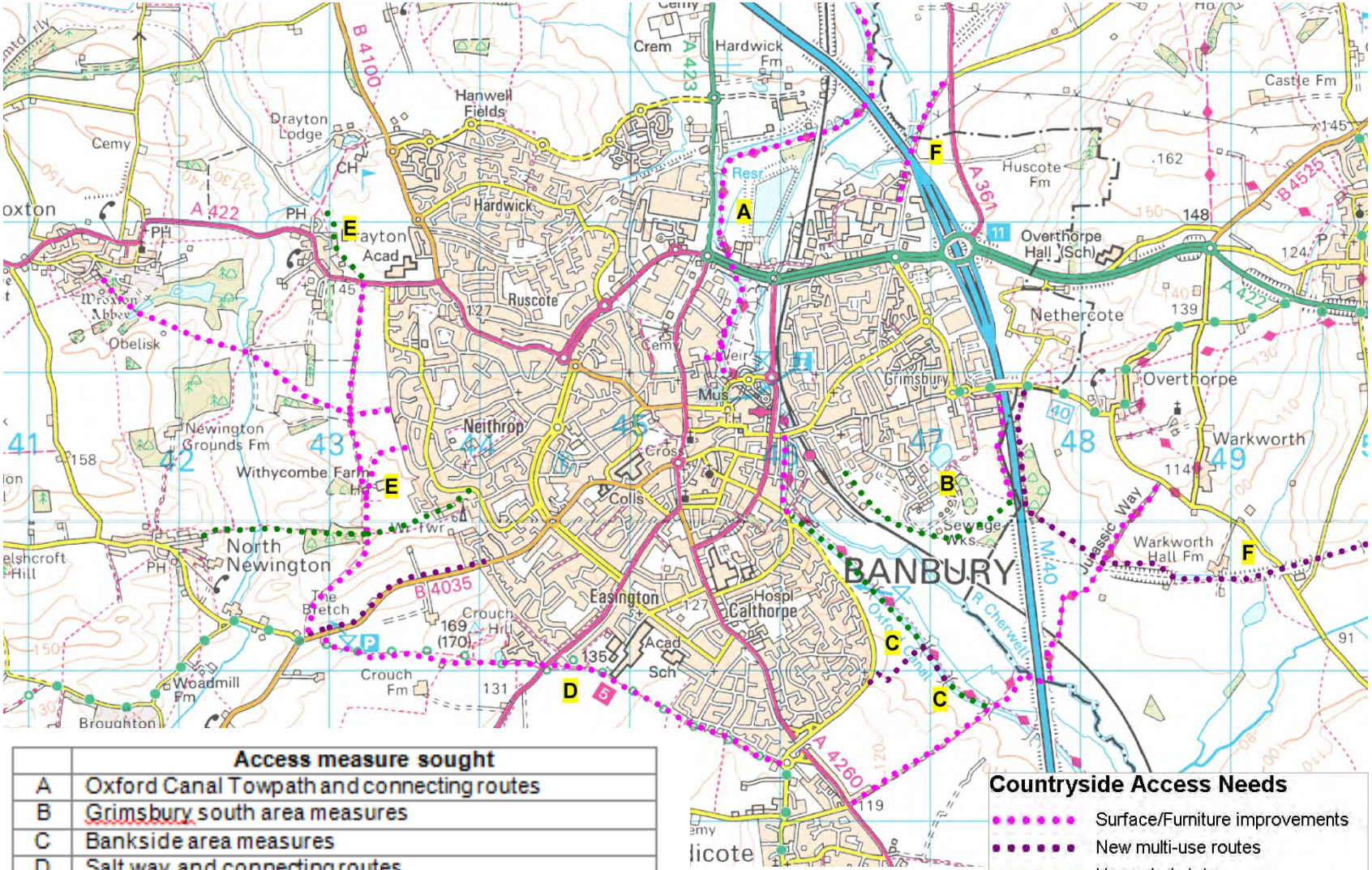
	Access measure sought
A	West Witney access improvements
B	Potential multi-use route along old railway line
C	Cogges area improvements
D	Ducklington improvements
E	Gill Mill access measures
F	South Leigh bridleway link
G	Witney North access link

Carterton Area: Access Measures



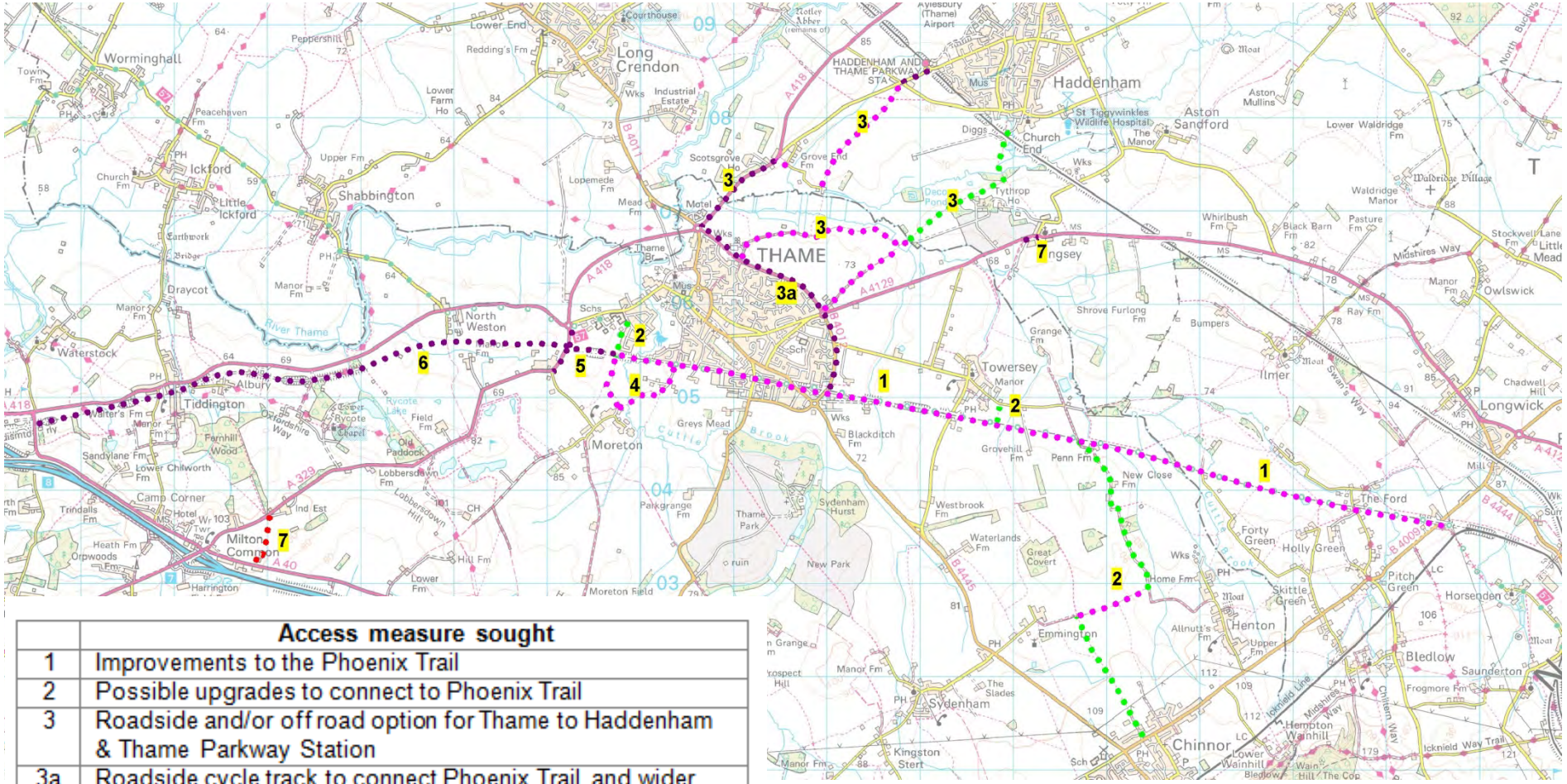
	Access measure sought
A	North Carterton ,multi-use route improvements
B	Link to riding and walking network
C	Possible upgrade to cycling route
D	Options for Carterton to Witney cycle route
E	Connections to make a better walking and riding network

Banbury Area: Access Measures



	Access measure sought
A	Oxford Canal Towpath and connecting routes
B	Grimsbury south area measures
C	Bankside area measures
D	Salt way and connecting routes
E	Banbury West improvements
F	Out of Oxfordshire connections and improvements

Thame Area: Access Measures

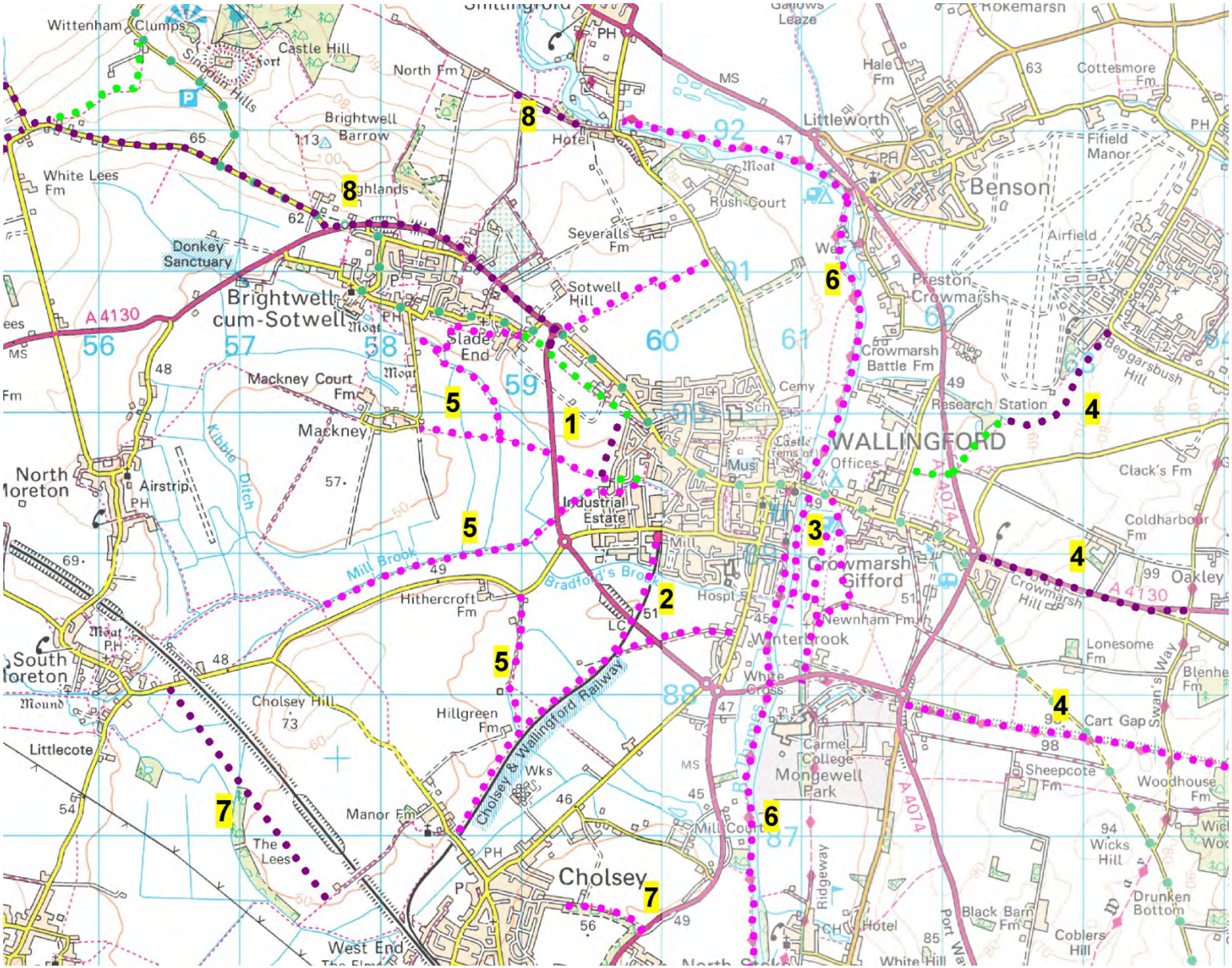


	Access measure sought
1	Improvements to the Phoenix Trail
2	Possible upgrades to connect to Phoenix Trail
3	Roadside and/or off road option for Thame to Haddenham & Thame Parkway Station
3a	Roadside cycle track to connect Phoenix Trail and wider countryside to Thame
4	Accessibility improvements to existing routes
5	Improved connections to the Phoenix Trail
6	Possible extensions of Phoenix Trail along old railway line
7	Improved connections for rights of way

Countryside Access Needs

- Surface/Furniture improvements
- New multi-use routes
- Upgraded status
- New walking routes

Wallingford Key Area: Access Measures

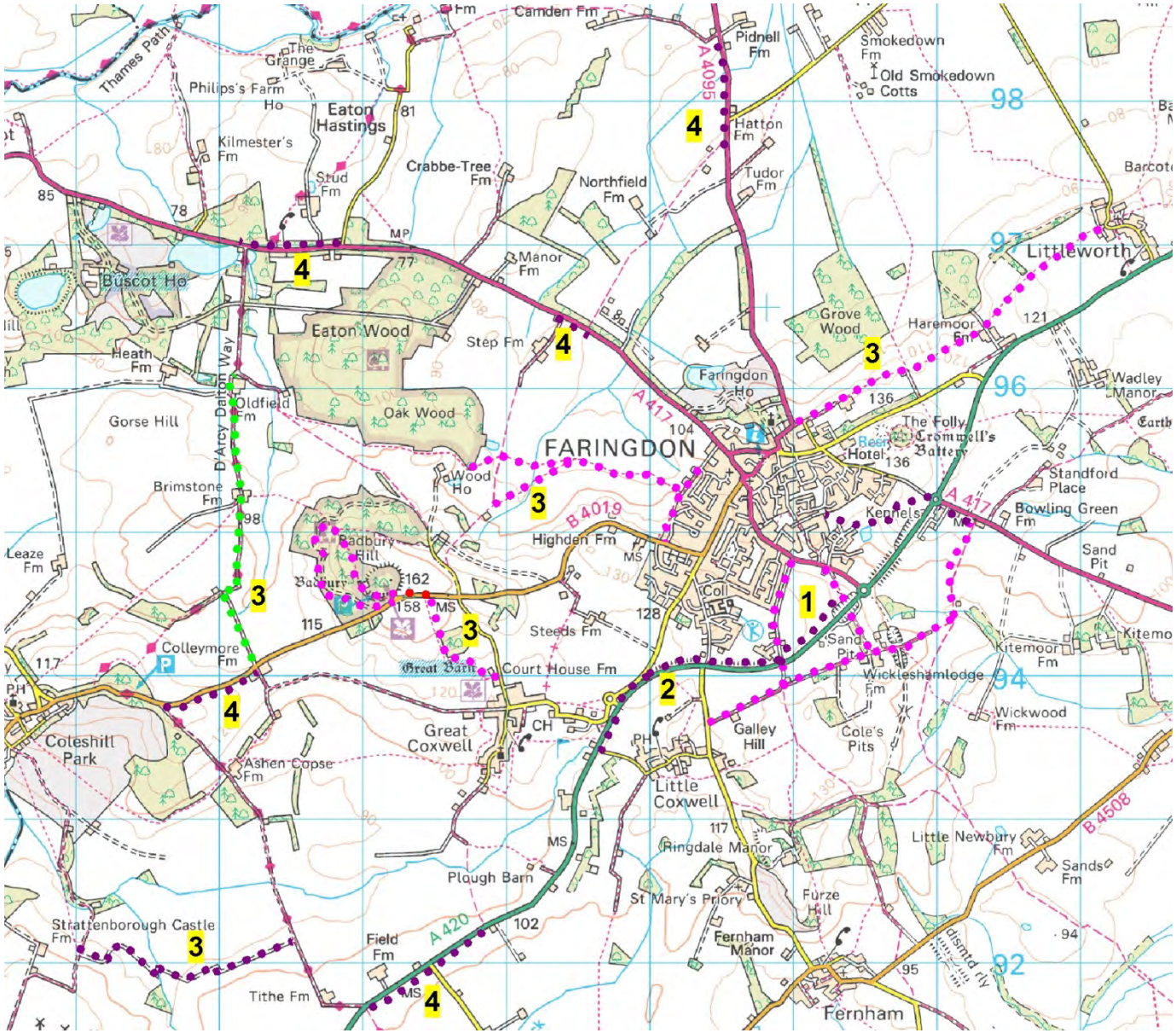


Countryside Access Needs

- Surface/Furniture improvements
- New multi-use routes
- Upgraded status
- New walking routes

	Access measure sought
1	Wallingford Slade End development and surrounds
2	Wallingford to Cholsey link
3	River Thames towpath and connections
4	Wallingford eastern links
5	Wallingford western links
6	Wallingford southern links
7	Improved connections for rights of way
8	Improved connections to Earth Trust Estate

Faringdon Key Area: Access Measures

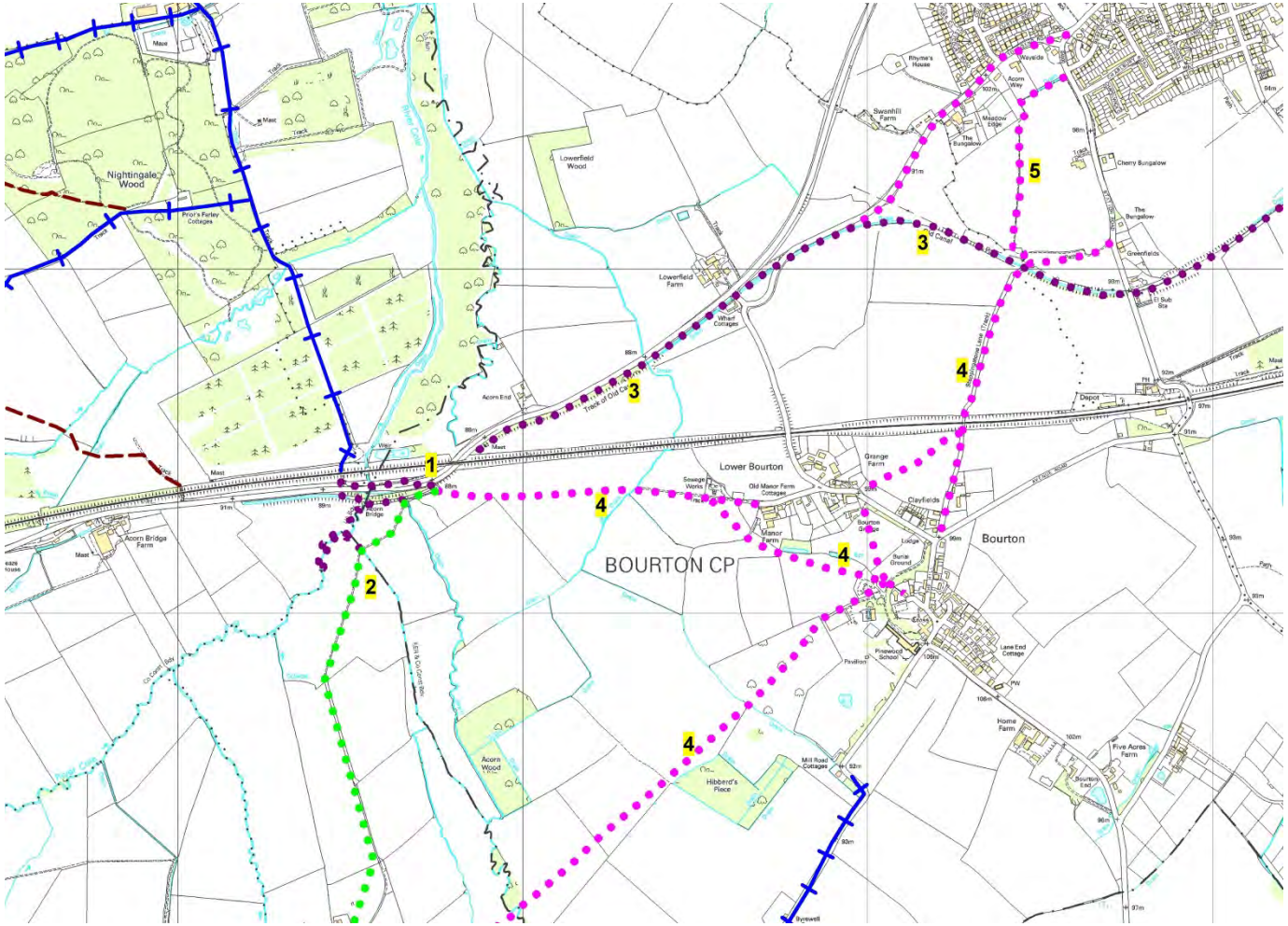


Countryside Access Needs

- Surface/Furniture improvements
- New multi-use routes
- Upgraded status
- New walking routes

	Access measure sought
1	Park Road links and surrounds
2	Faringdon south links
3	Improved accessibility of rights of way
4	Improved connections for rights of way

Swindon Eastern Villages Key Area: Access Measures



Countryside Access Needs

- Surface/Furniture improvements
- New multi-use routes
- Upgraded status
- New walking routes

	Access measure sought
1	New link crossing A420/Acorn Bridge/River Cole
2	Proposed route of restored Wilts & Berks Canal and towpath route
3	Wilts and Berks Canal and towpath route
4	Links to and around Bourton
5	Links to Shrivenham

Oxfordshire's public rights of way network – assessment of connectivity

As part of work to achieve the aims of the first Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the public rights of way network was assessed using a Geographical Information System (GIS) by Exegesis Spatial Data Management Ltd.

This has enabled the production of graphics and tables to show the relative connectivity at the settlement level and for each kilometre square across the county. The graphics are colour coded for ease of reference and simple comparison. Shades of green are areas better connected, whilst areas shaded red are more poorly served. Tables accompany the graphics and include the mean average connected network in each of the settlement size categories. The connectivity study was not able to take account of the other access resources that are available to the public, including access land, neighbouring counties' rights of way networks, the minor and unsurfaced road network, cycletracks, permissive paths under stewardship agreements, nature reserves, Woodland Trust and National Trust accessible land, and areas made available under Inheritance Tax exemptions -so these should be considered as part of any detailed assessments.

In addition, the public rights of way network has been assessed for its 'disjunctions' – points where public rights of way meet roads and other barriers – and where there is not a close connection on the opposite side of that road. Some of these match with suggestions submitted as part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan production. The study is not definitive and there may be other disjointed routes that are not indicated or indicated in error.

This information is intended to be used as an evidence base tool to help inform the identification of areas that could potentially benefit from additional public rights of way as well as measures that could help improve connectivity and safety. These could be standalone projects or schemes that are linked to an area's local plan, green infrastructure strategy, neighbourhood plan or as mitigation for a particular development.

Contents

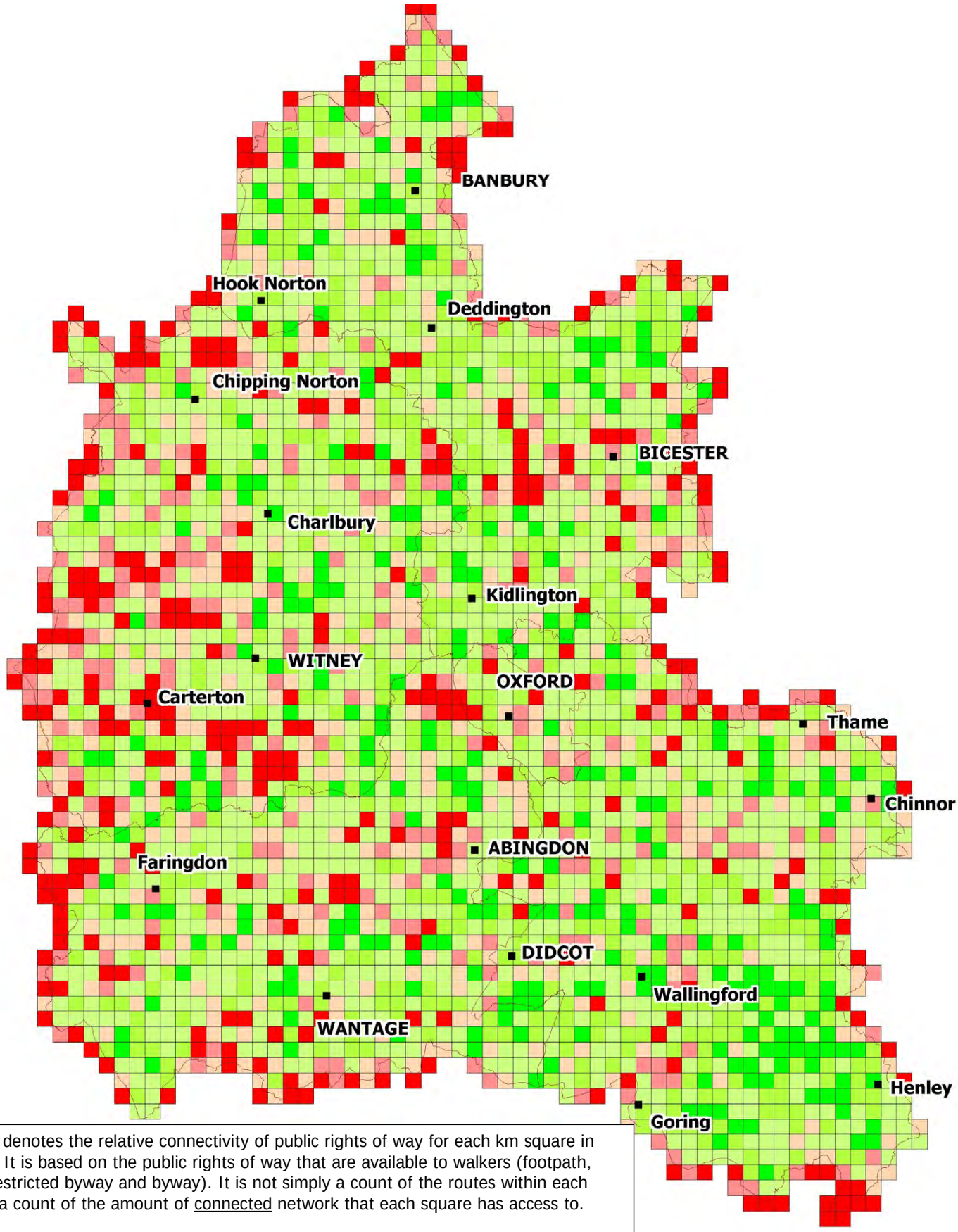
- Map 1 – connected walking network (km squares)
- Map 2 – connected riding network (km squares)
- Map 3 – connected walking network (settlement areas)
- Map 4 – connected riding network (settlements areas)
- Tables of connected networks in settlement size categories
- Map 5 – disconnections in the rights of way network

Metres of connected walking network from each km square

Uses all rights of way. Brackets show numbers of km squares

Map 1

5,000 to 7,000	(7)
3,000 to 5,000	(276)
2,000 to 3,000	(544)
1,000 to 2,000	(1034)
500 to 1,000	(375)
100 to 500	(255)
0 to 100	(339)



This graphic denotes the relative connectivity of public rights of way for each km square in Oxfordshire. It is based on the public rights of way that are available to walkers (footpath, bridleway, restricted byway and byway). It is not simply a count of the routes within each square, it is a count of the amount of connected network that each square has access to.

It is not able to take account of the minor and unclassified road network, cycletracks, or other access facilities other than the public rights of way network. It also cannot include neighbouring authority networks. © Oxfordshire County Council 2007
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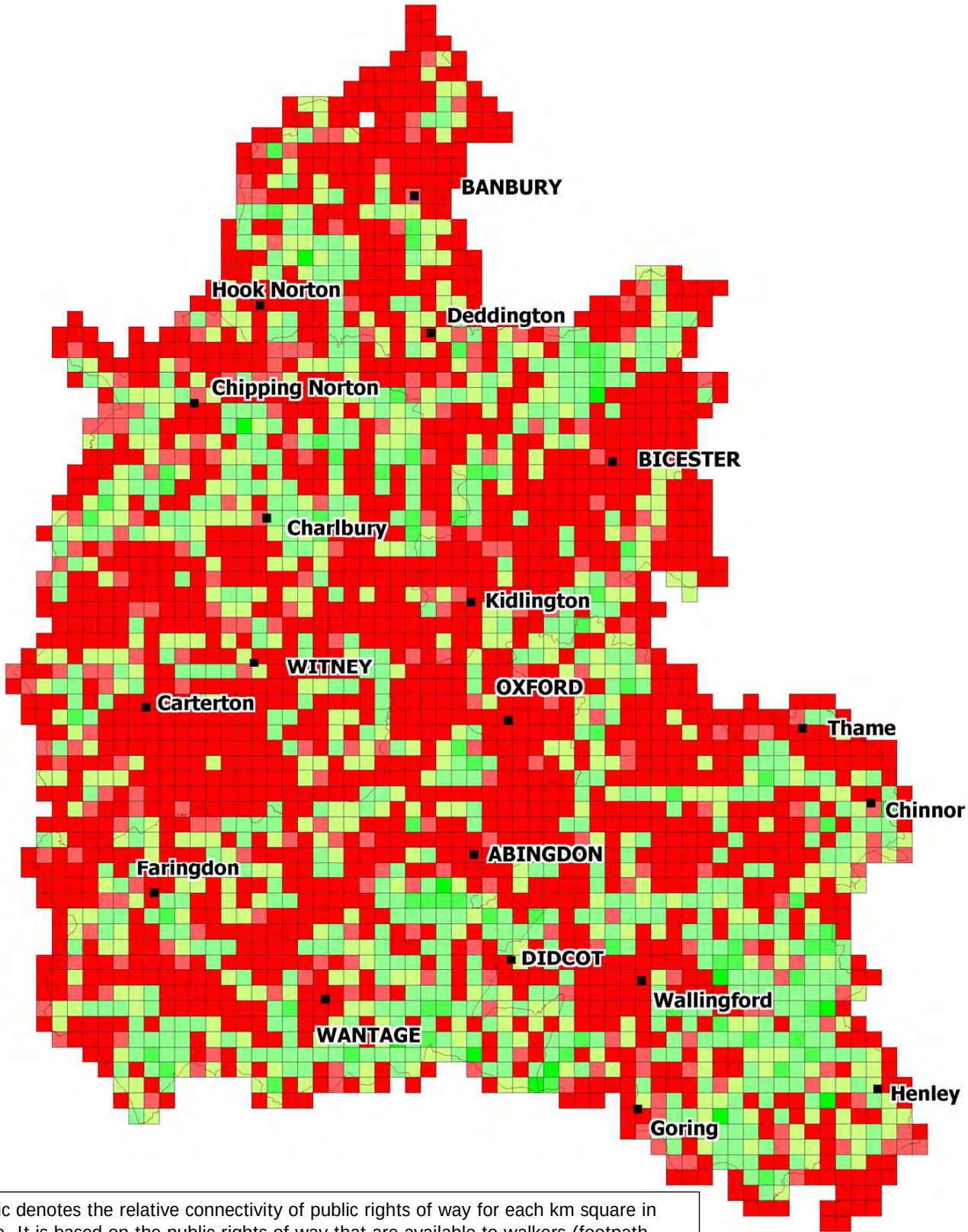
Metres of connected riding network from each km square

Uses all public rights of way except footpaths. Brackets show number of km squares

3,000 to 4,000	(13)
2,000 to 3,000	(72)
1,000 to 2,000	(554)
500 to 1,000	(459)
200 to 500	(251)
0 to 250	(1481)



This graphic denotes the relative connectivity of public rights of way for each km square in Oxfordshire. It is based on the public rights of way that are available to walkers (footpath, bridleway, restricted byway and byway). It is not simply a count of the routes within each square, it is a count of the amount of connected network that each square has access to.

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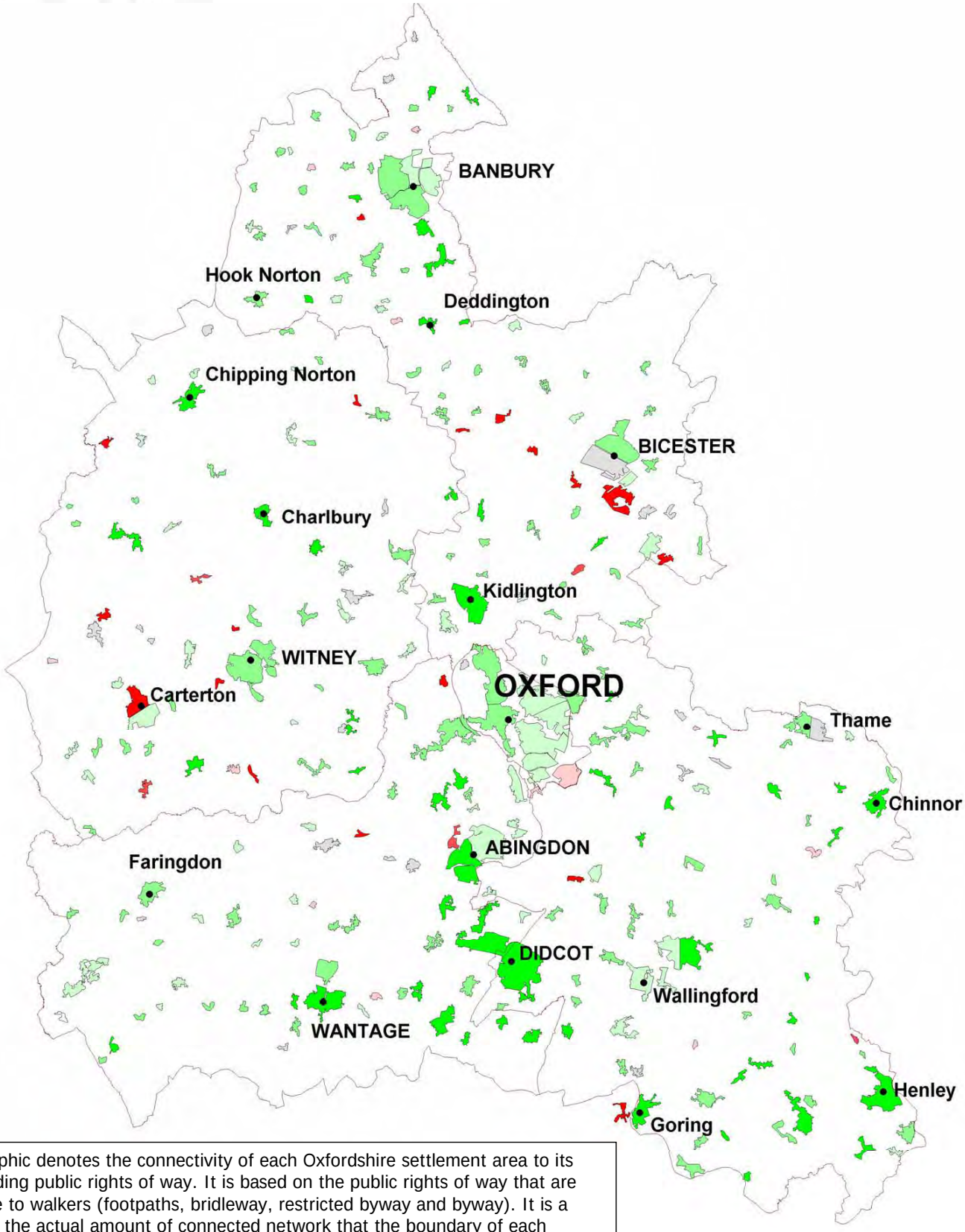
Metres of connected network available to walkers from settlements

Uses all public rights of way. Figures in brackets are number of settlements

20,000 to 45,000	(57)
10,000 to 20,000	(116)
5,000 to 10,000	(63)
3,000 to 5,000	(25)
1,500 to 3,000	(12)
500 to 1,500	(5)
0 to 500	(18)



This graphic denotes the connectivity of each Oxfordshire settlement area to its surrounding public rights of way. It is based on the public rights of way that are available to walkers (footpaths, bridleway, restricted byway and byway). It is a count of the actual amount of connected network that the boundary of each settlement has access to, based on the journey options available in a fixed radius

It is not able to take account of the minor and unclassified road network, cycletracks, or other access facilities other than the public rights of way network.

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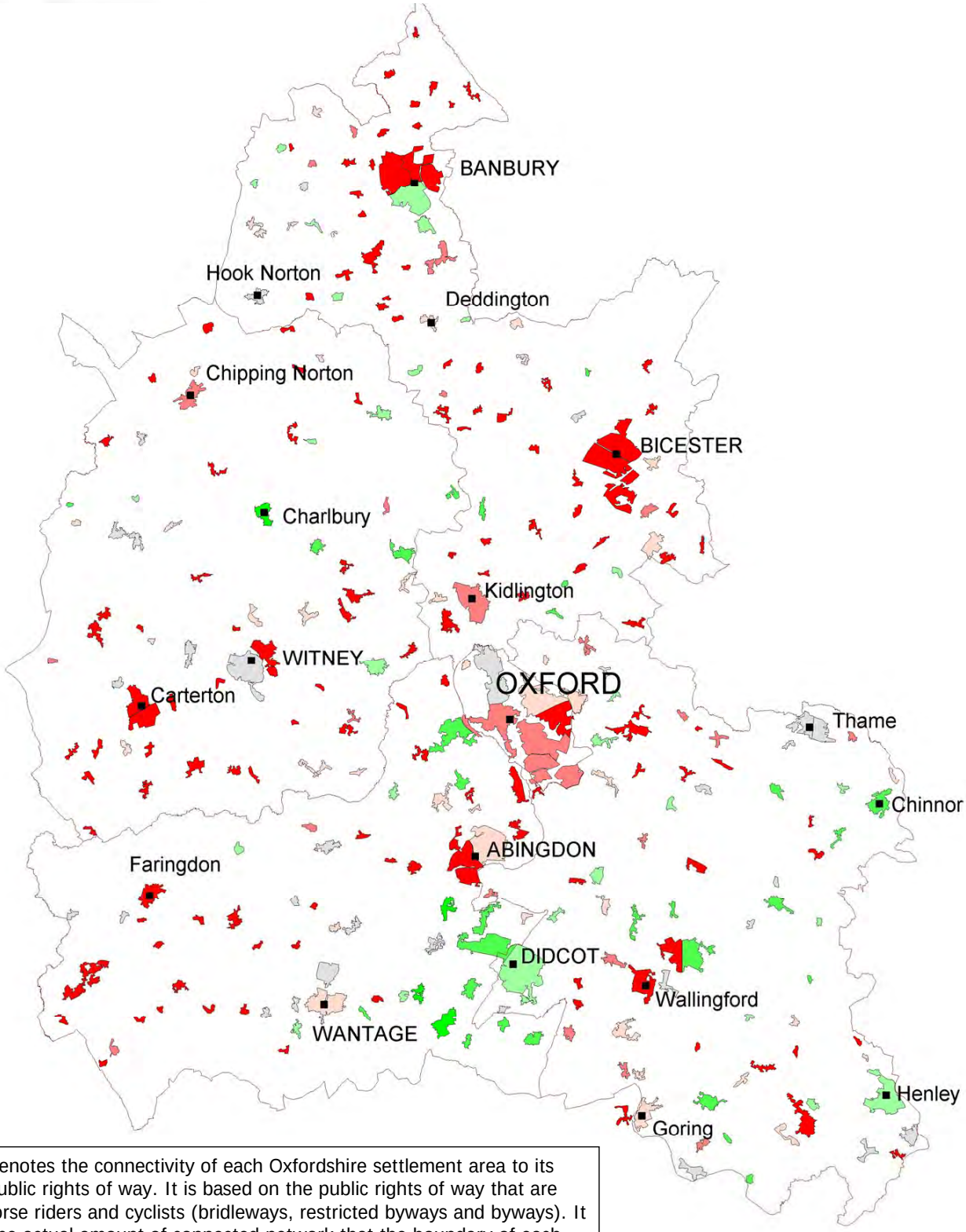
Metres of connected network available to riders from settlements

Uses all public rights of way except footpaths. Figures in brackets are numbers of settlements

20,000 to 60,000	(4)
10,000 to 20,000	(28)
5,000 to 10,000	(28)
3,000 to 5,000	(28)
1,500 to 3,000	(44)
500 to 1,500	(26)
0 to 500	(139)



This graphic denotes the connectivity of each Oxfordshire settlement area to its surrounding public rights of way. It is based on the public rights of way that are available to horse riders and cyclists (bridleways, restricted byways and byways). It is a count of the actual amount of connected network that the boundary of each settlement has access to, based on the journey options available in a fixed radius

It is not able to take account of the minor and unclassified road network, cycletracks, or other access facilities other than the public rights of way network.

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Oxfordshire's connected public rights of way network

Settlements are grouped into size categories of less than 2 km^2(very small) total area, less than 5km^2(small), less than 20km^2(medium), less than 40km^2(large), and over 40km^2(very large). The larger settlements have been split where there are significant barrier features such as railways or defined sub-areas. For each size category the length of the public rights of way (PRoW) network within the settlement area is shown for walking and riding routes, as well as the connected walking and riding network that is available outside of the settlement's boundary to a 3km (walking) and 5km (riding) radius. The mean average external network figures area is calculated and shown at the top of each size category table along with the 60% figure. Those walking and riding networks that are less than 60% of the average network are shown in red.

1. Settlements with area less than 2 km^2				Mean walking network (all PRoW) 11,022m (60%=6,613)	Mean riding network (all PRoW except footpaths) 2,741m (60%=1,645)
	Area m^2	**Metres of internal walking network (all PRoW)**	**Metres of internal riding network (all PRoW except footpaths)**	**3km walking network(m)**	**5km riding network(m)**
Alkerton	96,163	220	0	**5,566**	**0**
Asthall	109,280	104	40	**3,229**	**1,594**
Balscote	171,572	174	99	**2,230**	**1,341**
Barford St John	92,999	305	0	9,552	**0**
Bourton - North	134,133	0	0	**0**	**0**
Britwell Salome	183,025	713	135	6,989	3,379
Christmas Common	134,595	804	101	27,678	9,148
Claydon	148,007	157	0	**4,511**	**0**
Cleveley	161,869	1,023	688	11,135	5,615
Clifton	157,393	474	220	21,144	8,758
Compton beachamp	191,312	731	222	17,955	**324**
Crawley	118,073	106	0	**212**	**0**
Denchworth	170,386	299	0	9,056	**0**
DraytonB	154,810	407	40	16,108	**120**
Elsfield	145,774	579	132	7,123	**2,628**
Epwell	172,195	1,006	93	17,935	5,576
Fernham	181,583	892	0	14,504	**0**
Fifield	171,288	518	14	18,782	2,083
Frilford	158,037	263	0	**3,846**	**0**
Goosey	163,084	424	0	9,746	**0**
Goring Heath	165,785	644	202	32,153	14,003
Great Tew	136,566	347	151	13,832	2,468
Hampton Gay and Poyle	139,854	194	0	11,680	**0**
Hardwick	110,423	276	0	9,096	**0**
Highmoor	148,053	917	0	15,813	**0**
Idbury	89,060	383	128	18,008	10,630
Idstone	167,093	429	0	15,549	**0**
Ipsden	133,908	243	0	**3,147**	**0**
Letcombe Bassett	164,831	708	0	**5,254**	**0**
Little Bourton	152,076	176	0	**2,360**	**0**
Little Coxwel	119,303	304	0	**3,377**	**0**
Lower Assendon	92,163	322	175	18,408	**1,548**

Lower Heyford	146,394	322	0	**446**	**0**
Lower Tadmarton	74,499	104	104	**4,963**	1,900
Lyford	126,212	484	0	**2,900**	**0**
Lyneham	127,516	307	8	13,790	8,735
Mapledurham	199,714	381	245	26,963	10,808
Middle Assendon	144,277	318	0	**995**	**0**
Middle Aston	129,222	393	178	11,445	**1,022**
Milton	133,511	501	0	15,129	**0**
Moreton	186,156	347	200	11,054	4,712
North Aston	160,033	294	0	7,791	**0**
Nuffield	147,131	478	152	14,678	7,831
Oddington	132,895	87	87	11,586	18,295
Postcombe	135,693	240	0	16,200	**0**
Pyrton	154,386	615	197	12,317	4,483
Russells Water	94,889	321	158	23,023	15,026
Salford	189,562	860	0	8,423	**0**
Sandford St Martin	179,993	0	0	**0**	**0**
Shipton on Cherwell	135,306	497	0	12,219	**0**
South Leigh	125,490	657	0	15,374	**0**
Stoke Lyne	100,203	436	349	15,096	10,347
Sunningwell	149,212	768	354	9,814	2,384
Swalcliffe	132,669	133	65	**4,080**	2,498
Swinbrook	120,846	208	0	**4,415**	**0**
Sydenham	197,759	697	101	28,423	7,843
Upper Heyford	169,103	274	0	13,936	**0**
waterstock	86,383	261	0	**3,045**	**0**
West hagbourne	186,947	800	331	16,682	3,395
Westwell	169,555	502	278	**2,326**	**1,476**
Williamscot	95,756	138	0	11,378	**0**
Woolstone	118,929	143	0	8,904	**0**
2. Settlements with areas less than 5 km^2				Mean external walking network 12,970m (60%=7,782)	Mean external riding network 2,341m (60%=1,405)
	AreaSqM	**internal walking network (m)**	**internal riding network (m)**	**3km all routes network(m)**	**5kmRiding network(m)**
Alvescot	361,348	1,297	110	18,021	1,565
Appl4eford	239,388	272	233	**5,647**	2,758
Appleton	326,666	848	610	15,310	7,203
Ardington	226,124	366	0	**2,159**	**0**
Ardley	263,359	1,385	64	15,795	**246**
Arncott - SEast	438,422	0	0	**0**	**0**
Ascott-under-Wychwood	241,490	852	76	10,692	2,152
Ashbury	324,930	1,544	453	29,738	**753**
Aston nr Bamton	316,531	282	0	**1,957**	**0**
Aston Rowant	324,174	483	155	25,286	19,029
Aston Upthorpe	440,204	1,392	544	22,580	**1,400**
Barford St Michael	239,096	1,155	0	**10,078**	**0**
Beckley nr Oxford	439,589	592	343	18,907	**916**
Begbroke	342,335	700	400	19,481	2,774

Berrick Salome	263,133	615	255	18,680	11,158
Black Bourton	278,494	1,136	0	11,262	0
Blackthorn	293,271	1,073	19	5,086	172
Bladon	346,895	645	48	8,889	1,595
Bletchingdon	244,384	303	0	11,882	0
Bourton - South	235,528	805	166	0	0
Brize Norton	333,130	1,150	0	12,475	0
Buckland	297,662	525	123	8,944	5,707
Bucknell	315,652	536	185	8,481	4,770
Burcot	282,286	77	0	453	0
Cassington	342,775	874	172	8,628	364
Chadlington	323,971	819	0	12,689	0
Charlton on Otmoor	298,086	214	0	1,500	0
Charney Bassett	222,495	614	134	8,181	3,522
Checkendon	289,833	781	246	21,808	2,190
Chesterton	287,421	0	0	0	0
Childrey	256,797	757	301	18,717	3,851
Chilton (Vale of White Horse)	266,338	1,045	3	22,215	14,050
Churchill	262,779	1,150	266	10,851	2,124
Clanfield	387,335	557	0	1,549	0
Coleshill	243,203	601	124	18,847	3,412
Combe	289,104	1,084	0	9,884	0
Cote	248,140	0	0	0	0
Cropredy	267,701	992	0	31,482	0
Cuddesdon	246,079	1,018	0	15,895	0
Culham	237,590	688	526	7,917	526
Cumnor - West	445,137	1,006	0	18,424	0
Curbridge	200,337	58	0	382	0
Dorchester/Bridge End	451,534	3,817	1,343	14,603	2,691
Duns Tew	315,825	1,071	152	12,407	5,601
East Challow	269,704	1,029	94	23,644	3,034
East Hendred	496,925	1,464	471	33,087	23,491
Enstone	382,728	730	16	7,983	480
Farmoor	244,839	821	0	17,325	0
Filkins	281,037	883	0	7,295	0
Forest Hll	205,571	550	172	20,945	7,572
Foxcombe	242,580	1,322	0	11,772	0
Freeland	483,391	1,012	12	9,769	452
Fringford	246,539	868	0	10,926	0
Fritwell	241,710	972	75	12,648	2,953
Fulbrook	371,518	828	0	828	0
Fyfield	236,992	425	283	483	341
Goring/Streatley - West	480,842	0	0	0	0
Greast Coxwell	204,533	1,283	182	14,791	3,958
Great Bourton	215,664	591	0	14,532	0
Great Haseley	390,343	2,180	66	11,821	4,104
Great Milton	309,904	464	0	5,189	0
Great Rollright	347,981	594	0	5,173	0
Hanney - East	436,898	2,171	184	13,991	3,593
Hanney - West	257,976	1,067	22	18,226	2,318
Hanwell	221,088	681	0	9,993	0
Hempton	200,403	414	0	2,931	0
Henton	261,195	1,604	142	15,500	2,175

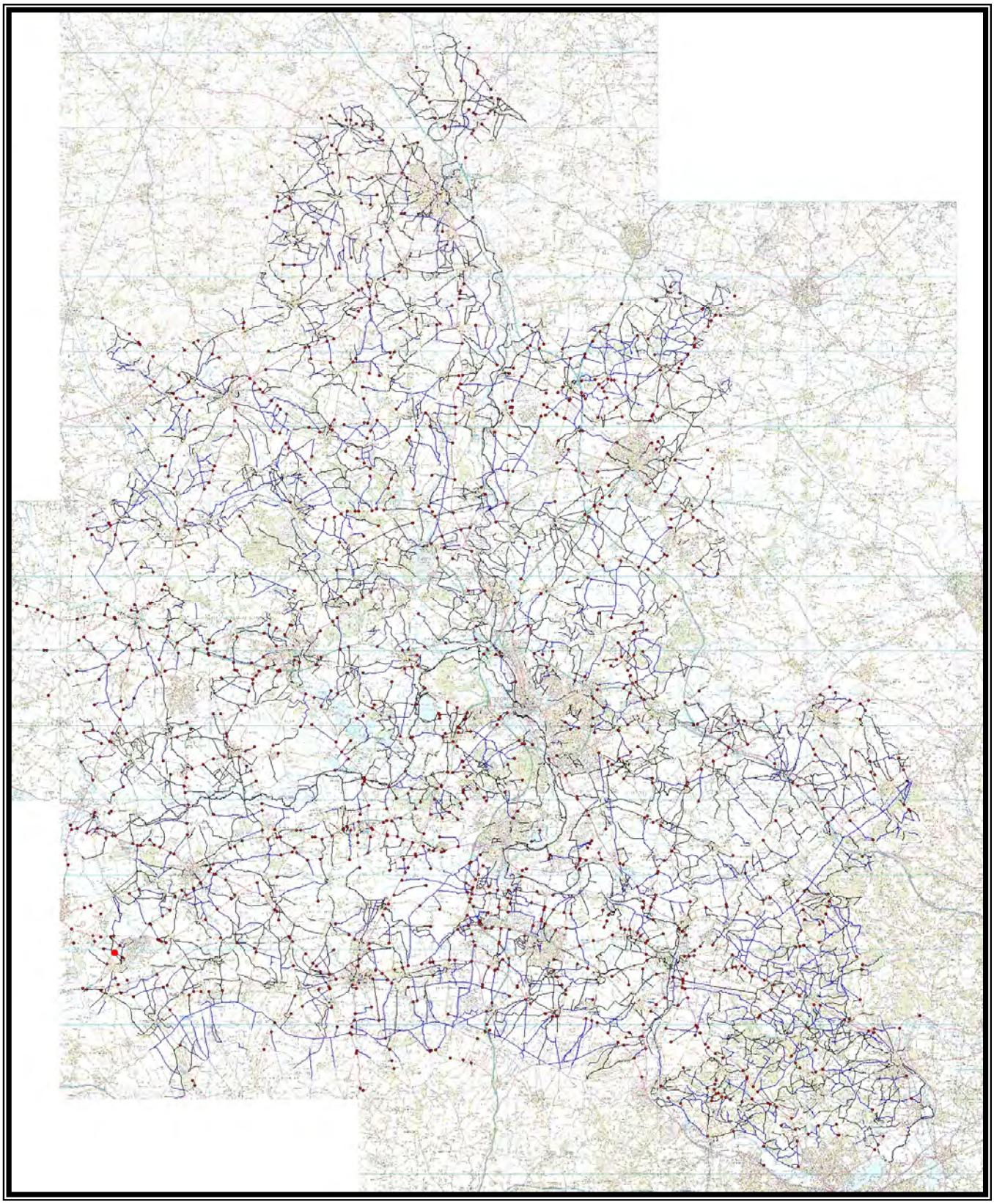
Holton	322,429	247	0	10,102	0
Horley	204,710	477	91	13,215	838
Hornton	245,626	1,282	75	19,332	1,696
Horton cum Studley	409,482	693	0	18,803	0
Islip (Cherwell)	281,291	288	0	7,376	0
Kelmscott	204,086	118	0	10,741	0
Kencot	322,403	761	0	13,245	0
Kingham	271,687	36	0	116	0
Kingston Lisle	229,310	252	0	12,022	0
Kirtlington	346,438	991	340	30,767	16,698
Langford	331,974	721	0	6,567	0
Launton	442,298	894	47	17,145	2,902
Leafield	271,772	127	0	1,589	0
Letcombe Regis	348,354	739	76	18,171	6,010
Lewknor	327,745	572	0	2,448	0
Little MIlton	301,674	1,280	255	23,730	5,966
Little Tew	205,769	288	0	9,004	0
Lockinge	212,588	462	146	8,246	10,300
Long Wittenham	325,831	2,331	1,271	16,688	5,088
Longworth	300,580	977	42	7,268	758
Marcham	477,278	694	0	4,540	0
Merton	234,515	653	0	20,771	0
Middleton Stoney	226,515	94	0	381	0
MIlcombe	351,714	566	0	16,916	0
Milton Common	268,254	155	0	4,282	0
Mollington (Cherwell)	257,131	1,061	0	5,753	0
Moulsford	358,204	1,424	243	11,998	1,104
Murcott	254,299	373	170	19,562	8,951
Nettlebed	219768	1,157	375	37,981	2,969
Noke	226,209	1,028	540	20,455	14,040
North Moreton	237,677	1,195	0	12,656	0
North Newington	211,846	1,465	0	21,841	0
Northmoor	202,375	874	173	27,078	1,673
Over Norton	221,662	327	117	8,356	2,841
Piddington	223,808	283	0	10,749	0
Rotherfield Peppard	356,986	1,068	191	17,940	6,657
Sandford on Thames	202,974	763	0	3,761	0
Sheelingford	231,423	749	0	8,844	0
Shenington	221,284	601	143	16,859	6,850
Shilton	305,828	664	329	9,338	4,346
Shiplake	244,143	289	132	10,038	262
Shutford	243,398	1,002	63	19,053	3,885
Sibford Gower - North	293,873	1,592	415	7,813	1,529
Sibford Gower - South	226,755	1,792	551	11,985	2,066
Somerton	224,762	1,222	0	20,435	0
Soudern	369,516	1,404	220	6,481	2,649
South Moreton	246,793	1,240	48	20,890	87
South Newington	281,699	1,034	70	10,881	7,346
South Stoke	308,503	284	29	3,360	1,782
Sparsholt	228,428	157	0	15,037	0
Stadhampton	233,377	1,209	143	22,080	1,262
Stanton St John	230,393	616	246	18,486	1,600
Steeple Aston	436,461	390	0	10,753	0
Stoke Row	422,803	1,251	158	23,673	158

Stratton Audley	252,377	854	0	14,549	**0**
Sutton/Stanton Harcourt - East	206,576	797	0	22,059	**0**
Sutton/Stanton Harcourt - North	256,986	1,598	469	23,793	**566**
Sutton/Stanton Harcourt - West	208,557	60	0	**3,140**	**0**
Swerford	222,537	1,015	79	13,701	**79**
Tackley	308,004	1,204	55	27,819	15,362
Tadmarton	260,398	977	204	14,708	5,242
Tetsworth	434,142	2,910	473	37,185	11,126
Tiddington	376,254	1,608	595	22,026	**807**
Towersey	224,469	974	102	9,392	**898**
Uffington (Vale of White Horse)	391,770	2,553	0	9,336	**0**
Upper Heyford Airbase	363,074	0	0	**0**	**0**
Upper Wardington	324,031	1,295	0	25,124	**0**
Upton	356,869	1,424	402	30,177	11,781
Waterperry	237,870	795	258	**4,413**	1,462
Wendlebury	294,048	365	0	15,472	**0**
West Hendred	299,269	1,272	174	19,667	9,130
Weston-on-the-Green	332,723	1,239	0	13,012	**0**
Whitchurch Hill	358,831	1,170	713	13,612	**1,340**
Wiggington	210,959	534	0	20,796	**0**
Wolvercote	237,451	151	14	**3,948**	2,862
WoottonW	250,824	393	39	**5,355**	**1,247**
Wroxton	254,792	703	162	16,824	**162**
Wytham	265,105	77	0	**349**	**0**
3. Settlements with areas less than 10 km^2				Mean external walking network 16,743m (60%=10,046)	Mean external riding network 6,277m (60%=3,766)
	AreaSqM	**internal walking network (m)**	**internal riding network (m)**	**3km all routes network(m)**	**5kmRiding network(m)**
Abingdon - North	862,438	1,972	798	22,019	**2,015**
Ambrosden	516,357	405	370	**5,339**	**785**
Bampton	716,352	2,396	0	32,648	**0**
Berinsfield	641,917	1,537	1,048	8,143	5,934
Bicester - Mid East	554,584	533	0	**7,783**	**0**
Binfield Heath	547,366	2,521	693	24,389	**3,287**
Blewbury	677,829	3,592	808	35,642	10,167
Boars Hill	582,610	2,503	934	24,856	15,296
Bodicote	752,482	1,024	527	24,493	7,919
Brighthampton	552,904	571	157	13,639	**2,151**
Burford	699,180	784	0	**5,568**	**0**
Chalgrove	604,066	839	0	15,422	**0**
Charlbury	936,680	2,278	976	27,245	26,731
Crowmarsh Gifford	617,860	1,956	30	11,113	**3,596**
Deddington	541,762	838	311	22,591	**1,695**
Drayton	735,254	2,597	1,492	33,639	38,373
Garsington	551,949	2,396	592	24,328	**2,710**

Hailey	502,610	1,622	599	13,211	**1,988**
Harwell	741,570	3,266	713	13,807	17,902
Hook Norton	713,779	1,901	54	18,484	**3,643**
Kidmore End	583,511	1,090	102	17,676	**1,971**
Kingston Bagpuize	699,471	1,394	691	**4,443**	**3,254**
Lashbrook	875,829	1,767	732	14,734	**3,452**
Long Hanborough	696,311	829	39	**5,800**	**219**
Middle Barton	592,382	1,763	262	13,262	5,643
Minister Lovell	680,711	182	177	**5,208**	**3,374**
North Leigh	557,922	1,084	145	14,752	**1,663**
Radley	650,290	830	0	**6,842**	**0**
Shillingford	580,167	2,816	592	19,140	11,619
Shrivenham - South	828,531	936	0	**8,633**	**0**
St Helen Without	531,078	88	0	**608**	**0**
Stanford in the Vale	631,597	1,978	222	16,414	**222**
Steventon	635,295	3,539	1,227	21,066	4,264
Stonesfield	513,062	943	614	23,450	17,619
Sutton Courtenay	987,185	4,277	1,494	33,222	15,088
Wallingford - West	615,028	2,577	208	16,122	**627**
Watlington (South Oxfordshire)	787,521	1,830	181	21,196	16,207
Wheatley - West	591,549	924	240	13,513	7,093
Whitchurch	834,027	2,181	984	14,873	4,816
Woodcote	992,269	2,195	144	19,804	10,701
Woodstock	863,049	1,211	77	17,834	11,611
Yarnton	892,078	1,788	0	10,260	**0**
4. Settlements with areas less than 20 km^2				Mean external walking network 14,060m (60%=8,436)	Mean external riding network 3,842m (60%=2,305)
	AreaSqM	**internal walking network (m)**	**internal riding network (m)**	**3km all routes network(m)**	**5kmRiding network(m)**
Adderbury	1,099,491	2,824	342	25,349	**782**
Arncott - NWest	1,240,911	670	349	**6,040**	**1,780**
Banbury - Business	1,973,397	4,823	52	10,688	**164**
Banbury - Grimsbury	1,752,778	2,018	98	**8,154**	**164**
Benson - West	1,833,296	2,849	0	9,568	**0**
Bicester - South	1,955,073	0	0	**0**	**0**
Bloxham	1,098,582	2,791	215	16,842	**215**
Carterton_north	1,640,550	60	0	**60**	**0**
Carterton_south	1,904,395	51	0	**5,796**	**0**
Chinnor	1,442,718	756	11	30,422	12,271
Chipping Norton	1,463,815	1,543	267	24,188	**532**
Cholsey	1,004,432	1,309	475	**8,382**	**1,707**
Eynsham	1,129,358	2,144	1,298	19,880	7,710
Faringdon	1,432,895	1,665	0	14,402	**0**
Goring/Streatley - East	1,578,092	4,294	560	24,540	**1,870**
Harwell International Business Centre	1,473,175	1,188	1,170	26,673	55,563
Kennington	1,219,999	1,402	0	9,235	**0**

Oxford - Barton/Sanhills/Risinghurst	1,270,196	1,958	599	13,515	2,421
Oxford - Blackbird/Leys	1,818,278	1,433	845	**3,637**	**845**
Shipton-under-Wychwood	1,064,149	1,262	66	21,764	4,460
Shrivenham - North	1,380,249	674	292	**6,899**	**292**
Sonning Common	1,733,784	2,486	0	26,407	**0**
Thame - East	1,335,689	806	197	**5,561**	4,005
Thame - West	1,410,511	3,403	527	14,777	4,327
Wantage/Grove - North	1,458,414	2,105	163	20,333	4,492
Wheatley - East	1,249,881	2,521	0	12,881	**0**
Witney/Ducklington - East	1,910,054	2,907	119	13,628	**137**
5. Settlements with areas less than 40 km^2				Mean external walking network 21,527m (60%=12,916)	Mean external riding network 5,077m (60%=3,046)
	AreaSqM	**internal walking network (m)**	**internal riding network (m)**	**3km all routes network(m)**	**5kmRiding network(m)**
Abingdon - South	3,471,881	3,218	0	24,449	**0**
Banbury - Easington & Calthorpe	3,372,414	7,785	2,238	20,576	7,147
Banbury - Hardwick/Neithrop	3,813,224	5,788	0	25,624	**351**
Benson - East	2,324,462	2,170	802	22,326	19,428
Bicester - Mid West	3,333,446	4,220	0	**7,828**	**0**
Bicester - North	3,569,753	2,977	0	20,468	**0**
Didcot - West	3,455,702	3,204	2,668	34,753	15,966
Headington / Marston - North	3,724,839	4,573	1,129	13,607	**1,801**
Headington / Marston - South	2,752,351	2,878	0	**8,100**	**0**
Henley-on-Thames	3,383,344	9,659	3,480	39,283	8,081
Kidlington	3,329,995	5,572	3	32,081	**1,179**
Oxford - Botley/Cumnor	2,630,061	3,383	1,119	19,816	18,737
Oxford - Littlemore/ Rose Hill	2,706,476	3,781	525	**10,308**	**525**
Wallingford - East	2,100,719	7,148	0	16,785	**0**
Wantage/Grove - South	2,802,368	6,788	665	26,900	**2,939**
6. Settlements with areas more than 40 km^2				Mean external walking network 20,633m (60%=12,380)	Mean external riding network 3,223m (60%=1,934)
	AreaSqM	**internal walking network (m)**	**internal riding network (m)**	**3km all routes network(m)**	**5kmRiding network(m)**
Abingdon - Mid	4,177,911	3,467	864	**10,156**	2,098
Didcot - East	6,494,995	12,471	2,164	51,045	7,054
Oxford - CentralSouth	4,132,493	5,450	43	22,984	**644**
Oxford - Cowley	4,597,043	3,576	1,300	**8,791**	**1,300**
Oxford - North	4,465,225	2,857	383	14,444	3,593
Witney/Ducklington - West	4,012,787	5,368	1,792	16,378	4,648

Oxfordshire - disjointed public rights of way network



Black lines are footpaths
Blue lines are for bridleways, restricted byways and byways
Red circles are the points where public rights of way meet a potential barrier