



hda

Pangbourne River Meadows and Recreation Ground

Initial Proposals for Pangbourne Parish Council

DRAFT

November 2024

SCHEME OVERVIEW

Pangbourne Parish Council is seeking guidance from HDA and input from the community on plans to enhance accessibility and biodiversity within Pangbourne river meadows and the recreation ground. This project will be funded by a Mend the Gap grant, with additional support from the Parish Council.

Mend the Gap is a programme to reduce and compensate for the visual harm done to the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes by the electrification of the Great Western main line. Specifically, it seeks to support nature recovery projects that will enhance and enrich this outstanding landscape for wildlife, residents and visitors through improved biodiversity and accessibility as well as through visual mitigation.

In addition to the primary proposals, HDA has identified several additional improvements within the recreation ground that would further enhance access and connectivity to the river meadows, aligning with Mend the Gap's criteria for sustainable and enjoyable public spaces.

Your feedback on these proposed improvements will help shaping the future of Pangbourne river meadows and recreation ground.

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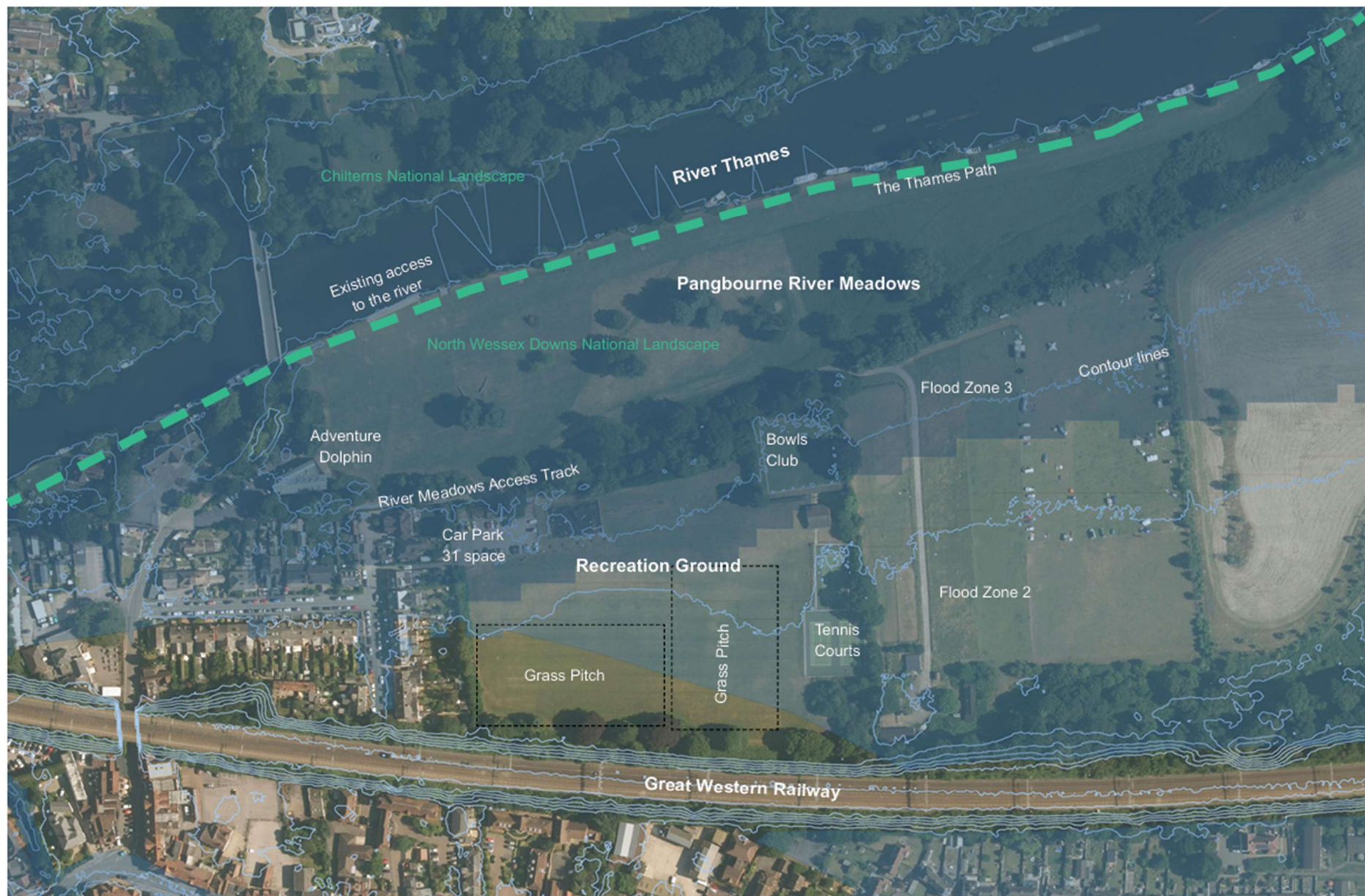
INTRODUCTION

HDA has conducted site visits and desk study analysis in order to evaluate various options for improving biodiversity and access to Pangbourne river meadows and the recreation ground. This document outlines the options we have explored, providing feedback and recommendations in line with our findings. HDA has explored several options to expand accessibility within and between the meadows and recreation ground. While we have recommended specific improvements, the options are flexible, allowing for a mix-and-match approach.

HDA is now seeking input from the Parish Council on their preferred options. Once agreed upon, these can be developed further and progressed to the public consultation phase.



1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

PANGBOURNE RIVER MEADOWS

During our site visit in September, the floodplain meadows were wet underfoot. Several informal "desire lines" are present, crossing the longer grassland areas within the meadow. To the west, the grass is regularly mown, allowing space for activity. A wide mown strip is also present to the north, along the alignment of the Thames Path and allowing access to the river.

The ecological value of the meadow is currently under assessment by an ecological consultant, and any future design proposals would seek to take the survey findings into consideration.

RIVER MEADOWS TRACK

Access to the River Meadow is provided by a gravel track running east from the Adventure Dolphin car park between the River Meadow and Recreation Ground. Although public vehicle access is restricted, this track acts as an all-weather path. It also connects to the Recreation Ground, campsite, and nearby businesses. However, the narrow track is in disrepair and lacks passing points, making legitimate vehicle access challenging and uneven.

Repairing and upgrading the track would improve access for maintenance and make it more usable for pedestrians, including those with mobility restrictions and families with prams. This would also benefit visitors to the adjacent campsite, eastern facilities of the Recreation Ground and the river meadows.

RECREATION GROUND BOUNDARY VEGETATION

The recreation ground is bordered by scrub and mature trees on all sides, forming a well-defined natural boundary that enhances both the site's character and its biodiversity. A yew hedge currently encloses the bowls club, providing a formal, structured element to the landscape. Along the southern boundary is the embankment of the Great Western Railway.

There is the potential to enhance biodiversity within the recreation ground by selectively removing some of the non-native species from the tree belt to the north and south and by carrying out new native wild flower and scrub planting at the edges of the recreation ground. By selectively removing some under-story planting to the north-west of the recreation ground, visual connections to the meadows could be improved, creating a more cohesive and connected landscape.

RECREATION GROUND PATH

The existing access to the facilities on the eastern side of the recreation ground is from the car park located to the west. Visitors must cross the grass area to reach the facilities. However, this grass area is situated within a flood zone, making it susceptible to seasonal flooding and wet conditions. As a result, the current route can be challenging, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall, leading to accessibility issues for users.

Addressing these conditions is a key consideration in the proposed improvements to enhance accessibility and user experience at the recreation ground.

