



**STEPHENSON  
HALLIDAY**

Planning, Landscape & Environment  
an **RSK** company



Rev 02 FINAL

# **BERSTED BROOKS PARK**

## Wildspace on your doorstep

Concept Masterplan Report



Project managed and funded by Arun District Council



Prepared by Stephenson Halliday, an RSK Company,  
with input from Plumb Associates

Consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders and the local community, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

## Document history

	Name	Date / Revision		
Author	David Walker	10/10/23 - Rev00	27/10/23 - Rev01	03/11/23 - Rev02
Technical Reviewer	Lynne Houlbrooke	10/10/23 - Rev00	27/10/23 - Rev01	03/11/23 - Rev02
Approved	Andrew Tempny	11/10/23 - Rev00	27/10/23 - Rev01	03/11/23 - Rev02

# CONTENTS

<u>Page</u>	<u>Section Title</u>
4	1. Introduction
5	2. Towards a masterplan
7	3. Masterplan vision and concept
12	4. What happens next...
21	5. Delivery plan

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Bersted Brooks and Bersted Park are both well-loved by those that use and live by them. The open spaces provide valuable green recreation opportunity for visitors and a naturalistic outlook for the surrounding community – wildspace really is on the doorstep for many local people.

The open spaces are not without their challenges however, which needs to be addressed. There is potential to improve their contribution as valuable green and blue infrastructure through the masterplanning process. Response to these issues could include looking at how to build better resilience to climate change; promoting strong, well integrated, and cohesive communities; conserving natural resources and increasing biodiversity; and protecting and enhancing the outstanding landscape and historic features.

The Masterplan Report is provided along with the accompanying Summary Baseline Analysis and Stakeholder Feedback Report, a separate document which provides background information. This report should therefore be read in conjunction with that separate document.



Bersted Brooks Local Nature Reserve.



Aldingbourne Rife.



Western Field.



Eastern Field.

# 2. TOWARDS A MASTERPLAN

Bersted Brooks and Bersted Park have been identified as having potential for improvement to enhance their provision as valuable, usable open spaces within the local area, as part of the wider open space provision across the district.

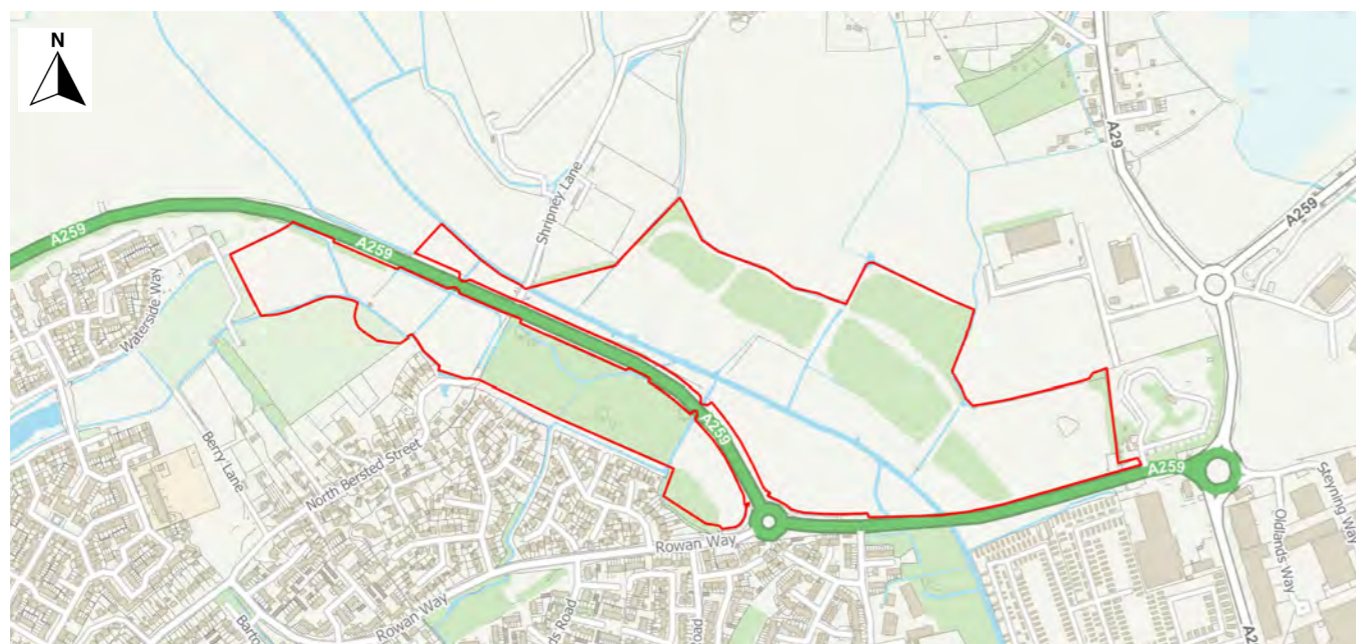
It is clear from the initial research and the public consultation processes carried out that these areas are used by local people for a range of activities, such as dog walking, enjoyment of the landscape setting and wildlife, keeping fit and spending time with family and friends. Many who live nearby already have a sense of ownership over the open spaces due to regular recreational use or even volunteering to help maintain the areas; this sense of ownership should

be encouraged and nurtured. Therefore, a sensitive approach is required to balance the various aspects of community use and interest, whilst looking to make needed improvements for the benefit of people and wildlife.

The site faces various challenges, and these have come to the forefront through the research and engagement process, as part of the evolution of the concept design. Some of the key challenges include flooding which causes large portions of the site to become inaccessible for long periods; and the lack of car park provision which results in congestion within the surrounding streets, which affects some residents' enjoyment of their homes.

With the above in mind, the types of intervention that have been explored as part of this process include:

- Flood mitigation and alleviation
- Improved access, including a focus on year-round access
- Potential to increase parking provision
- Enhanced opportunities for community use
- Opportunities for enhancing biodiversity, and
- Improved signage, interpretation, and wayfinding.



Site layout - Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.



Key challenge - Flooding and future adaptability. Photo by Keir Greenway (17th Nov 2022)

The process has identified 7 themes which represent the priorities for the open spaces and which have been used to frame the development of the Concept Masterplan. The themes link closely to ecosystem services and environmental and social functions of green infrastructure as well as the Green Flag Award standards, Building with Nature standards and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as relevant.

The 7 themes are as follows:

:



Conserving and enhancing biodiversity



Landscape setting and character/sense of place



Flood mitigation and healthy ecosystems



Historic character



Healthy and cohesive communities



Access to green recreation



Lifelong learning/skills for life

# 3. MASTERPLAN VISION AND CONCEPT

The Bersted Brooks Park masterplan has developed from the consultation process where stakeholders and community members have engaged.

The masterplan vision for Bersted Brooks Park has evolved through the awareness of a landscape that needs improved climate change resilience in order to serve its purpose as a useable community open space. A 'design through management' approach would be adopted to help deliver the outcomes in different stages, seeking to conserve and protect the best and most valuable elements of the area, whilst managing access to open-up more opportunity for enjoyment of them, where appropriate.

The key aspects of the masterplan vision are as follows:

- **Bersted Brooks Park to be a place to enjoy the outdoors in all conditions.**
- **Bersted Brooks Park to be a place to learn from and respond to nature and the landscape.**
- **Bersted Brooks Park to be a place to bring wildlife to your doorstep.**



Aerial image. © 2022 Microsoft Corporation © 2022 Maxar ©CNES (2022) Distribution Airbus DS.

**Bersted Brooks Park to be a place to enjoy the outdoors in all conditions:**

Parts of the open space could become more accessible throughout the year via walkways to provide opportunity for green recreation, even when the site is suffering from flooding. Year-round access is considered important for both the physical and mental health of the local community. Improved access would allow more opportunity for regular engagement with the outdoors, sense of community, and to learn about the floodplain environment.

The benefits of walkways would be twofold – as well as providing continual opportunity for people to use the open space, the routes would also encourage people along specific routes, allowing other parts of the site to become wilder. Subtle landscape interventions could reinforce this, discouraging human and pet activity away from areas that are noted for their wildlife value.



Raised pathways



Year-round access for the benefit of the physical and mental health of the local community





**Bersted Brooks Park to be a place to learn from and respond to nature and the landscape:**

Part of the reason the site is special is due to its function as a floodplain. The land around the Aldingbourne Rife takes on excess water in times of flooding; this is what it is there to do. The landscape and associated ecology of the area should be celebrated as one of the park’s key characteristics. It is important that all proposed landscape interventions located within the floodplain are subject to detailed hydrological surveys and engineering input to ensure that the function of the floodplain is not compromised. As the site becomes more usable at times of flooding, opportunities would be unlocked for nature connectedness and education regarding the floodplain environment through interpretation boards, natural play, and community-based areas and events.

The park’s cultural heritage is also important; the site has a story which should be told. The WW2 pillboxes and the former agricultural use of the landscape are opportunities for further learning and community engagement.



Natural play and educational opportunities

Opportunities to learn about the floodplain landscape



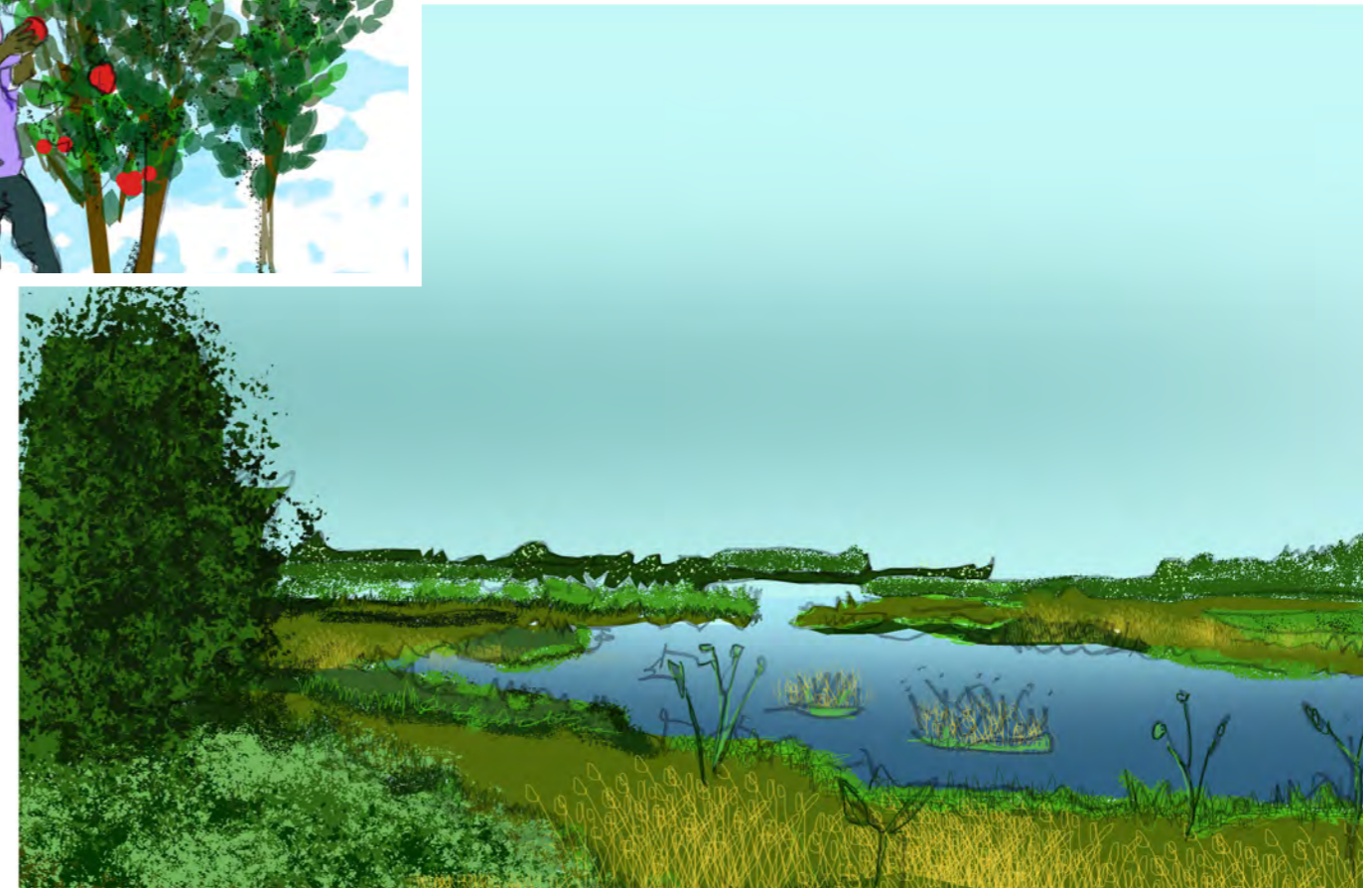
**Bersted Brooks Park to be a place to bring wildlife to your doorstep:**

The open space is bordered on several aspects by built up, residential areas. For local people, wild space really is on their doorstep with habitats associated with the river and surrounding tributaries and ditches, and wetland planting including meadows, hedgerows and trees just metres away.

Existing habitats across the park would be enhanced, and new planting would be provided to help increase biodiversity, enhancing the site's contribution to the ecological network of wildlife-rich places in the local area. New planting and habitat creation, located and managed appropriately, would increase the sense of naturalness and offer further opportunity for engagement with nature by the local community.



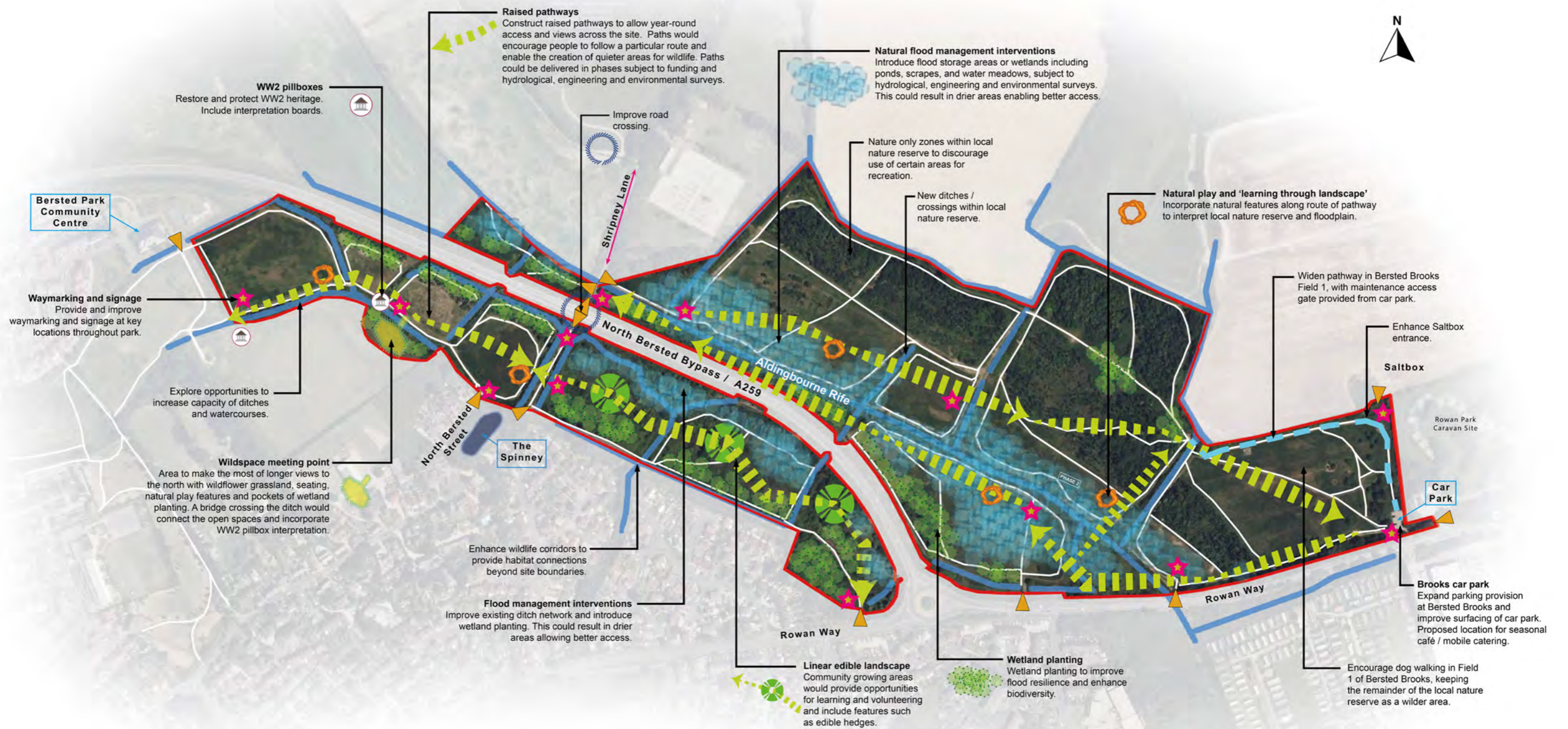
Engagement with nature



Wetland habitats associated with the river



# Concept Masterplan



# 4. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

This section looks at how the Masterplan could be delivered, proposing a phased approach which takes into consideration the feedback received during the consultation stage.

Early-stage works are proposed, with medium and long-term projects also recommended. This section sets out the notion of the Masterplan as a fluid 'roadmap' document which can be changed and updated. Outline management principles of the various projects are also presented.

## Consultation

A summary of the key themes that were drawn out of the consultation process and are relevant to masterplanning at this strategic level, are provided below. Please refer to the Summary Stakeholder Feedback Report for the full picture in terms of stakeholder response to the scheme.

- A number of residents had concerns about the inclusion of areas of Bersted Park and felt the focus of works should be on Bersted Brooks LNR. Bersted Park is considered by many as an open space that was provided for the community in the localised area.
- The crossing over the A259 / North Bersted Bypass is seen as a barrier to connecting the two open spaces. Many see it as a dangerous crossing. There is considerable scepticism around ever being able to bring forward a safer bridge crossing due to significant costs.

- The vast majority of those who engaged understood the need for the open spaces to have better resilience to climate change. This includes the importance of year-round access, and there was considerable support for raised pathways to provide this. However, there was much scepticism about the costs of implementation and ongoing maintenance. There are also concerns around works within the floodplain (i.e., construction of walkways, raising ground levels, and allowing water to continue to flow as it should).
- The issue of congestion on the streets around Bersted Park, especially the lack of parking, is an emotive issue for residents. As a result, anything that is likely to bring more visitors to the area is generally looked upon negatively by many residents.
- The idea of satellite, seasonal parking areas to ease pressure on the residential streets was generally supported, although some discussion was had around suitable locations given the floodzone and potential for anti-social behaviour.
- Concerns were raised about the current and future management of Bersted Park Lake in terms of its function as an attenuation feature and its importance to the hydrology for the surrounding housing development, citing the level of reed growth as an issue.
- The proposal for natural play and 'learning through landscape' features was received positively, along with opportunities for education about the floodplain and landscape/ecology generally.
- Dog walking generally divided opinion, with many citing the naturalness of Bersted Brooks LNR needing better protection from dog walking activity, while others were less supportive of dog-free zones.
- There was some support for mobile/small scale catering, although this was to some degree countered by some residents considering this a

something that would encourage more people to the area, and therefore a negative thing.

- Most agree and support the idea of more opportunity for community involvement.
- Various technical advice was received from stakeholders, including high level hydrology/ drainage advice and regarding river and ditch habitat enhancement opportunity.

## The Concept Masterplan as a Roadmap – a dynamic process

The responses received as part of the consultation exercise have helped lead the type and location of the proposals, particularly in terms of priorities of delivery.

The Masterplan should be viewed as an evolving, fluid document with an estimated timeframe of around 30 years. Smaller, early works projects that are delivered successfully and are perceived positively may help to ease public and stakeholder concern in some respects, meaning similar schemes could be rolled out in other parts of the wider site as time goes on. Also, funding streams may become available which allow for progression of works that at one stage seemed unobtainable. Therefore, the concept masterplan may be updated to reflect the change in circumstances or general opinion.

The proposals are broken down into early works, mid to long-term works, and long-term aspirations.

### **Early works**

Specific aspects of the masterplan have been identified as having potential to be delivered earlier than others. These are works of a small to medium-scale which could be delivered with relative ease and at a lower estimated cost compared to some of the mid to long-term works proposed. Some of the early works have been broken down into individual smaller-scale projects as shown on the subsequent pages, with the project areas identified on the plan on the next page. The identification of the individual projects that could be delivered in the short-term is based on aspects of the concept masterplan that were met with general support during the consultation process as well as being generally simpler and less costly to deliver.

### **Mid to long-term works**

Other aspects of the masterplan are envisaged as interventions that could be delivered further down the line when more funding may be available, and in some cases based on the success of the smaller-scale projects delivered as part of the early works.

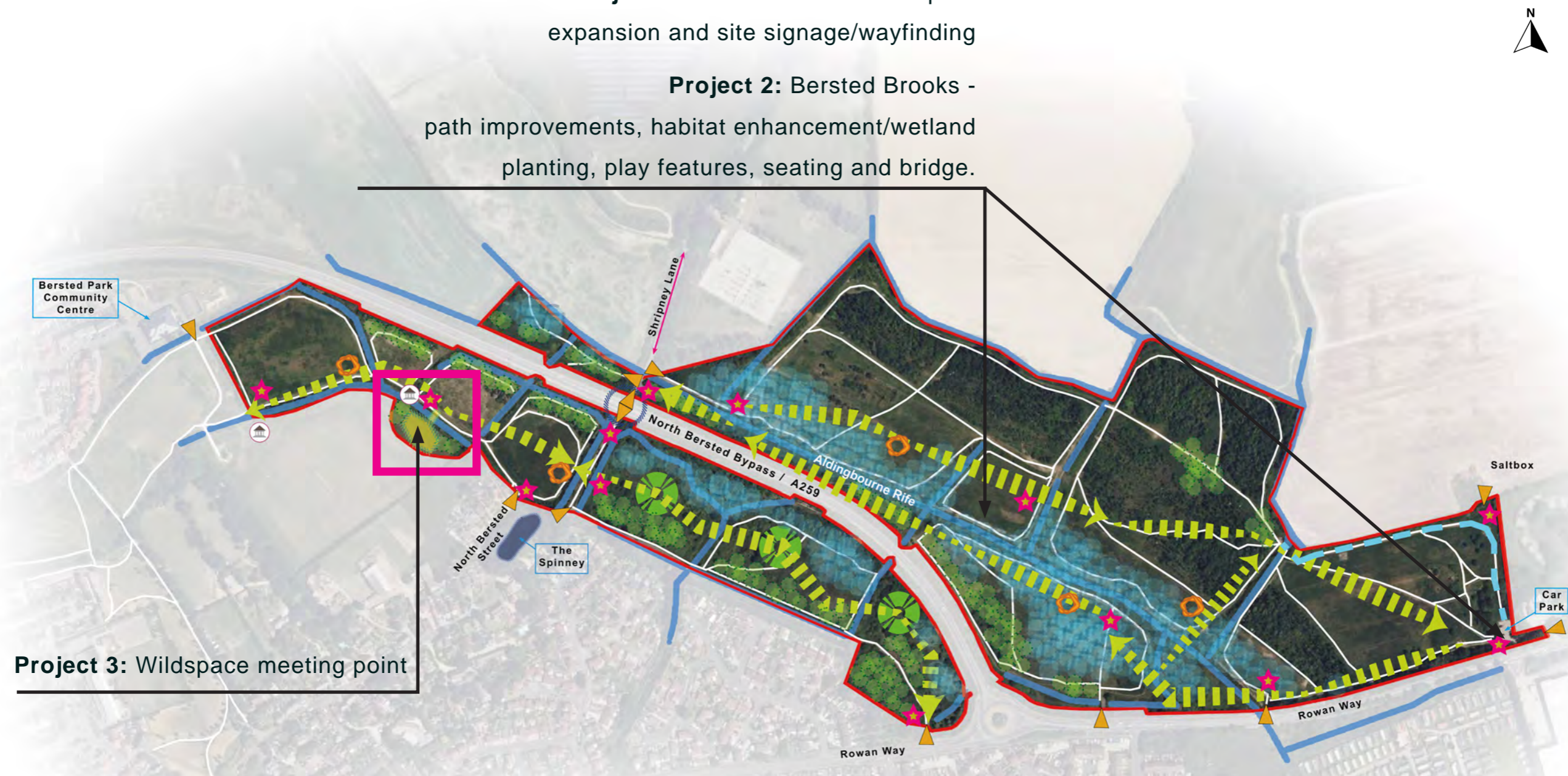
### **Long term aspirations**

The long-term aspirations are large scale, high-cost works that would require a significant amount of stakeholder engagement and additional funding.

### Early works – individual, smaller-scale projects

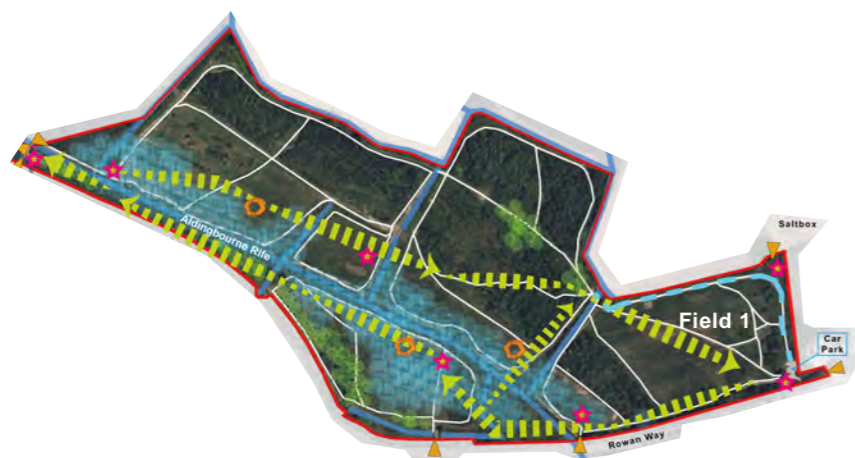
**Project 1:** Bersted Brooks - car park expansion and site signage/wayfinding

**Project 2:** Bersted Brooks - path improvements, habitat enhancement/wetland planting, play features, seating and bridge.



**Project 3:** Wildspace meeting point

## Project 1: Bersted Brooks - car park expansion and site signage/wayfinding.



- Bersted Brooks car park to be expanded and resurfaced in accordance with detailed survey information and recommendations.
- Opportunity for mobile catering within remodelled car park to provide refreshments, local business opportunity, and heightened sense of community.
- Wayfinding within the site is to be improved to aid movement and flow of people, particularly for those who have not visited the site before. Wayfinding would encourage the use of certain parts of the site keeping other areas more natural, improve user experience, and contribute to a sense of wellbeing and security.
- Interpretation would help visitors form an emotional connection, encouraging those who use the open

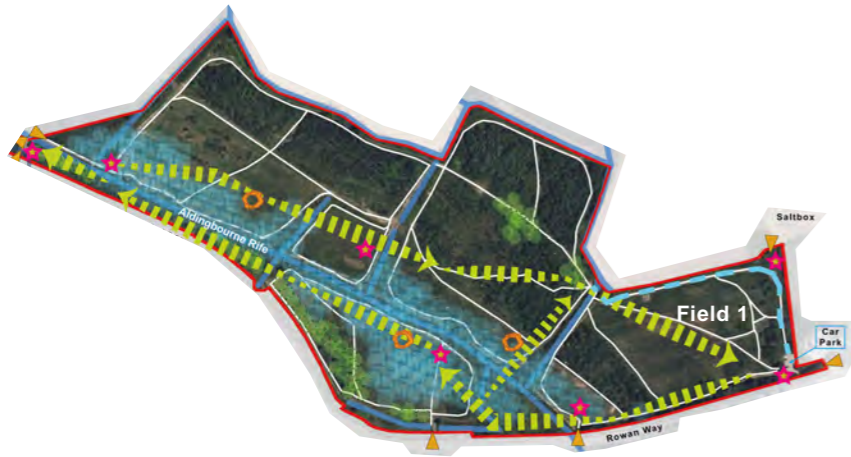
space to care about the park's characteristics. Interpretation would establish features of value, helping visitors discover the meanings and significance associated with them. Interpretation may be in the form of boards, self-guided trails, viewing points, wildlife viewing hides and organised events within the local community.

- More 'nature only zones' would be implemented, to ensure better protection of areas that are particularly ecologically sensitive. Subtle landscape interventions could be used such as wayfinding and strategically placed natural barriers, as well as natural fencing. Information boards would also be installed at key locations along Aldingbourne Rife, warning visitors of the risks.
- Measures to be taken to encourage dog walking to Field 1, keeping the remainder of the LNR as a wilder area. Signage to be installed to educate dog walkers of the potential damaging effects to wildlife from dogs. The grassed areas in the vicinity of the car park to be managed as short grass for amenity use and to allow dog waste to be picked up more easily than in long grass. A mosaic of pathways/ mazes, weaving posts, tunnels and other dog

exercise features made of natural materials, to encourage dog walking to Field 1, compensating for 'nature only zones' in other areas of the LNR.



**Project 2: Bersted Brooks - path improvements, habitat enhancement/wetland planting, play features, seating and bridge.**

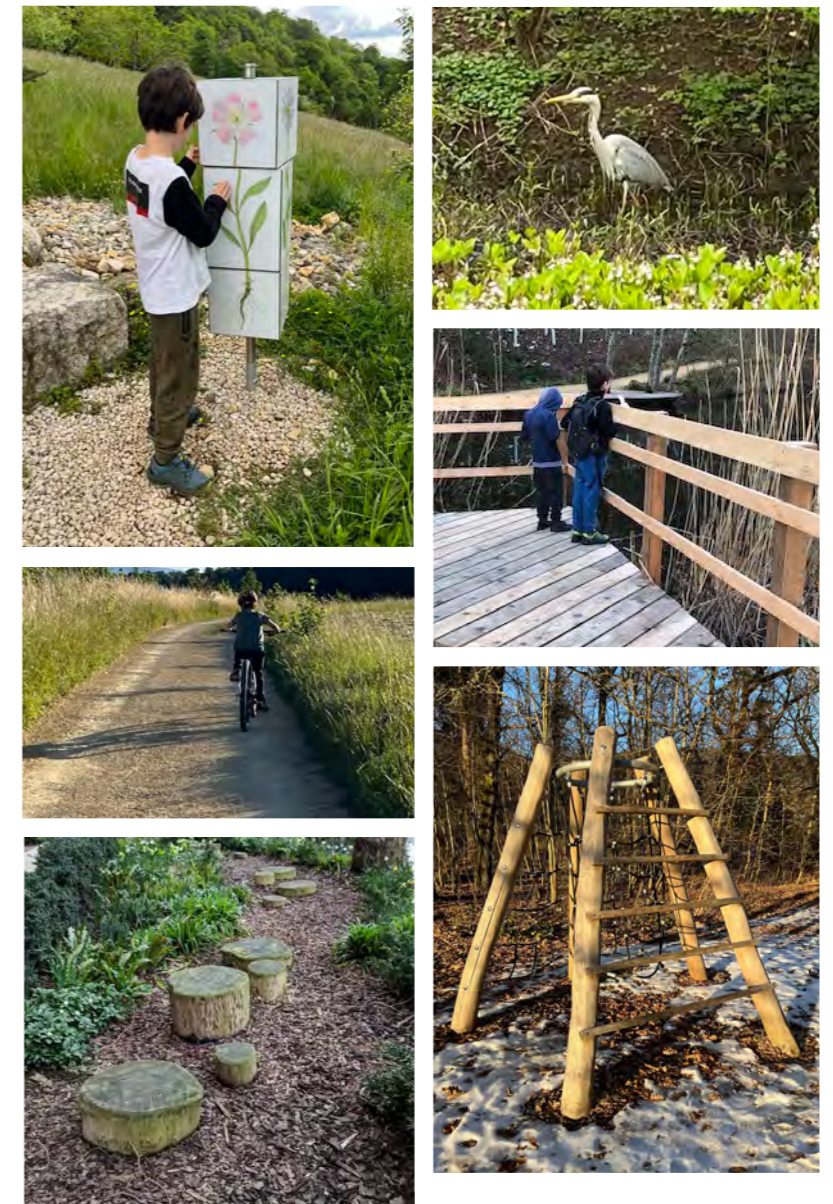


- The pathway around the north of Field 1 would be widened, with maintenance access gate provided from the northern edge of the enlarged and resurfaced car park.
- Formal and informal natural play items would be located at key locations including steppingstones, logs, and wildlife seating circles, providing the opportunity for exploring, jumping, climbing, crawling, roleplay, feeling, smelling, and more, whilst exploring the open space. Opportunities to educate visitors about the floodplain environment would be explored as part of interactive play.
- Interface with Saltbox Industrial Estate to be enhanced both on the Brooks side, and on the Saltbox side with benched seating, wayfinding and

interpretation boards. Work with stakeholders who have shown interest in improving this crossover between sites.

- Opportunities to reinforce landscape structure and habitat would be fully explored throughout the project area. This would require detailed habitat surveys to ascertain the present condition and species composition. Planting would aim to increase biodiversity and habitat resource and aid flood mitigation. In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain, there is also potential for habitat creation in parts of the site to deliver off-site 'biodiversity units' for development being brought forward in the surrounding area, with money from the sales potentially reinvested into the park improvements. Work with Friends of Bersted Brooks who have a detailed understanding of the site.
- A boardwalk could be constructed to provide a circular route. This would be subject to detailed hydrological survey and assessment information and engineering advice. The location shown is indicative. The route of the pathway would be designed to make the most of views across the landscape setting, avoid any new planting and any features of notable landscape/ecological value. The walkway

could provide the opportunity to access this part of the site even at times of severe flooding and would, to a degree, encourage human/pet activity along one route, reducing impact on wildlife. The boardwalk could cross the Aldingbourne Rife at a chosen point, with interpretation regarding the floodplain environment at key locations.

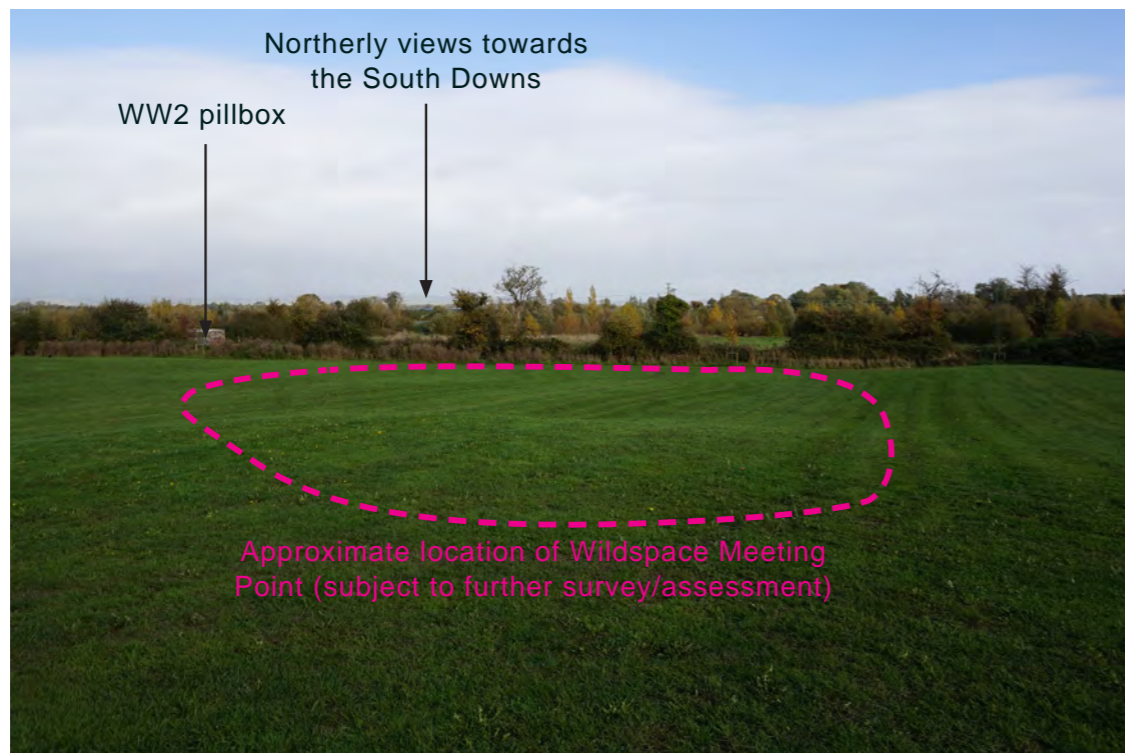




**Project 3: Wildspace meeting point**



- An area to make the most of the longer views towards the South Downs to the north and make full use of a relatively dry part of the site.
- Area to include wildflower grassland, pockets of native shrub planting, seating, natural play and 'learning through landscape' features.
- Visual connection to the WW2 pillbox on the northern side of the ditch, and potentially to the sunken pillbox to the west, to be enhanced. Interpretation boards to describe their importance as part of Britain's defences during WW2.
- Riparian planting along the ditch to be reinforced and enhanced where appropriate.
- Floodplain landscape and wildlife interpretation boards to be incorporated.
- Bridge crossing over the ditch to allow for better connectivity.
- A place for harnessing sense of place and quiet contemplation.
- An alternative space for users of the adjacent sports pitches and their families/spectators.



## Mid to long-term works

### Raised pathways

Based on the success and support for the early works within Bersted Brooks Nature Reserve, subject to detailed survey and assessment, and depending on access to funding, further raised walkways could be implemented to provide better year-round access across the site. Paths would encourage people to follow a particular route and enable the creation of quieter areas for wildlife. The main route along Aldingbourne Rife could be sufficient width to allow for bicycles, providing connectivity to the network beyond the site boundary. Raised pathways could be made of waste plastic or of a permeable raised causeway type design.



### Linear edible landscape alongside wetland

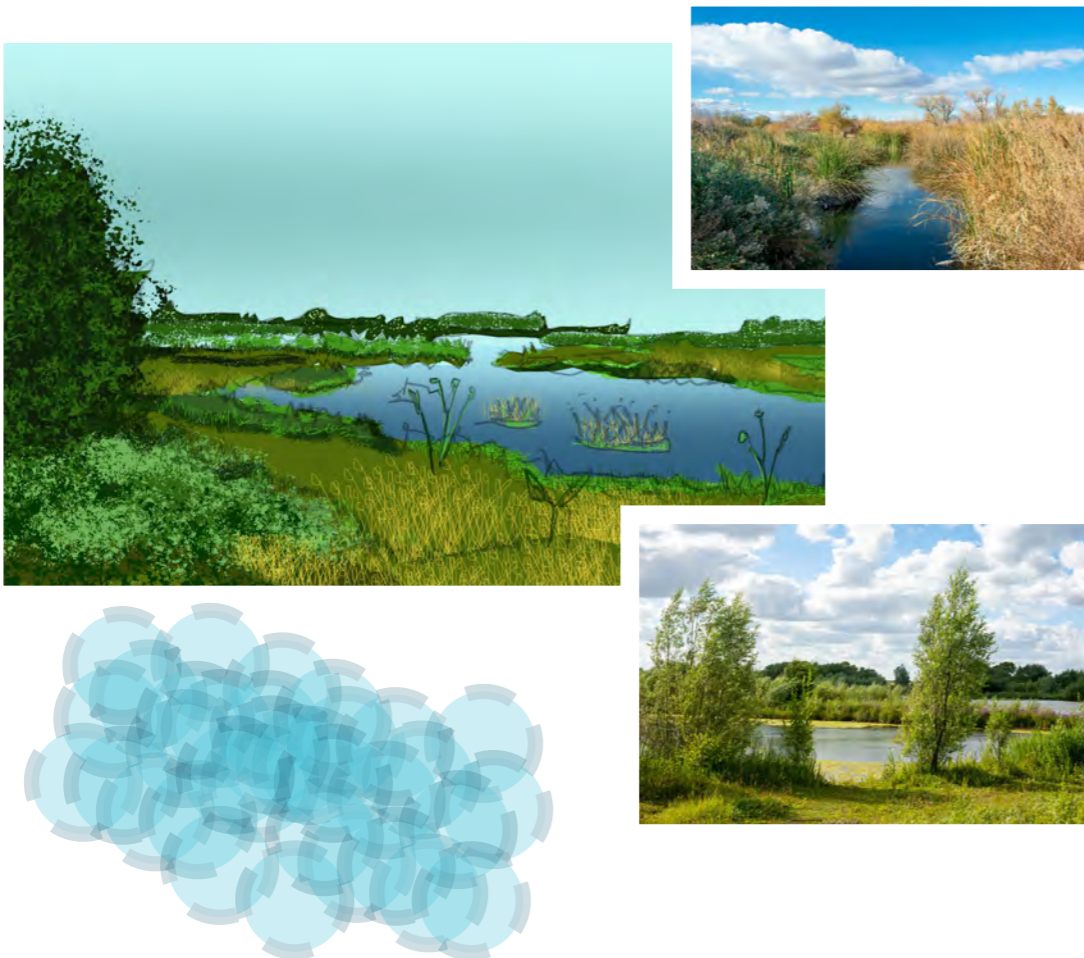
A raised pathway could provide access to a series of flood resistant community growing areas as a local resource and to provide opportunities for learning and volunteering. The pathway and growing areas would incorporate features such as edible hedges along with natural flood management interventions such as junction ponds and water meadows and wetland planting. Boundary planting would be bolstered to provide a buffer with the residential properties, whilst maintaining natural surveillance.



## Mid to long-term works

### Natural flood management interventions

Subject to detailed hydrological surveys and engineering input, the aim would be to store water in certain places for longer, meaning specific parts of the site were drier for longer periods than at present. Interventions could include junction ponds, scrapes, water meadows, along with further riparian planting and would alleviate flooding, benefit wildlife and provide enhanced recreation opportunity. Opportunities for education about the natural flood management methods used should be explored as part of the strategy for interpretation on the site.



## Long-term aspirations

### Road crossing improvements, potential bridge over North Bersted Bypass / A259 linking the two areas north and south

The masterplan process is an opportunity to identify future options for consideration as part of the feasibility exercise. The crossing over the bypass is clearly a major barrier to the overall connectedness of Bersted Brooks and Bersted Park, this was reinforced through feedback received during the consultation process. Road crossing improvements would be explored to provide a better link between the two areas, reducing or removing the risks associated with the busy crossing. As part of the inclusive design process, consideration should be given to quality design that meets the needs of the widest range of users.



## Outline management principles and aims

A series of outline principles and aims have been developed to help guide the ongoing management of the open space. These are as follows:

- The Adopt a 'design through management' approach, increasing access in certain areas, easing pressure on other parts of the open space. Discourage human activity in specific locations to aid the re-naturalisation and wilding of the landscape.
- Provide a welcoming environment, encouraging and facilitating year-round access to the open space for both physical and social benefit, whilst also safeguarding local wildlife and habitats across the park.
- Maintain and enhance the diverse range of habitats within the open space, notably woodland, scrub, meadow, and watercourses, increasing foraging, nesting and breeding opportunity with encouragement of wildlife corridors. Ensure habitat management is appropriate and based on best practice, particularly within Bersted Brooks Local Nature Reserve.
- Maintain formal/designed landscape areas whilst increasing awareness and understanding of the site's natural environment and history, such as the WW2 heritage.
- Ensure a healthy, safe and secure experience for site users.
- Provide opportunities to increase community use and involvement, allowing local people to take a degree of ownership, particularly through volunteering opportunities, education, events, interpretation and building partnerships.
- Improve the environmental quality and management of the park using sustainable practices, including the effective management of watercourses.
- Provide a well-maintained and clean open space for community use, maintaining the landscape and infrastructure to a high standard.

# 5. DELIVERY PLAN

This section provides summary discussion regarding a delivery plan for the masterplan proposals, potential delivery models and likely funding streams. The projects presented in the previous section are summarised in tabular form on the following page with the main features clearly identified. All works would be subject to detailed survey and assessment, particularly hydrological, ecological and engineering input.

## Delivery models

Delivery models used to deliver projects such as those presented and manage parks and open spaces include:

- Local authorities working with in-house parks teams or private contractors
- Local authorities forming partnerships with other public sector organisations (e.g. other local authorities / Environment Agency / Natural England), or with Parish and Town Councils
- Dedicated groups setting up charitable trusts or community interest companies (CIC)
- Private management companies established to manage open space associated with a specific development.

## Funding streams

There is a diverse offering of potential funding streams to support the delivery and future management of parks and open space projects. These include:

Grant funding applications can be made for projects and associated management, such as:

- Habitat creation / enhancements (e.g. Woodland Creation Planning Grant)
- Natural flood management (e.g. Natural Flood Management Programme)
- Historical environments (e.g. National Lottery Grants for Heritage)
- Sports facilities (e.g. Sport England - Active Together Fund)
- Community growing projects (e.g. National Lottery Community Fund)
- Improving connectivity (e.g. National Highways Environment Designated Funds).

Other sources of funding include:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) - habitat banking

- Income-generating opportunities
- Partner funding.

<b>Early works – individual, smaller-scale projects</b>	<b>Main features</b>
<b>Project 1:</b> Bersted Brooks - car park expansion and site signage/wayfinding.	Car expansion, site signage/wayfinding, establishment dog friendly area within Field 1 and nature only zones within the wider project area.
<b>Project 2:</b> Bersted Brooks - path improvements, habitat enhancement/wetland planting, play features, seating and bridge.	Path improvements, interpretation, planting/habitat creation or enhancement, natural play and 'learning through landscape' features, seating, a boardwalk could be constructed (3m width for pedestrians and cycles, made of waste plastic), including a bridge over the Rife.
<b>Project 3:</b> Wildspace meeting point	Hard and soft landscaping, seating, bridge, signage, play features.
<b>Mid to long-term works</b>	
<b>Raised pathways</b>	Additional boardwalks (3m width for pedestrians and cycles, made of waste plastic), or permeable causeway type paths, based on success and support of initial raised pathway works.
<b>Linear edible landscape alongside wetland</b>	Boardwalk (3m width for pedestrians and cycles, made of waste plastic), community garden.
<b>Natural flood management interventions</b>	Professional and contracting services to cover natural flood management interventions.
<b>Long-term aspirations</b>	
<b>Road crossing improvements, potential bridge over North Bersted Bypass / A259 linking the two areas north and south</b>	Pedestrian / cycle bridge.





# STEPHENSON HALLIDAY

Planning, Landscape & Environment  
an **RSK** company

