



**STEPHENSON
HALLIDAY**

Planning, Landscape & Environment
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Rev 01 FINAL

BERSTED BROOKS PARK

Wildspace on your doorstep

Summary Baseline Analysis and Consultation Report

Document history

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report contains a summary of the detailed Baseline and Analysis Report which provides a more comprehensive analysis of the site and its surrounds.

Stephenson Halliday have been commissioned by Arun District Council to produce a RIBA Stage 2 Masterplan for an existing public open space, facilitating access to the countryside and contact with nature at Bersted, to the north of Bognor Regis in West Sussex. The masterplan design will be delivered together with outline management recommendations, and broad recommendations for future delivery. As part of the project, a stakeholder engagement process has been undertaken to obtain initial views to input into the proposed design, followed by a process of public consultation on the masterplan itself, once prepared.

An initial site visit and a review of existing site information was undertaken, along with an assessment to identify any gaps in survey information which are required to aid design progression. The process of gathering data relating to the natural, environmental and social assets, as well as using information gained from the site visit, have supported the development of constraints and opportunities, a summary of which are provided at Section 4.



Photograph 1: Bersted Brooks Local Nature Reserve.



Photograph 2: Aldingbourne Rife.



Photograph 3: Eastern Field.



Photograph 4: Western Field.

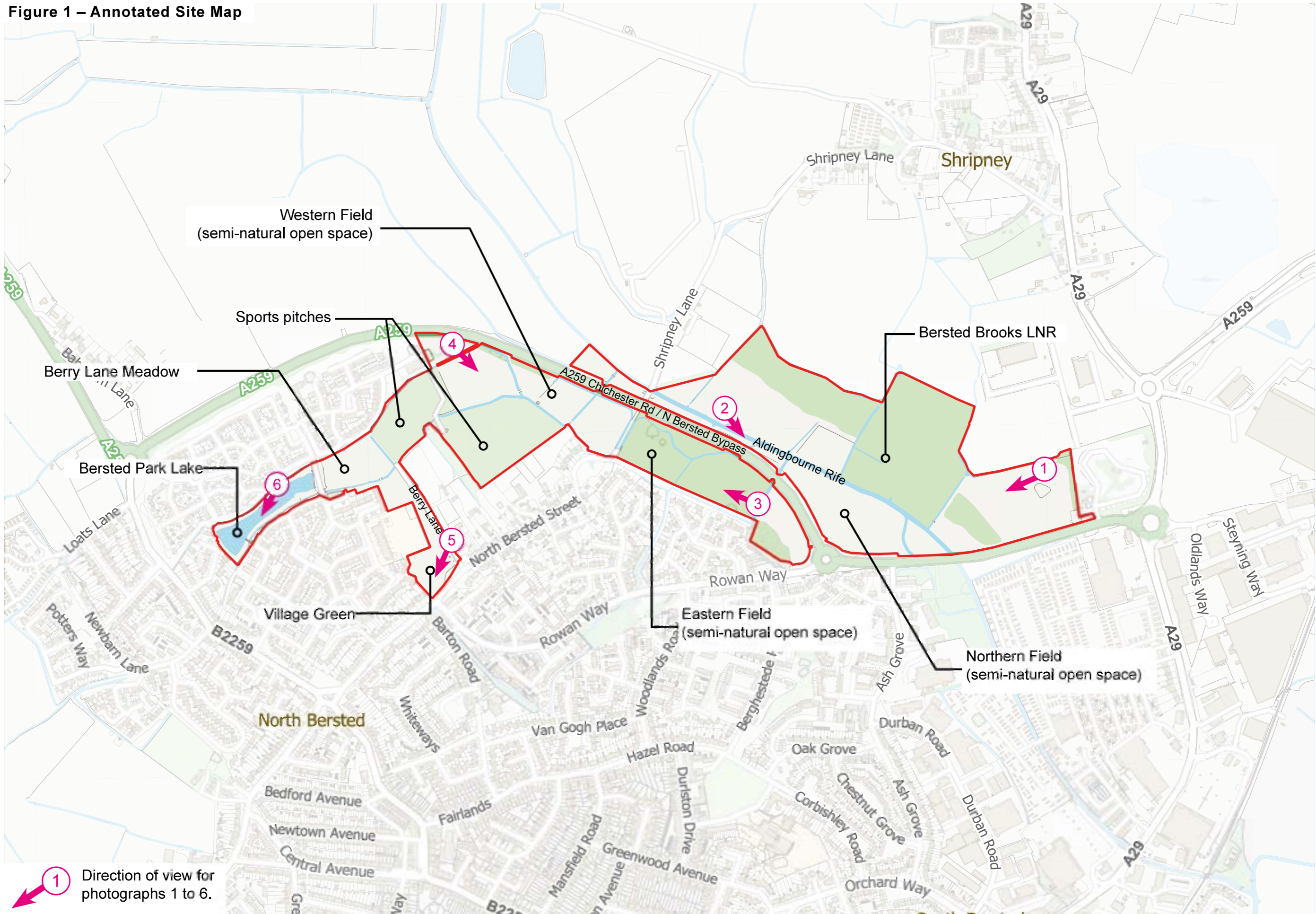


Photograph 5: Village Green.



Photograph 6: Bersted Park Lake.

Figure 1 – Annotated Site Map



① Direction of view for photographs 1 to 6.

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2. UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

The site has been analysed and viewed within its wider setting (1km study area) in order to understand the context that it sits within.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The documents reviewed include plans, frameworks, strategies, guides, assessments, studies and reports, providing valuable insight, policies and objectives.

The documents provide recommendations which relate either specifically to the site and its surrounds, or more generally to the wider area or surrounding landscape.

The following information was recorded as part of the review:

- The key findings of the document;
- The importance/relevance and key considerations of the key findings for masterplan;
- Where more information is required.

FINDINGS FROM THE DOCUMENT REVIEW

The results of the document review have fed into constraints and opportunities for the site, and these are presented at Section 4 of this report.

Opportunities have been identified to fall within seven main themes which link closely to ecosystem services and environmental and social functions of green infrastructure. They relate to Green Flag Award

standards, Building with Nature standards and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as relevant. These opportunities have been considered in the context of the existing site and will build a robust, evidence-based picture and context for the masterplan proposals.

The seven opportunity themes across the site are identified below:



GAP ANALYSIS

As part of the review process, gaps in site survey information which could be required to improve knowledge and provide an evidence base for developing the later stages of design work, such as RIBA Stage 3, 4 and 5, have been identified. Information which may contribute to the progress of the project is listed below.

- Ecological information
- Hydrology information
- Transport Assessment / Active Travel Plan
- Arboricultural information
- Topographic information
- Visitor surveys and accessibility reporting
- Disability and access audit
- Play area information
- Management Plans

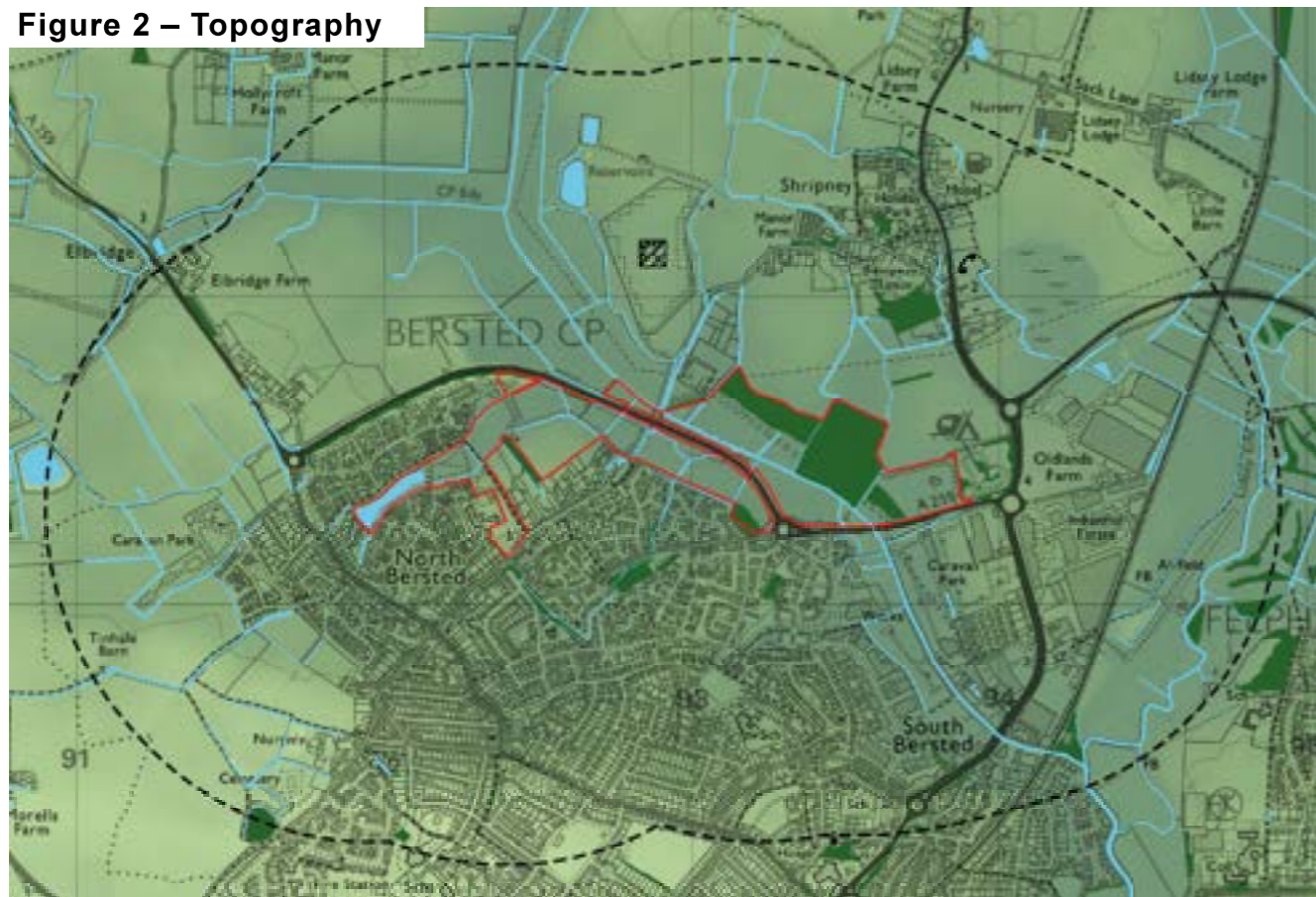
3. STUDY AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

As part of the analysis, a review of mapping data in relation to the site and its wider setting (1km study area) has been undertaken. The following information has been reviewed in relation the site and it's surrounds:

- Topography
- Hydrology
- Landscape character
- Designations
- Access / connectivity
- Facilities / local amenities
- Land ownership

Mapping is shown on the subsequent pages in this section. A more comprehensive analysis of mapping has been provided as part of the full version of this report.

Figure 2 – Topography



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TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of the site and its surrounds are shown on Figure 2.

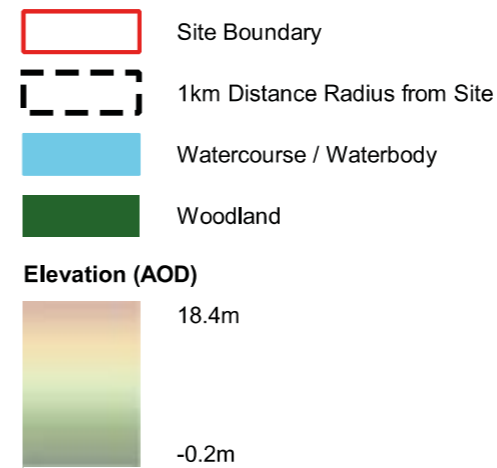
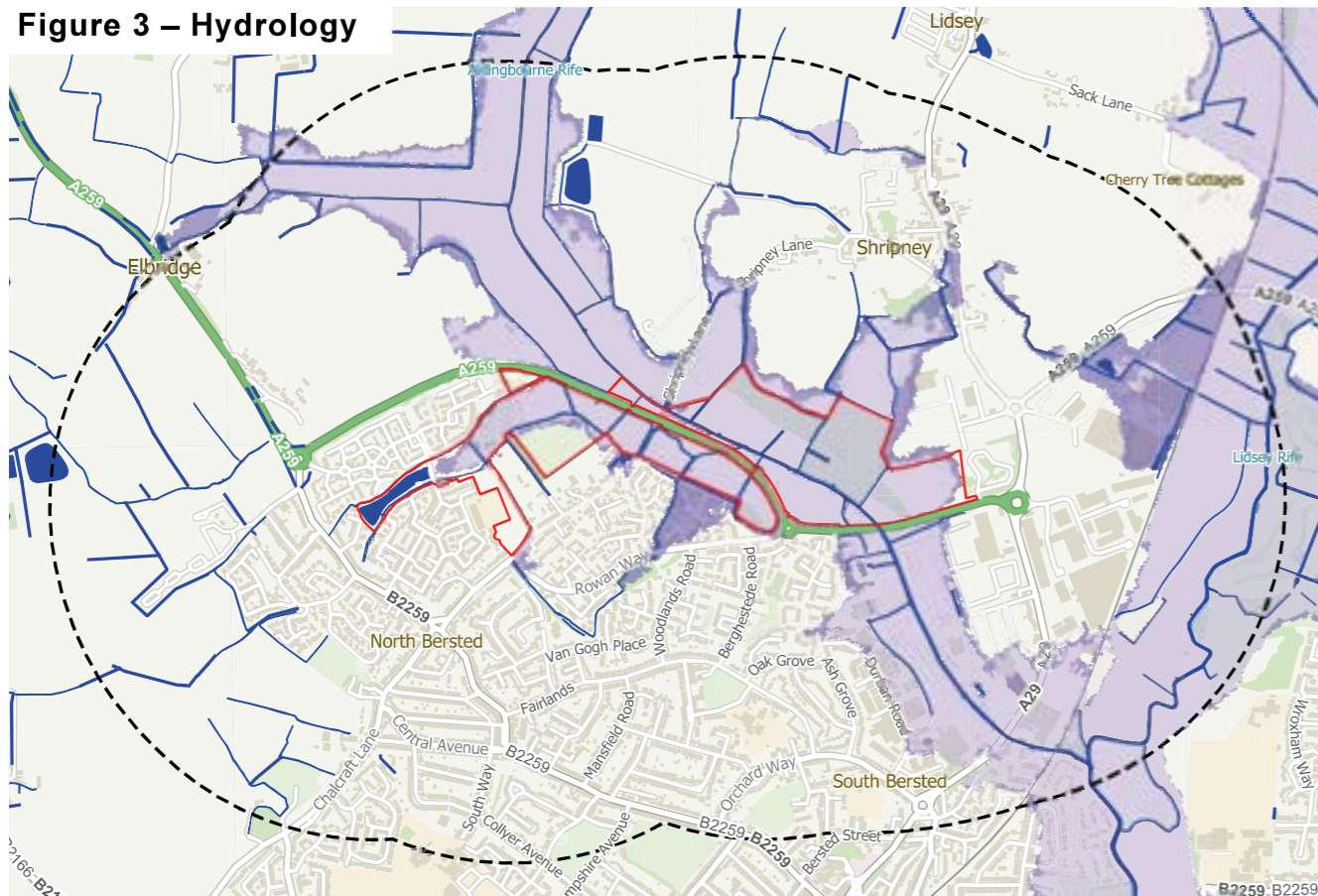


Figure 3 – Hydrology



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HYDROLOGY

The hydrology of the site and its surrounds are shown on Figure 3.

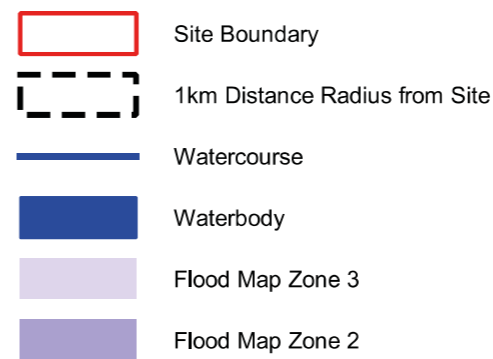
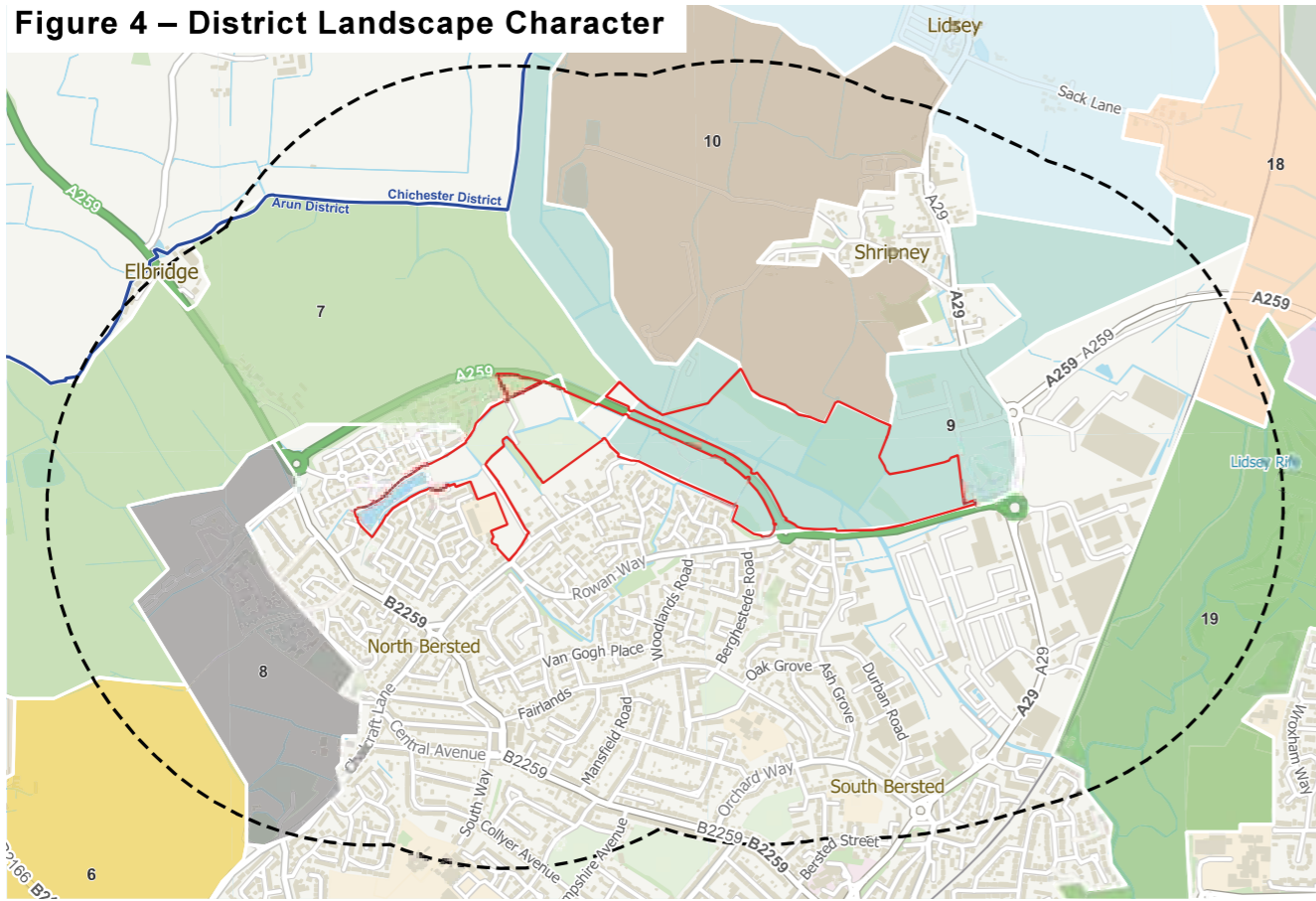


Figure 4 – District Landscape Character



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DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Arun district LCAs are shown on Figure 4.

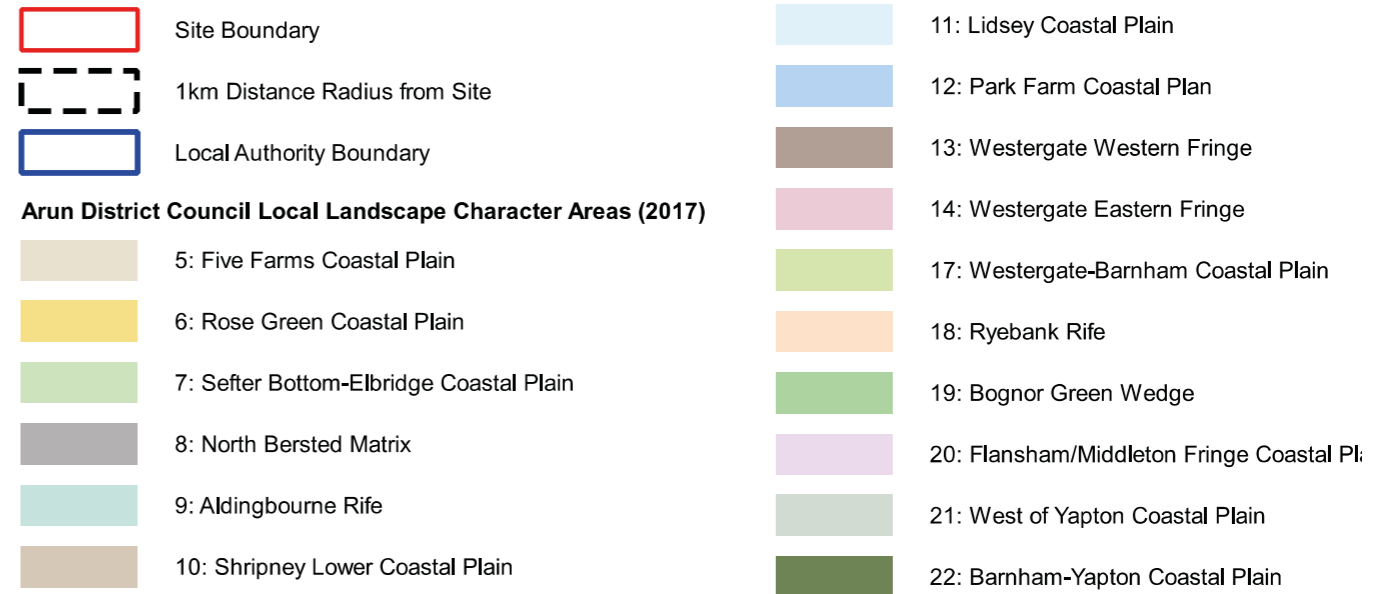
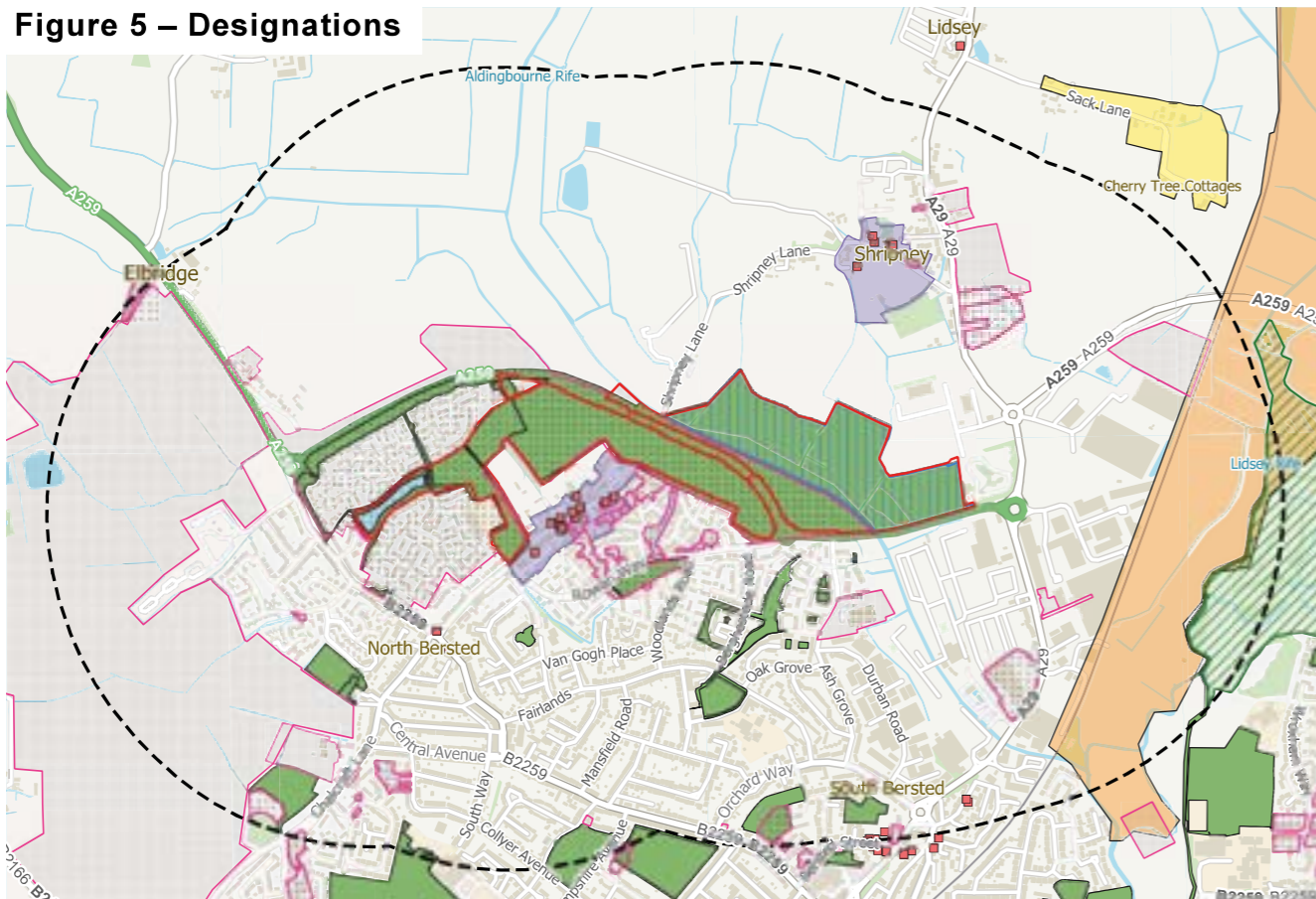


Figure 5 – Designations



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DESIGNATIONS

Relevant designated interests are shown on Figure 5. These either influence the character of the site and/or form constraints material to the development of the Masterplan.

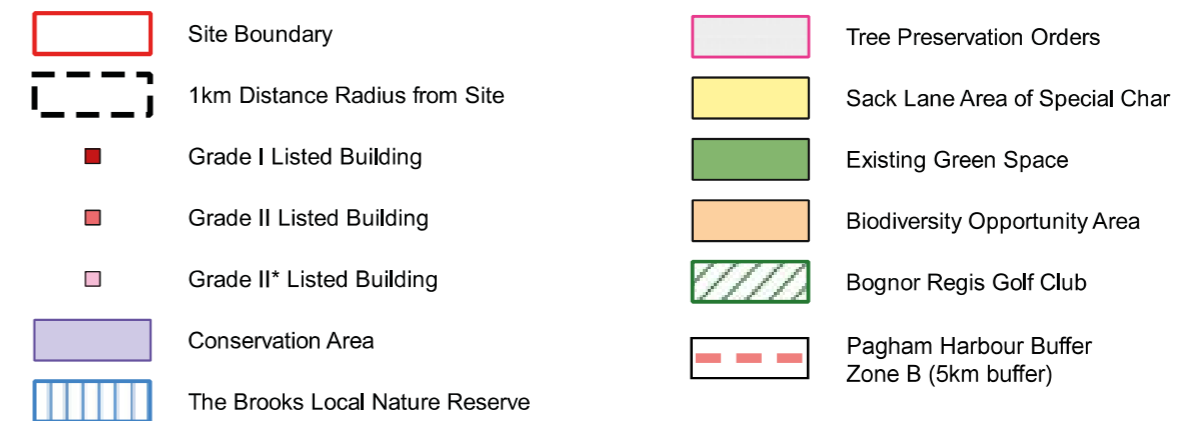
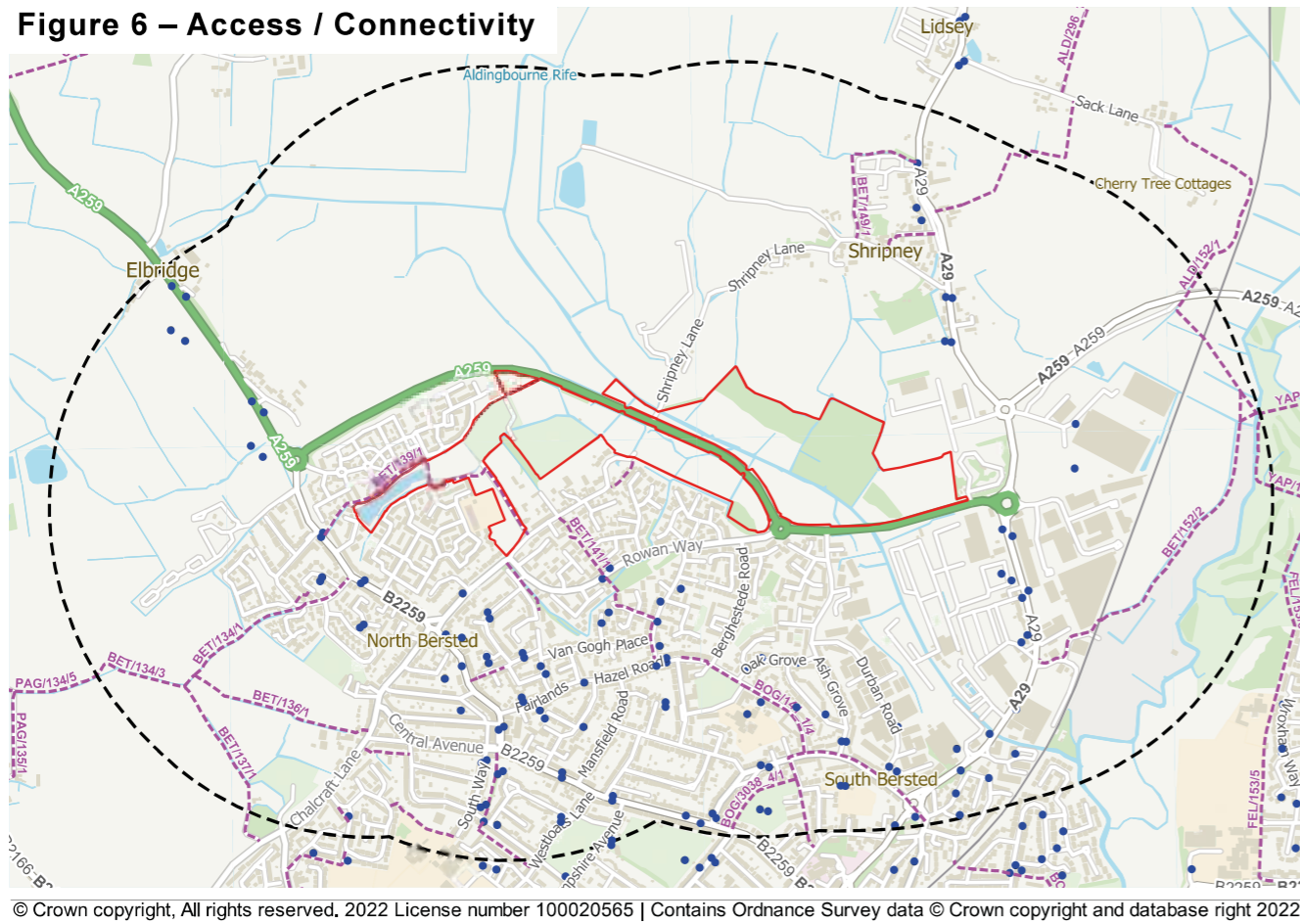


Figure 6 – Access / Connectivity



ACCESS / CONNECTIVITY

Figure 6 shows the local road network, bus stops and Public Rights of Way which provide access to the site.





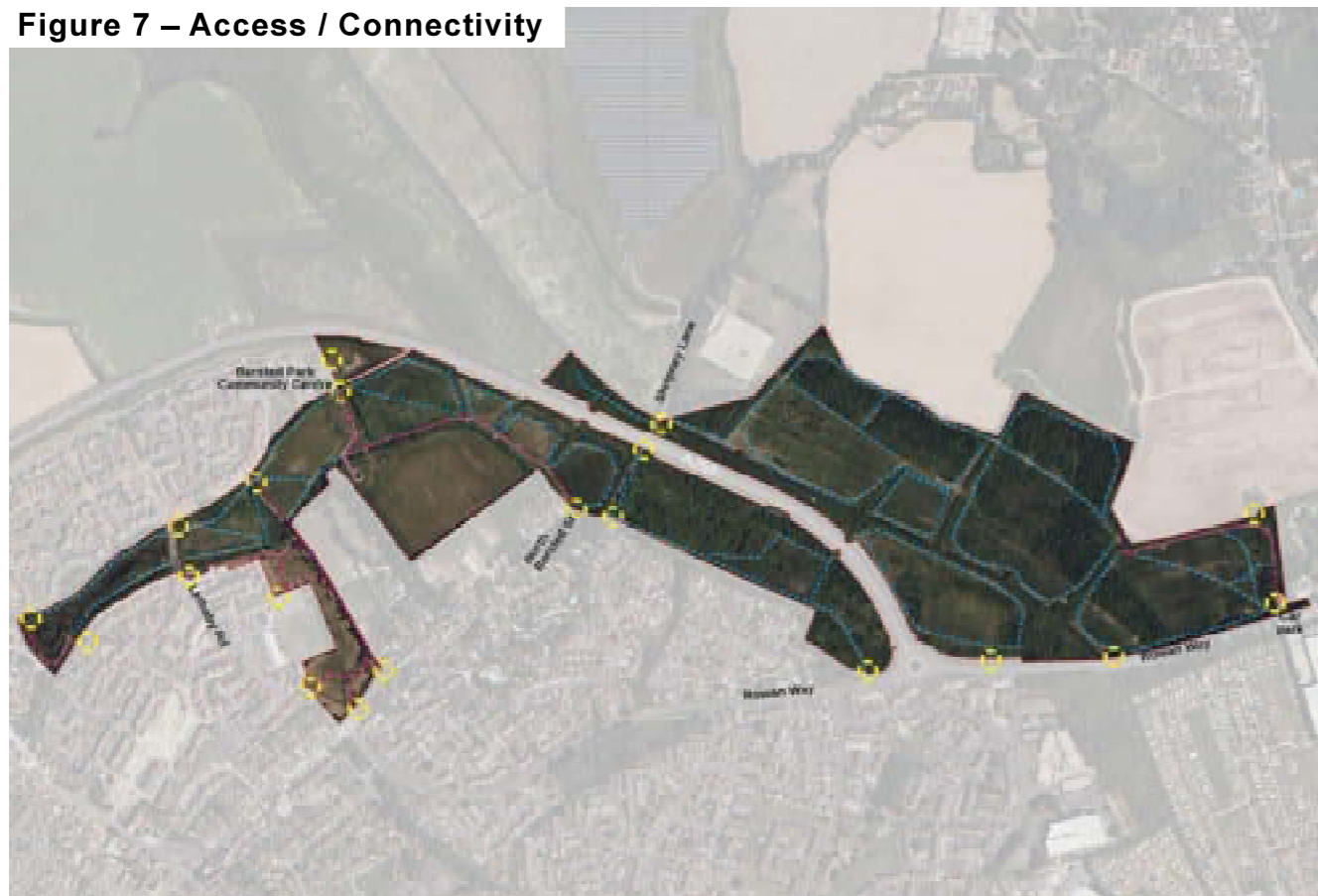
-  Site Boundary
-  1km Distance Radius from Site
-  Footpath
-  Bus Stop

Figure 7 – Access / Connectivity



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

CONNECTIVITY - WITHIN THE SITE

There are various formal access routes (both hard surfaced or mown paths) as well as unofficial routes/desire lines noted across the site. These have been shown on the annotated aerial image at Figure 7, together with all the points of access / entrance points from the surrounding areas.




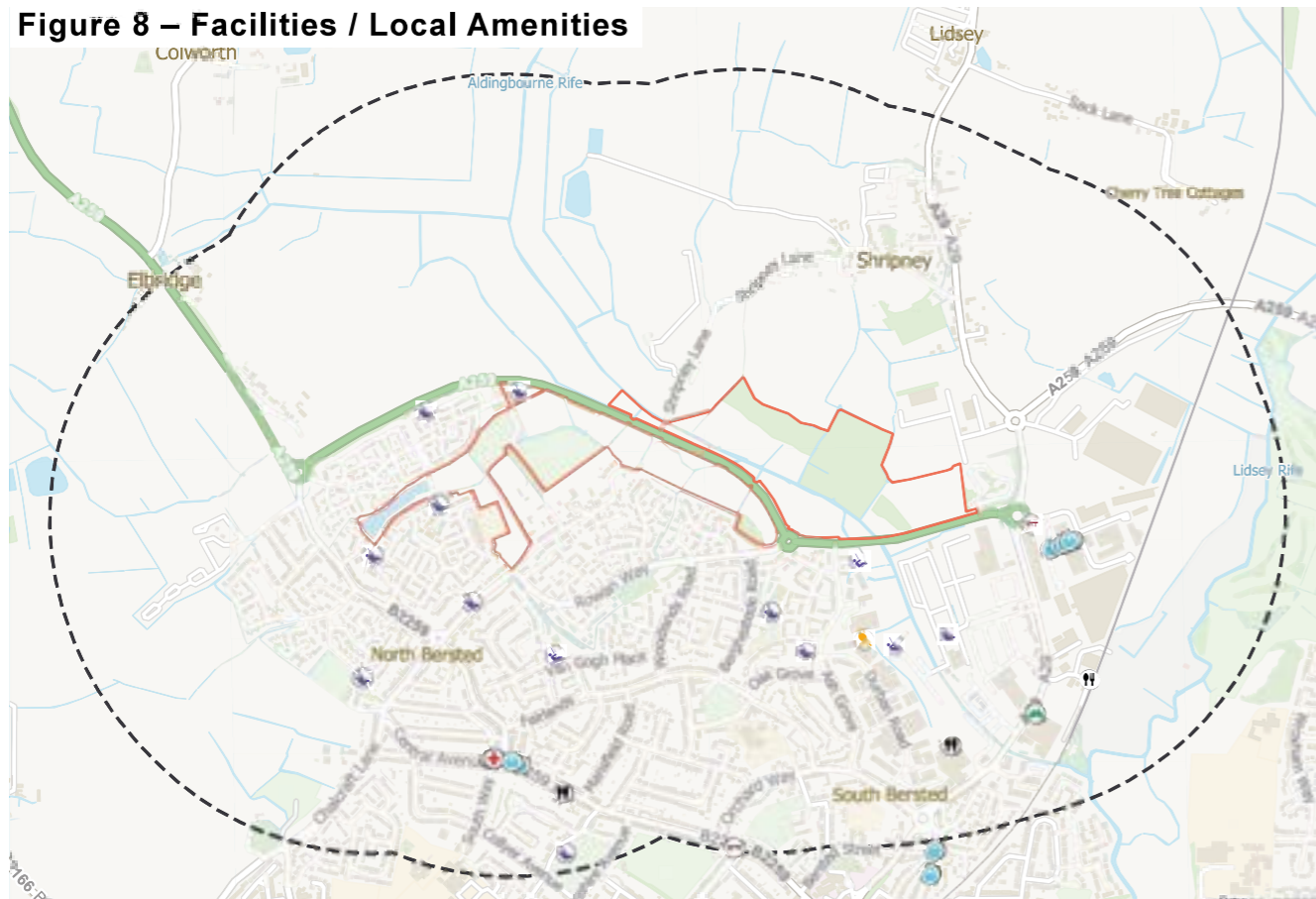
-  Access point
-  Hard surfaced paths
-  Mown paths or desire lines

Figure 8 – Facilities / Local Amenities



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FACILITIES / LOCAL AMENITIES

Local facilities and amenities are shown on Figure 8.











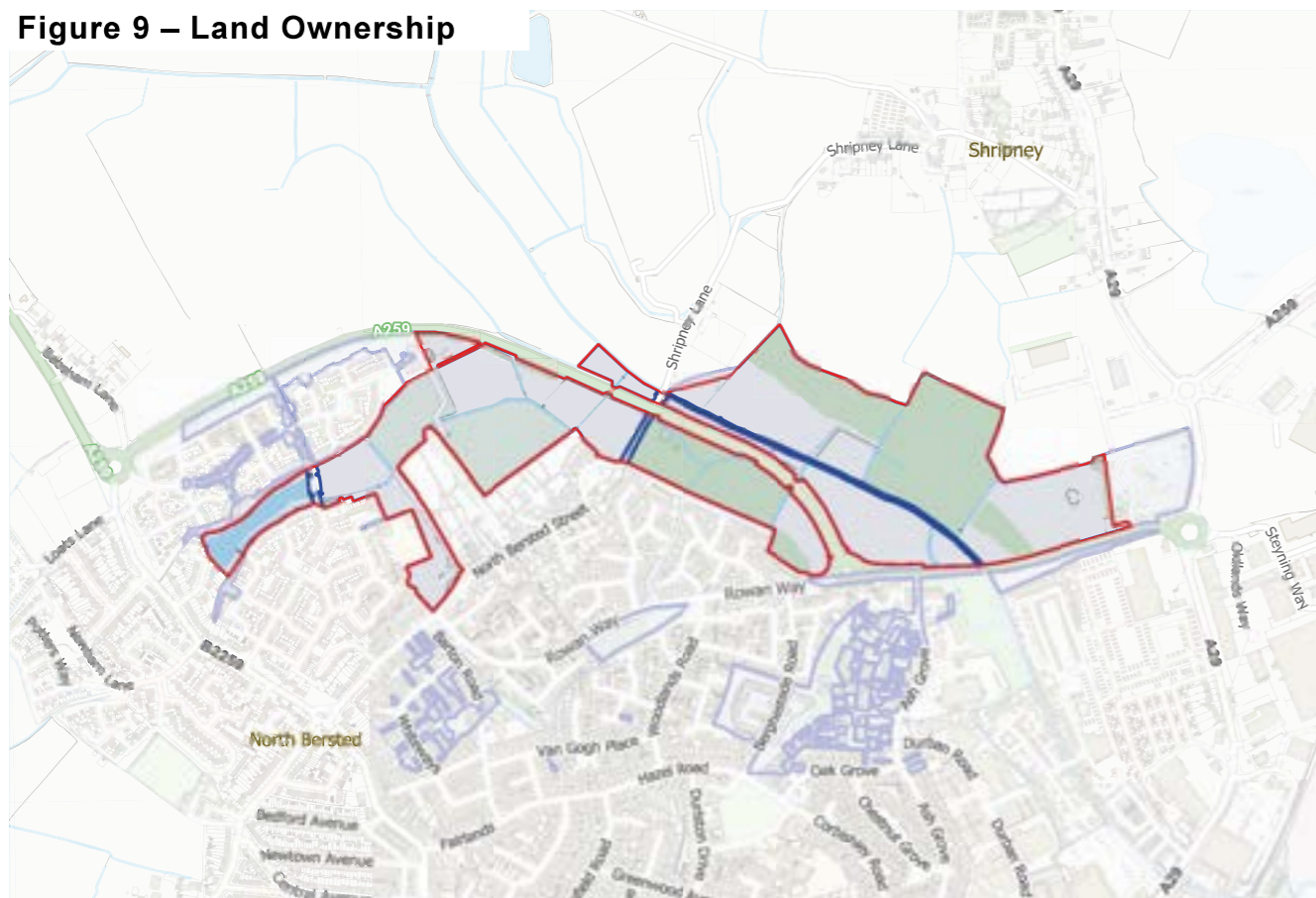
-  Site Boundary
-  1km Distance Radius from Site
-  Restaurant/Cafe/Fast Food
-  Bench
-  Cycle Parking/Cycle Repair Station
-  Healthcare
-  Post Box
-  Shop
-  Playground
-  Fitness/Sports Centre



Figure 9 – Land Ownership



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LAND OWNERSHIP

Land owned by Arun District Council is shown on Figure 9.

-  Site Boundary
-  Land within Ownership of Arun District Council within the Vicinity of the Site

BIODIVERSITY / HABITAT SURVEY INFORMATION - Summary

The site has notable wildlife value at several locations, particularly at Bersted Brooks LNR, Aldingbourne Rife and the associated ditch network, and at Bersted Lake. The information gathered from site visits carried out by Stephenson Halliday in October 2022 and January 2023, together with a review of survey/management information have helped build an understanding of the site in terms of species and habitat diversity.

Bersted Brooks comprises a range of habitats including mature trees, mixed woodland, wildflower areas, an area laid out as an orchard area, hedges, scrub, ponds, ditches, reed beds and habitats bordering Aldingbourne Rife.

Bersted Park comprises areas of wildflower grassland, hedgerows, scrub, treelines, ditches, amenity grassland, shrub beds and sports pitches. Bersted Park Lake comprises a pond area with significant reeds and an island containing mainly Willow.

There are numerous species of note recorded at the site, including European Water Vole (mammal), Common Pipistrelle Bat (mammal), Marsh Harrier (bird), Lapwing (bird), Wasp Spider (invertebrate), Stag Beetle (invertebrate), Adder (reptile), and Ruff (bird).



Photograph 7: A water vole eating by Jonathan Ridley.

HISTORIC / CULTURAL - Summary

The site is located on former agricultural land, previously used for growing a range of arable crops. Through reference to historic aerial photography, the site comprised a series of irregular shaped fields, divided by mostly intact hedgerows and ditches/watercourses.

Archaeological surveys have revealed artefacts relating to the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age (early, middle and late), Iron Age (middle and late) and Roman periods.

The North Bersted Man - A warrior grave equipped with an exceptional set of objects was discovered by Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd in 2008 during archaeological investigations, prior to the construction of the housing development Bersted Park. Additionally, there are two pillboxes constructed in 1940 and 1941 located on site. The pillboxes were designed to house machine guns and rifles contributing to lines of defense along the south-east and eastern coast of Britain.

Through reference to historic maps and aerial imagery, the site can be interpreted as forming part of extensive former agricultural land. Berry Lane appears to be a historic route, and this is evident on the ground today as it has a holloway or sunken lane character, with ancient woodland indicator species at the edges.



Photograph 8: Pillbox within Western Field



Photograph 9: Berry Lane

4. CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section provides a summary of identified constraints and opportunities that have become apparent through site visits, and document / baseline review. A full list of constraints and opportunities, as well as corresponding plans, are included within the full version of this report.

CONSTRAINTS

A range of spatial and thematic constraints were identified in relation to issues such as access and connectivity, safety, lack of site usability at times of flooding, character and sense of unity, lack of wayfinding and interpretation, deterioration of features, lack of car parking, biodiversity and management.



Photograph 10: Defaced information board at Bersted Brooks.



Photograph 12: Busy crossing over the A259 / N Bersted Bypass.



Photograph 11: Impacts from overhead lines on landscape character



Photograph 13: Pot holes at Bersted Brooks LNR car park.

OPPORTUNITIES

A series of opportunities have been identified relating to...



Conserving and enhancing biodiversity

... the management of existing and/or creating new habitats, providing a richer landscape mosaic, natural flood management, and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity.



Access to green recreation

... increased year-round usability for recreational and educational use, enhancing rights of way, paths and wider access links within the vicinity, facilitating equal access, and improving visitor access infrastructure.



Flood mitigation and healthy ecosystems

... the restoration and re-naturalisation of the watercourses, improving wetland habitat and flood capacity, targeted tree / woodland planting to aid attenuation, and enhancing biodiversity.



Lifelong learning/ skills for life

... learning and development, bringing local people together to engage with the floodplain landscape, building knowledge, skills and confidence, developing relationships whilst learning about natural processes.



Landscape setting and character/sense of place

... re-naturalisation and restoration of aspects of historic lowland wetland landscape character, increasing perceived tranquility and the sense of relative naturalness, whilst maintaining key views / visual links.



Healthy and cohesive communities

... encouraging sustainable, active and healthy travel, education, engaging visitors about wildlife value and healthier living, facilitating child development, and using the site for local green prescribing initiatives.



Historic character

... increasing public knowledge and appreciation of the sites historic and cultural associations, its past uses and historic features.

5. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

This section summarises the approach and feedback received as part of the stakeholder and community consultation exercises to inform the development of proposals for the Bersted Brooks Park concept masterplan, that meet current and emerging needs and aspirations.

The aims and objectives of stakeholder and community engagement for this project were to gather key stakeholder views on both the opportunities and constraints for this area, assessing the current uses and condition and planning for the future. This was to be conducted taking account of planning regulations, national, regional and local guidance. Information would feed into initial concepts, which could be developed and presented as a evolving, fluid concept masterplan for delivery across a number of years.



Opportunities Map on Display on 15.03.23

APPROACH

Consultation on such a large project included a high number of individuals and groups. After stakeholders were consulted, an initial concept plan would be available to the wider public for further consideration.

Stakeholders were categorised into 4 groups.

- Group 1 included ward, parish and county councillors, council departments, and the Friends of Bersted Brooks group.
- Group 2 included various non-departmental public bodies, government agencies, local conservation organisations, and residents' groups.
- Group 3 included neighbouring landowners and the local MP.
- Group 4 included other organisations using the site for various recreational activities, organisations operating on adjacent land and various other interested parties.

Methods of engagement included:

- Initial introductory email
- Meeting/event around parameters of potential project scope
- Follow up telephone calls with individual department representatives

- Email correspondence
- Telephone Interviews or online meetings
- Participation in survey on or offline
- Residents Newsletters/ Social Media Facebook project page
- Open event at local venue

Consultation Activity Timeline

Group 1

An internal stakeholder event was held on the 15.03.23. Invitations were sent out following an introductory email from Arun District Council, to introduce the team and project. Of the 51 invitations sent 15 people attended the event, with requests for follow up discussions from a further 2 people. This represented a good cross section of stakeholders across various departments and organisations.

Group 2

The project team drafted specific, technical email introductions relating to areas these organisations were most likely to engage with us on. The team held several positive online Teams meetings with local organisations in this area.

Group 3+4 - Various email, online meeting and phone contact were made.



Photograph 14: Feedback notes on one of the Opportunities plan 15.03.23

First advert in local newsletter

An advert was placed in the newsletter delivered over the weekend of 18/19th March 23. This advert informed residents that consultation was at an early stage and to look out for ways to engage.

Facebook page

A Facebook project page was created which went live on 20.04.23.

Residents survey

A residents' survey seeking feedback on initial plans was created and rolled out through the Council's website, and the Facebook

pages. The Residents survey went live and was open from the 22.05.23 until 12.06.23.

Second advert in local newsletter

Another advert was placed in the Bersted Park residents newsletter to notify of the public consultation which included an opportunity to view the revised and re-defined concept masterplan proposals in person at Bersted Community Centre on 15.07.23.

Public Consultation

A public consultation went live between 07.07.23 until 31.07.23. The survey contained several questions regarding individual elements of the concept masterplan proposals. Project staff for Stephenson Halliday and Arun District Council were present at the event on 15.07.23 to help answer queries on the day. The event was well attended.

Advertisement in Bersted Park Residents Newsletter

Three display boards within the online survey and at public event 15.07.23

FEEDBACK

Initial feedback highlighted issues around flooding and drainage, highways for access and connectivity across the A259, parking, a need for raised pathways for year round access, and wildlife conservation and enhancement. Also dog fouling, bins, seating and issues around the addition of seasonal facilities like refreshments were raised.



Word cloud created from data collected on 15.03.23

The residents survey went live and was open from the 22.05.23 May until 12.06.23, and received 178 responses, which represented over 31% of the 564 Residents at Bersted park. This is a higher than average response rate (usually 10-15%) over 30% is considered good.

Some of the feedback from residents related to ownership and maintenance issues. The adoption of roads within the private Bersted Park estate (a process which began in January 2023) raised concerns that residents would have less privacy, security and parking than they do currently.

There were 121 responses to the public consultation. There was broad support for the design proposals with most people responding either strongly agree or somewhat agree to each. Additional comments received raised concerns about parking pressures in residential areas and were not supportive of seasonal parking in Shripney Lane. There was also concern about increased anti-social behaviour, potential for increased flooding, increased litter and future resource for maintenance. People were supportive of opportunities to increase accessibility to wet areas of the site, enhancing habitats and biodiversity and also introducing an area for seating and wildflower planting.



Project facebook page

Final overall summary:

- People were happier to see improvements made to Bersted Brooks Nature Reserve, than Bersted Park.
- Some Bersted Park residents have some concerns around the move from private to Council adoption of roads and maintenance which need resolving before discussions around further improvements on the Bersted Park side can progress.
- Improvements to car parking at Bersted Brooks Local Nature Reserve are generally welcome.
- Limited boardwalks were popular if water resistant materials are used and can cope with flooding.
- A positive number of people responded to the option of volunteering in the parks.



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