

# Countryside Strategy (2023-2028)



**Elmbridge**  
Borough Council

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# Foreword

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The new Countryside Strategy (2023-2028) provides the strategic direction for the management of the countryside for the next 5 years. The updated strategy replaces the Countryside Strategy adopted in 2007 which ran until 2012. At that time the strategy had to reconcile external demands from the Esher Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Restoration and Management Plan and more recently our commitments to Elmbridge's Countryside Stewardship agreement. This strategy seeks to strike a balance between the interests associated with issues like nature conservation, recreation, and amenity use.

The recent Covid pandemic has led to many people re-evaluating their lives and spending more time outdoors and enjoying local amenities. This has had positive effects of more people being aware of and appreciating the local Countryside but at the same time has placed increased pressure on the infrastructure of the Countryside sites with significant increases in usage leading to increased wear and tear on paths, car parks and an increase in litter in many cases.

The new countryside strategy is a key document to support the new 2030 vision of a sustainable, thriving Elmbridge driven by the power of our community. The strategy will support the drive to reducing carbon while at the same time creating the best environment for wildlife and biodiversity to thrive in our open spaces.

Elmbridge Borough Council is committed to maintaining the Elmbridge Countryside for all to enjoy while balancing the needs of Elmbridge's wildlife and biodiversity. In recent years the importance of the ecological environment has become more prominent, and as custodians of the Elmbridge countryside this strategy sets out how we will protect and enhance this valuable asset.

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# Summary

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This strategy sets the strategic direction for the management of our countryside estate for the next 5 years. The strategy draws together current best practice found nationally and within the Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan and our commitments made through our Countryside Stewardship Agreement with the Forestry Commission and Natural England and to apply these principles to the wider countryside estate owned and managed by Elmbridge Borough Council.

Elmbridge`s countryside estate, the area owned and managed by Elmbridge Borough Council, covers 625 hectares. We have a responsibility to manage the estate for the whole of Elmbridge, balancing the needs of nature with the desires of our residents. Following our Countryside Stewardship Agreement (Appendix 1), covering our common land, we will ensure that biodiversity and sustainability are key in delivering the strategy to benefit all who use and enjoy the countryside.

## The strategy identifies key policy areas as:

**Nature Conservation and Amenity (Biodiversity Improvement)** continuing positive management and the protection and enhancement of landscape, habitats, and wildlife.

**Recreation and Access (Accessibility)** assessing demands; addressing changes in trends; examine and activate opportunities, particularly in the more urban parts of the Borough, equal opportunities to access.

**Awareness and Understanding** building upon the present initiatives; maintaining a positive image of the Council`s countryside estate; recognising the value of the estate as an educational resource; broaden opportunities for enjoyment.

**Community Action** working with all sectors of the local community to help them appreciate and `take ownership` of their countryside with the possibility of a `Friends of Elmbridge Countryside` being formed, increasing awareness, encouraging, supporting and co-ordinating works.

**Sustainable Resource Management** the protection of the general fabric of the estate; efficient and effective use of staff and finances; maximising opportunities for external funding; partnerships and relationships with external agencies and interest groups

Above all, the countryside is a shared responsibility. This strategy is for all those in the public, private and voluntary sectors who use or have an interest in the Council`s countryside estate and who work for it. With our approach to consultation and customer orientated service, it will assist as an example of `best practice` to those involved in the management and stewardship of the countryside areas in Elmbridge.

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## Scope / what does this Strategy include

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This strategy has been primarily written in respect of the Council's own 'countryside' estate. Much of the land is Common Land under the ownership of Elmbridge Borough Council, but there are 5 sites that are not Common Land but are included because of their landscape character and/or associated management issues. The Commons can be broadly classified as Lowland Amenity Commons consisting of a variety of habitats. The 'central block' of 360 hectares (Arbrook, Esher, Fairmile, Oxshott Heath, West End and Winterdown Woods) are a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The strategy has a much wider audience as well. There are a number of other functions of the Council, particularly those relating to Planning, which have separate but interlinked relationships with the management of Elmbridge's countryside estate. There are those organisations formally represented on the Countryside Consultative Group with specific responsibilities or interests in respect of the Council's countryside estate and/or general countryside in Elmbridge, such as the Forestry Commission, Natural England, and the Lower Mole Partnership.

Above all, the countryside is a shared responsibility. This strategy is for all those in the public, private and voluntary sectors who use or have an interest in the Council's countryside estate and who work for it. This new strategy will serve as an example of 'best practice' to those involved in the management and stewardship of the countryside areas in Elmbridge.



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## Previous Strategies

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The Elmbridge Countryside has been a consistent topic of management interest over the years. The 1970 Public Inquiry into the Esher bypass recognised the importance of the Countryside for its recreation, amenity, and nature conservation value, even though the road eventually took its course through Esher Common.

A Management Plan was produced for the Council by consultants in 1986. The then Recreation and Amenities Committee approved a series of service policies arising from this Plan in January 1987. These policies provided a degree of guidance but were limited in scope; a major criticism being that the Plan concentrated on woodland management and heathland, to the exclusion of most other aspects of nature conservation and recreational issues.

One of the main proposals of the 1986 Plan was to set-up an Advisory Group as a forum for discussing and progressing the management of the Countryside. Initially, the Commons Advisory Group consisted of Council Officers and representatives from various interest groups.

These groups were:

- British Horse Society
- Countryside Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Lower Mole Countryside Management Project
- Nature Conservancy Council
- Oxshott Heath Conservators
- Ramblers Association
- Surrey Wildlife Trust.

From October 1989 the Group (now known as the Countryside Consultative Group) has also included elected Members who are appointed to the committee each year at the Annual Council meeting.

In 1992 a Commons Action Plan was drafted to create a more specific policy framework and programme of actions, and therefore to provide a clear rationale for management; the Council adopted this Plan in April 1993. Key features of the Action Plan are that it was drafted and approved with the aid of broad consultation, and that it addressed the deficiencies of the 1986 Plan in respect of dealing with the issues of nature conservation, recreation, and access. It was also the subject of an Annual Report, which monitored the progress of the Action Plan.

In October 1995 the Commons Advisory Group was reconstituted as the Countryside Consultative Group, the main difference being that the terms of reference of the Group now included substantial areas of land (namely Desborough Island, Molesey Heath and Stokes Field) that are not designated Commons.

In November 1999 Elmbridge Borough Council's Countryside Team launched the first Countryside Strategy this was based on user consultation and outlined the aims that were used to manage the Borough's Countryside over the following five years.

A revised strategy would have been produced, following consultation, in 2005 but was superseded by the Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan, which covers 380 hectares of the council's countryside estate (note: the SSSI only covers 360 hectares).

This next strategy was produced and adopted in 2007, and ran until 2012, After which it became evident that the requirements of the Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan, in terms of monitoring and establishing a regime where the Esher Commons SSSI was returning to favourable condition, meant that we needed to pause this latest strategy.

Following recognition by Natural England that the Esher Commons SSSI complex was either in favourable or recovering condition, and the adoption of a 10-year Countryside Stewardship agreement with the Forestry Commission and Natural England, it is now time to update our Countryside Strategy for the future.

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# Management of the commons

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The various sites within the Countryside estate covered by this strategy consist of 625 hectares of land and are covered by the terms of reference of the Countryside Consultative Group.

The Countryside Team at present consists of a

- Countryside Officer
- Countryside Estates Officer
- Six Countryside Rangers

The Team undertakes a range of duties including:

- Estate Management including litter collection, removal of dumped spoil, emergencies, notices, abandoned cars.
- Practical habitat management such as heathland, woodland thinning, pond maintenance.
- Interpretation including guided walks, talks.
- Public liaison by on-site presence, talking to users of the common, promoting and monitoring use e.g. Cycle route.

The team has a site hut and workshop on Esher Common and the use of two Land Rovers with trailers, pick-up truck, tractor and two small excavators which are used across the 20 sites / over 625 hectares of land. Equipment is largely funded by CIL maintenance. Where possible equipment will be part exchanged. The annual Countryside Revenue budget is £699k (2022-2023).

The emptying of the litter bins across most sites is carried out under the green spaces' grounds maintenance contract, along with a number of the annual meadowland maintenance but all other works are carried out by the Countryside Team.

Included within the revenue budget we receive income from:

- Countryside Stewardship (CS) funding which provides financial incentives for farmers, foresters, and land managers to look after and improve the environment.
  - CS protects and enhances the natural environment by:
    - increasing biodiversity
    - improving habitat
- Easements – access rights across the estate
- Income generation from Woodland Management
- Biodiversity Net Gain

The Council's countryside management approach so far has been pragmatic and realistic due to the resourcing and logistical framework and, by definition the service will continue to be both planned as well as opportunistic. The Council will endeavour to achieve what it plans to do, whilst responding necessarily to changes in legislation, grant aid programmes, partnerships and other project opportunities in the countryside and details will be provided in each of the Annual Action Plans over the 5-year strategy period.



## Achievements to date



Completion of the Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan which restored 22.6 hectares of Heathland.



Restoration of Margy Pond, West End and Milbourne Pond, Weston Green.



Successful pond management at West End for the nationally rare starfruit.



Successful heathland management at Fairmile Common for the rare Silver Studded Blue butterfly.



Award of Grant Aid (Countryside Stewardship Agreement).



23,000 site visits through the link up to nature programme.



Annual maintenance keeping the countryside in good order for both amenity recreation and the wildlife.

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# Countryside Consultative Group

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The Countryside Consultative Group (CCG) acts as a forum where issues relevant to the implementation of the Council's Countryside Strategy can be raised and provides the opportunity for liaison between its members on good practice in countryside management and the exchange of information. The current terms of reference of the CCG are attached at Appendix 2.

The Countryside Consultative Group (CCG) terms of reference cover the following sites:

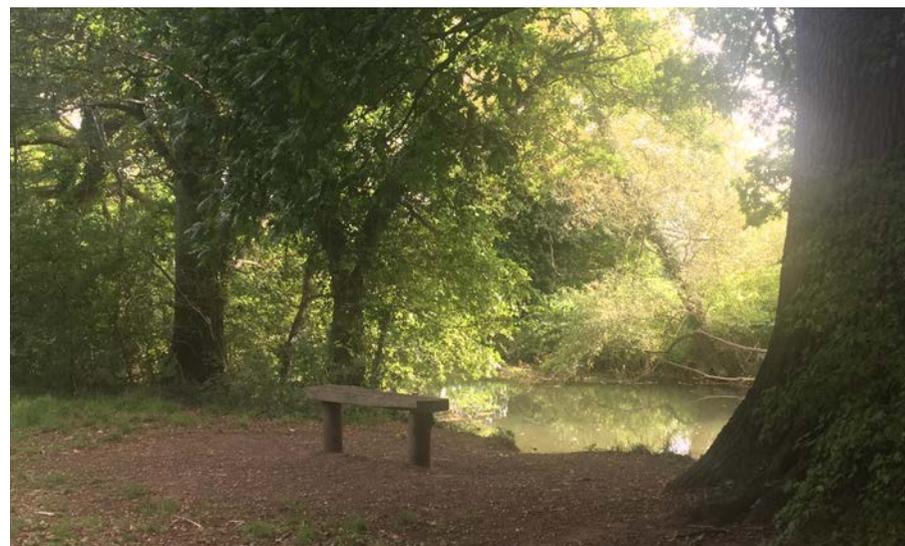
- Arbrook Common (SSSI)
- Brookland Community Park (SANG)
- Claygate Common (LNR) (SNCI)
- Desborough Island\* (LNR) (SNCI)
- Ditton Common and Weston Green (SNCI)
- Downside Common
- Esher Common (SSSI)
- Fairmile Common (SSSI) (SNCI)
- Hersham Riverside Park
- Leigh Hill Road Common
- Littleheath Common
- Littleworth Common (SNCI)
- Molesey Heath\* (LNR)
- Old Common (SNCI)
- Oxshott Heath (SSSI)
- Stokes Field\* (LNR)
- Telegraph Hill\*(SNCI)
- Tilt Common
- West End Common and Winterdown Woods (SSSI, LNR)
- Weybridge Heath (SNCI)

Please see Appendix 3 for Site Maps

The above list shows the sites that are covered by this Strategy. However, the Countryside Team additionally have input into the following Greenspaces sites due to some of their natural features:

- Hurst Meadows Open Space
- Hurst Meadows Minor
- Cowey Sale Open Space
- Greside Recreation Grounds
- Apps Court Open Space
- Other Greenspaces sites as required for consultation / advice.

These sites and other greenspaces sites not mentioned above are not covered by this strategy.



\*Not Common Land

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# Site Designations

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The management of the countryside estate must take into consideration the various requirements due to designations of the land through either local or national designations. Esher Commons SSSI is a nationally important site for the insect life found within it, the majority of which is associated with the heathland habitats for which it is so well known.

Other designations which are pertinent to the management of our countryside sites are:

- Local Nature Reserves (LNR`s) which are designated by Elmbridge to highlight the local importance of a site and the wildlife which inhabits it. Also, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) and
- Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI`s) which are locally designated sites which contain features of substantive nature conservation value at a local level.
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is a recreational site, created to attract residents of new developments away from designated sites that are protected for their valuable ecology which in Elmbridge`s case is the adjacent Thames Basin Special Protection Area designated for its important bird life.

The sites are designated through a Local Sites Partnership (LSP), using an agreed set of criteria.

Esher Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the largest continuous area made up of a number of commons: Esher Common, West End Common, Arbrook Common, Fairmile Common and Oxshott Heath and cover 360 hectares.

Oxshott Heath has been managed by the Oxshott Heath Conservators (OHC) since 1904 when an act of Parliament was enacted to create that body to protect Oxshott Heath. Over time it has evolved and developed and is now part of the Esher Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) complex and is a nationally important area for biodiversity as well as being a valuable open space for residents. The OHC gave notice and disbanded as a management organisation from 1st October 2018 returning day to day management back to Elmbridge Borough Council.



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# Policy Context

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The new Countryside Strategy will help the Council in achieving its 2030 vision of a sustainable, thriving Elmbridge driven by the power of our community.

Some of the key actions within the new vision that will be supported by this strategy include reviewing the technology available to decarbonize the range of vehicles needed to maintain the countryside, looking at alternate methods for generating income sources from our open spaces and maximizing their use while at the same time creating the best environment for wildlife and biodiversity to thrive in our open spaces.

Although the strategy is specific to Elmbridge, and particularly the Council's countryside estate, it is intended to be complementary to and/or supportive of other related documents and initiatives, notably:

## Legal Framework;

- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
- Common Land Policy Statement DEFRA (2002)
- Commons Act (2006)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- DETR (June 1998).

## Council Objectives;

- Our 2030 Vision / Council Plan (2022/23): Sustainable; Community; Thriving, A High Performing Organisation
- Getting Elmbridge moving physical activity strategy (2021-2031)
- Elmbridge Borough Local Plan
- Elmbridge Core Strategy
- Climate Emergency declared by Elmbridge Borough Council July 2019
- Carbon reduction plan
- Green fleet
- Management Plans / prescriptions (Esher Commons / Brooklands)
- Biodiversity enhancement strategy
- Green and Blue Infrastructure Study 2022

## Other Objectives:

- The State of Surrey's Nature 2017

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## Risks / challenges

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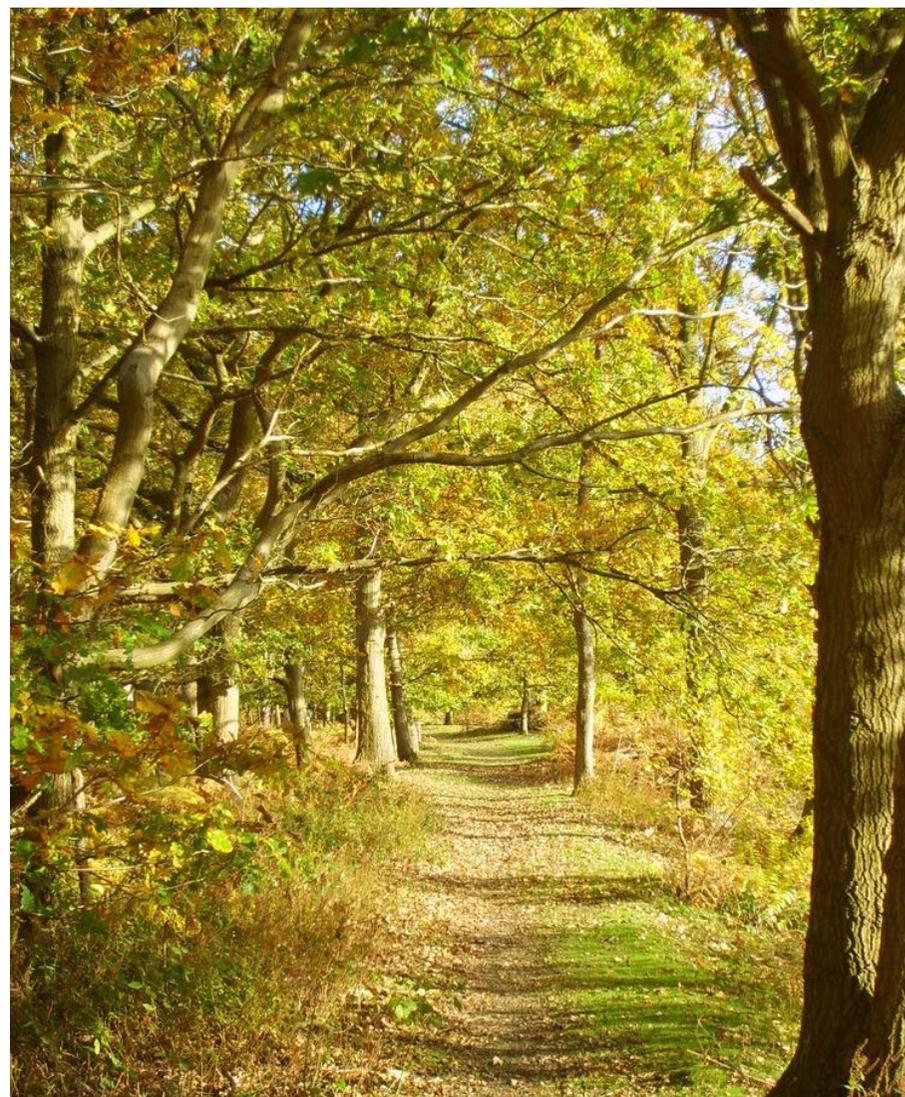
There are many risks, challenges, and opportunities within Elmbridge Countryside Estate.

The current risks and challenges that face the Countryside estate are primarily:

- Conflict between site usage, biodiversity conservation and between site users (i.e. walkers, cyclists, horse riders)
- Development on site boundaries
- Demand for recreation and access, population increases / post covid increase of use – more pressure on resources and infrastructure maintenance
- Invasive species introduced non-native pests and diseases.
- Public awareness of the countryside.
- Ensuring other policies support this strategy
- Sufficient resource.

Opportunities include:

- Biodiversity net gain – this will assist in securing funds to improve the biodiversity of sites for long term management.
- Increased interest in nature conservation – volunteers
- Positive management of habitats and habitat creation – tree planting, heathland / wetland restoration
- Consultation and working with the local community.
- National Nature Reserve declaration (Esher Common SSSI)



# Consultation

Public consultation was carried out during the summer of 2021 which allowed the public to highlight issues they were interested in. 655 people responded to the survey. The following is a summary of the consultation results of the satisfaction level with the management works carried out by the Countryside Team:

- 68% rated the work management works carried out by the Countryside Team as beneficial to users and 73% as beneficial to the landscape /wildlife/ environment
- Only 3.8% stated that the Countryside team’s management works had no benefit to users and 5.8% to the landscape/wildlife/environment.
- 27% had no opinions on any benefits related to the landscape/ wildlife/ environment of the Countryside team’s management works and 24% had no opinion on the Countryside team’s management works benefit to users.

Priorities that arose from the survey are highlighted below:

This largely aligns with the current capital programme of service improvements:

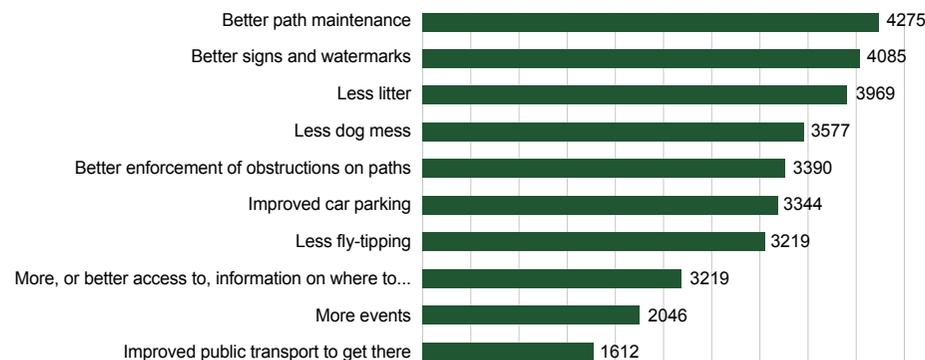
- Bin replacement programme (Completed 2022).
- Path maintenance / installation across identified sites (2021-2023).
- Noticeboard replacement programme (Programmed for 2023-2024).
- Improved site security where possible / identification of hotspots across Elmbridge owned sites (Ongoing).

Future improvement could include:

- Assessing accessibility and visibility of how to access our sites.
- Improved reporting systems for obstructions on our paths / direction to other authority land ownership.

For further detail please see Summary of Greenspaces and Countryside Sites Survey 2021, in Appendix 4.

## Priority ranking (Weighted averages)\*



\*The weighted average results from the number of times a priority is mentioned throughout the survey. Therefore this directly related to the importance of the priority to the respondents.

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# Key policy areas

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The Countryside Strategy for Elmbridge supports the Council's Vision for protecting and enhancing the Borough's valuable countryside resource.

The key policy areas of the strategy will be built upon the successes of the previous strategies, draw together the objectives set down in the Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan and the Countryside Stewardship agreement with the wider countryside and demonstrate how the Council should prepare and equip itself to face the challenges within the countryside over the coming years ahead; to state what its overall/policies and priorities will be and how it will work with its partners to achieve them.

There are many strands to this strategy that have been defined through consultation. Many are interlinked and inevitably there will be some overlap in the various policies. This is a strength as a cohesive policy framework, displaying the cross-benefits of different activities, for example, the healthy walks programme, horse riding, walking, orienteering, jogging etc....

Of most value has been the support of the public through the consultation meetings, together with the input from the representatives on the Countryside Consultative Group. An underlying factor will be the continual participation of the public in the future annual review of performance.

## Key Policy Areas can be defined as:

**Nature conservation and amenity (Biodiversity Improvement) - (NC)** continuing positive management and the protection and enhancement of landscape, habitats, and wildlife.

**Recreation and access (Accessibility) - (RA)** assessing demands; addressing changes in trends; examine and activate opportunities, particularly in the more urban parts of the Borough.

**Awareness and understanding - (AU)** building upon the present initiatives; maintaining a positive image of the Council's countryside estate; recognising the value of the estate as an educational resource.

**Community action - (FA)** working with all sectors of the local community to help them appreciate and 'take ownership' of their countryside with the possibility of a 'Friends of Elmbridge Commons' being formed.

**Sustainable Resource management - (SRM)** the protection of the general fabric of the estate; efficient and effective use of staff and finances; maximising opportunities for external funding; partnerships and relationships with external agencies and interest groups.

## Implementation

The success of this strategy, and the continuing good management of the Council's countryside areas, will depend upon:

- Maximising the skills and abilities of staff through ongoing development
- Engaging widespread community support and voluntary action
- Maximising external funding opportunities
- Assessing new ways to promote public awareness about the importance of Elmbridge's countryside
- Working with and encouraging local communities (groups and individuals) to take positive action in their own right
- Being responsive to community needs such as increasing patrols/ policing and education.

It needs to be noted that these policy areas are all interconnected with practical estate management providing benefits for nature conservation as well as public access and allowing the team to help educate the public through awareness and understanding. Although drawn out they need to be considered as part of the whole in the councils ongoing estate management.

It is important to stress that it is not the aim of this document to set out a plan of the resources available or commit itself to a fixed rolling programme of activities. The purpose of the strategy is, however, to set for the Council some very clear objectives for its work in countryside areas, with the rationale as to why they are considered priorities.

In terms of the implementation of the strategy the final element is therefore the production of an agreed programme of actions and projects that meet the aims of the strategy, and within the resources and skills available. It is clear from the public consultation that it is critical to ensure good promotion and understanding by the local community of the agreed programme. Detailed proposals will be developed on a yearly basis and linked to budgetary opportunities and constraints. These will be identified in an annual programme including setting

targets and providing a focus for works on the ground and giving a clear picture of what is planned each year and how well we achieve this, which will be agreed with the Portfolio Holder and approved through the Councils Countryside Consultative Group which will recommend on to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.

The Action Plan will also be a basis for providing costing and will further support bids for external funding and the promotion of best value in the delivery of the countryside service. Further detailed reports and management plans will be prepared as the need arises to look at the continuing development of site or topic specific areas of activity.

Priorities in delivering the strategy will be reviewed annually and as a guiding principle will be:

- Spread approximately equally across the five key policy areas, but placing nature conservation as a first priority where wildlife and habitats are seen to be threatened
- Targeted to maximise new grant aid and funding programmes as they arise, as well as project opportunities in the countryside
- Focused on those projects which spread greatest public benefit and added value through partnerships and community involvement
- Responsive to the needs of the local community and visitors in enjoyment of the countryside.



# **Policy objectives 2023 – 2028 and action plan**

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# Nature conservation and amenity (Biodiversity Improvement) (NC)

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## Overall Aim

**“To improve and maintain the countryside estate, in order to protect and enhance the landscape, its habitats and wildlife, and to promote best practice in nature conservation management.”**

The Borough’s countryside estate covers approximately 625 hectares and contains a rich variety of landscapes, habitats, and wildlife. There is no doubt that these areas contribute significantly to the overall quality and attractiveness of the Borough. Much of the estate is Common Land and about two-thirds is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. Historically, most of the Commons would have been open grass or heathland with some scrub but since the end of the Second World War and the cessation of traditional uses of the land, such as coppicing and grazing, there has been a relatively rapid re-colonisation of many areas by woodland. In addition to the natural re-invasion of trees there was, in the 1950’s, planting of large areas of coniferous plantations for the purposes of commercial forestry.

The council has therefore, over the last 30 years, been addressing this issue. Two main areas of activity have been the woodland management programme, and heathland restoration. The woodland management has included the thinning of plantations and broad-leaved trees, and the reintroduction of coppicing. To date 53.6 hectares of heathland has been restored and much has been done to protect and enhance this important habitat on the Elmbridge Commons and revive populations of wildlife species that depend upon it, such as the Silver-studded Blue butterfly. Other habitat management works have included restoration of ponds and bogs, and the maintenance of grassland areas.

Other countryside areas that have come under the management of the Commons Team will necessitate the careful consideration of the particular issues, and problems associated with them in particular the return of Oxshott Heath to council management following the dissolving of the Oxshott Heath Conservators. Four of the areas, Molesey Heath, Desborough Island and Stokes Field together with Claygate Common have all been designated as Local Nature Reserves. The Council recognises the importance of those landscapes and habitats of national and regional significance, as well as those smaller features and local characteristics, which the community so value.



## PROPOSED TARGETS: Nature conservation and amenity

	What	By Who	When
NC1	Maintain and improve the countryside estate to develop and provide a mosaic of habitats and rich variety of wildlife using all available conservation management techniques including conservation grazing where appropriate. Creating the best environment for wildlife and biodiversity to thrive in our open spaces.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC2	Work with and support local conservation organisations such as the Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Lower Mole Partnership, to provide opportunities for community involvement and cross boundary management.	<b>Countryside Team / External partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC3	Work alongside local and regional wildlife conservation organisations to ensure up-to-date knowledge of wildlife resources and consult with them over opportunities as well as potential threats.	<b>Countryside Team / External partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC4	Encourage other relevant Council policies and practices to reflect good nature conservation management, such as the maintenance of other open spaces, commons verges, and hedgerows.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC5	Deliver the agreed targets in the Countryside Stewardship agreement. See Appendix 1.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC6	Monitor provision of litter bins on the Countryside estate to ensure they are in the most appropriate place and work with Elmbridge`s grounds maintenance contractor to ensure efficient servicing of existing bins.	<b>Countryside Team / Green spaces Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC7	Identify and enable tree planting and biodiversity improvement / enhancement within management plans.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
NC8	Identify and enable Biodiversity Net Gain projects with the planning department, where suitable and available.	<b>Countryside Team / Planning Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>

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## Recreation and access (Accessibility) (RA)

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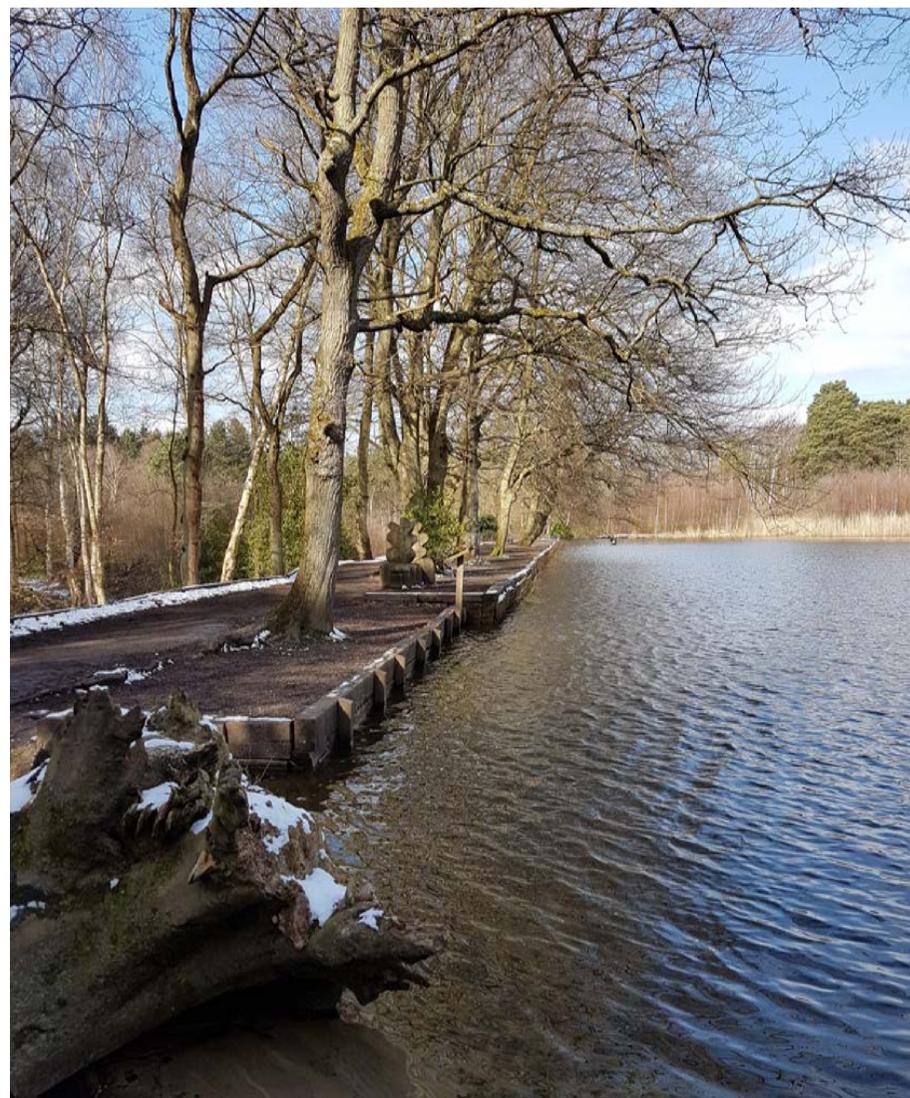
### Overall aim

**“To extend opportunities for informal recreation and improve the quality of provision and accessibility to meet the increasing needs of a wide range of activities and abilities.”**

The countryside faces unprecedented changes in recreation activity and pressure for access, which will increasingly affect the way it is managed. During the past two decades there has been a dramatic increase in the public’s mobility through the private car, popularity of rapidly developing new outdoor pursuits, and greater demand for access to open spaces, particularly around centres of population.

The Countryside is also a valuable facility to support the wider health and wellbeing of the community (Getting Elmbridge moving Physical Activity Strategy (2021-2031)) and access to open space. Whether this is through formal or informal walking activities or simply the mental health benefits of accessing green spaces, the Elmbridge Countryside has a valuable role to play.

Despite this, national surveys show that for a significant proportion of the population there are still fundamental barriers, which discourage more frequent visits to the countryside. Reasons can include lack of access to a car, lack of suitable alternative routes to countryside sites (such as cycleways), and physical barriers, which hinder the enjoyment of access to the countryside by people with disabilities or families with young children.



## PROPOSED TARGETS: Recreation and access

	What	By Who	When
RA1	Work with representative bodies and the public to improve accessibility to recreation facilities and encourage participation by as wide a range of the population as possible, including those with special needs, e.g. Surrey Coalition of Disabled people / Surrey Nature Partnership	<b>Countryside Team / External Partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA2	Give priority to tackling access problems arising from recreational pressure at particular sites, and take action to control and prevent damage to habitats and wildlife.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA3	Redraft and provide online Commons guides/maps for Esher Commons site of special scientific interest (SSSI).	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr1</b>
RA4	Ensure that work undertaken, and materials used on recreation and access projects are to a high standard of design, give consideration to special needs, and are appropriate to their location.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA5	Plan and develop recreation and access facilities that link with existing facilities and public transport provision as they develop locally.	<b>Countryside Team / External Partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA6	Continue and maintain improvements to horse rides, footpaths, and road crossings, including signage at horse ride entry points.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA7	Monitor concerns on dog fouling and professional dog walkers to see if a policy on control is required based on current legal framework.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA8	Undertake improvements to car parks surfaces using agreed materials subject to available financial resources.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA9	Review income opportunities at Countryside sites following the Ignite review, maximizing the sites usage.	<b>Countryside Team/Greenspaces Manager</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 3</b>
RA10	Fire PSPO - following consultation implement, monitor, and enforce.	<b>Countryside Team / Enforcement Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
RA11	Update Identified Management Plans Brooklands, Stokes Field, and review accessibility	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>
RA12	Update existing management plans as required ensuring a review of accessibility.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 2 – Yr 5</b>
RA13	Ensure that the EBC website provides accessible content regarding the Countryside estate	<b>Countryside Team/Communication Team</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>
RA14	Work with Natural England to create National Nature Reserve (NNR) covering Oxshott Heath	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 3</b>

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# Awareness and Understanding (AU)

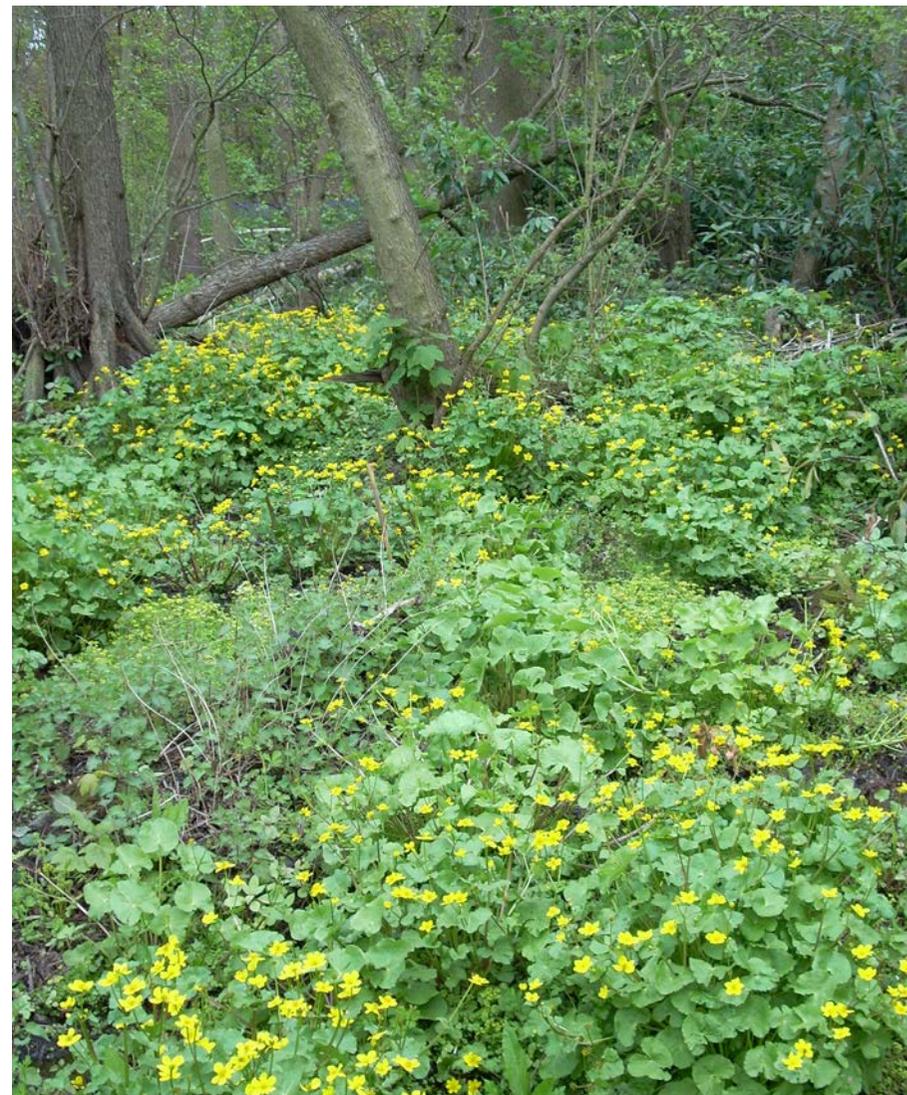
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## Overall aim

**“To raise and maintain public awareness and understanding of the countryside and the work of the Council’s countryside management services, and provide information about facilities, opportunities and activities.”**

The popularity of visiting the countryside is undisputed. In 2000 a Countryside Agency Leisure Day Visits survey showed that over 80% of the population in England had taken a leisure day within the previous two weeks with 24% of those trips to the countryside; the most common activities included outings, picnics and short walks. Comparative surveys support the importance of open spaces close to centres of population, which provide countryside experiences for that population; fresh air and natural surroundings, and facilities for informal recreation - all close to hand.

There is a significant proportion of the population with a low level of awareness of these sites 20.1%. This barrier prevents a considerable number of the community from enjoying and participating in the countryside, of gaining any understanding of it, and what connection it has with their lives.



## PROPOSED TARGETS: Awareness and understanding

	What	By Who	When
AU1	Develop and deliver countryside information to the public through a broad range of interpretative facilities, displays, leaflets, activities, advice, and events, including use of the Internet and provide information on management activities likely to be of concern to residents and visitors.	<b>Countryside Team / Communication Team / Greenspaces Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
AU2	Develop a commitment to ‘access for all’ in providing information to a wide range of visitors and special needs through consultation with relevant organisations e.g. Surrey Coalition of Disabled people.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
AU3	Promote public awareness through a variety of techniques, such as guided walks and illustrated talks.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
AU4	Encourage further research work and projects by interest groups, colleges, and students, to develop knowledge and understanding of the countryside estate.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
AU5	Encourage feeling of ownership and protection amongst local residents, and users by involving them in the management of the Commons through Volunteer groups meetings. (3 meetings per annum).	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>

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# Community Action (CA)

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## Overall Aim

**“To enable the involvement of the local community to act in improving and caring for the countryside and to further develop and harness the potential of the voluntary network.”**

In the last 20 years or so, there has been an enormous growth in the public’s interest and awareness about environmental and conservation issues at a national and local level. This interest has encouraged a major increase in subscription to countryside and environmental organisations and interest groups, as well as a willingness to get involved and take action. These changes in attitude represent a greater collective responsibility for our environment from all walks of life, both those who live in towns and cities together with those who live in or close to the countryside.

Clearly the benefits of community action go far beyond the task itself. Such action increases a sense of community spirit and involvement, contact with others, an increased pride in the local environment and a raised awareness of the countryside. Most tasks can be undertaken as they involve minimum skills and mean that many people can participate. Children are particularly receptive to learn, get involved and are our citizens of the future.

The Commons Team has already been active and successful in harnessing the energies and enthusiasm of the local community and has either directly coordinated or worked in conjunction with other management bodies such as the Lower Mole Partnership on a wide variety of initiatives. These have included tree planting, clearing litter and rubbish, restoring ponds, and repairing footpaths.

The opportunities are considerable, but the Council should not see its role as taking the lead in all such initiatives itself. Much will depend on the enthusiasm and commitment of local people to take action both themselves as well as in partnership with others, and on the support and help they receive from those partners.

The Council will continue to mobilise and rally further community action, to work with voluntary organisations and local interest groups, and act as a catalyst to promote new partnership initiatives through meetings, annual reports, and publicity.



## PROPOSED TARGETS: Community Action

	What	By Who	When
CA1	Maintain and develop links with local conservation and community groups, and encourage their participation in countryside management activities, e.g. through local residents' associations.	<b>Countryside Team / External Partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
CA2	Foster and maintain partnerships with statutory bodies, agencies, and other local countryside managers to work towards common aims, e.g. Natural England & Forestry Commission.	<b>Countryside Team / External Partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
CA3	Encourage the participation and involvement of visitors to the countryside in conservation activities – 3 volunteer events per year.	<b>Countryside Team / External Partners</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
CA4	Highlight positive community initiatives which care for the countryside and promote them through the local media, e.g. Elmbridge Common Volunteers.	<b>Countryside Team / Communications Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
CA5	Encourage community involvement in interpretative work, especially volunteers, and special interest groups.	<b>Countryside Team / Communications Team</b>	<b>Yr 2</b>

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# Sustainable Resource Management (SRM)

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## Overall aim

**“To continually improve the quality, cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the countryside management service and ensure the integrity of the countryside estate.”**

The objectives within the other key policy areas can only be achieved with the availability of, and effective and efficient sustainable management of necessary resources. This includes finances, suitably trained and qualified staff, adequate levels of equipment and machinery (including sustainable technology), and a clear remit provided by the Countryside Stewardship agreement, Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan, the Countryside Strategy, and the guidance of the Countryside Consultative Group. There is also the need to ensure the basic integrity of the countryside resource itself - the general fabric of the estate and protect it from unwanted use, abuse, conflicts of interest, and external proposals that may adversely affect it.

The Council’s countryside estate is being subjected to ever increasing amounts of pressure, examples include greater recreational use as patterns of leisure activity change, and development pressures from highway improvements, easements, and wayleaves. This can result in problems such as conflicts between different types of user and possible encroachments of land. External factors can, and do, have ‘knock on’ effects. The Landfill Tax, and increased charges for tipping waste, can encourage more rubbish to be dumped on open spaces.

Much has been achieved regarding securing income through sources such as grant aid and sponsorship but, with the continuing pressure on revenue budgets, an adequate base level of resources is required to meet the requirements of increased management activities.

The present complement of staff involved with the management and maintenance of the Council’s countryside sites is well qualified, experienced, and multi-skilled, and has achieved an enormous amount in the last 10 years.

The Council is committed to providing a professional countryside management service that meets the needs of visitors, whilst protecting the general fabric of the estate and within the requirements of good financial management practices.



## PROPOSED TARGETS: Sustainable Resource management

	What	By Who	When
SRM1	Review portfolio of sites presently managed within the terms of reference of the Countryside Consultative Group, and only take on management of other sites where appropriate resources are available.	<b>Countryside Team / CCG</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM2	Manage existing budgets effectively and seek to maximise income from external funding, including new sources, where this does not prejudice other aims.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM3	Encourage compliance with byelaws and monitor for major breaches such as encroachment and rubbish dumping, and initiate enforcement action where appropriate. Review legislation regarding encroachment and rubbish.	<b>Countryside Team / AMPS</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM4	Take action, including press release information against unofficial car parking on the countryside estate but consider the provision of parking for residents at sites where no suitable alternative exists.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM5	Continue to deter fly tipping and abandoned vehicles on the countryside estate, by arranging for prompt removal and by physical measures such as height barriers and posts.	<b>Countryside Team / Enforcement Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM6	Take a general presumption against additional easements and wayleaves on the countryside estate unless there can be demonstrated the gain of net benefits.	<b>Countryside Team / AMPS</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM7	Review levels of equipment, machinery, and vehicles for present Countryside Team, to enable work to be undertaken effectively and efficiently by the team.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1, 3 &amp; 5</b>
SRM8	Continue to train and develop staff, to maintain a high-quality professional delivery of service.	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1 – Yr 5</b>
SRM9	Investigate alternate technologies to decarbonize the Land Rovers by 27/28	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 3 – Yr 5</b>
SRM10	Investigate alternate technologies to decarbonize small equipment by 27/28	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 3 – Yr 5</b>
SRM11	Update Identified Management Plans Brooklands, Stokes Field and review sustainable resource management	<b>Countryside Team</b>	<b>Yr 1</b>

For more information contact Hamish White, Countryside Officer, telephone [01372 474579](tel:01372474579) or email [countryside@elmbridge.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@elmbridge.gov.uk)

You can download a copy of the Countryside Strategy from our website at [www.elmbridge.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/countryside)

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# Glossary and abbreviations

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**Esher Commons SSSI Restoration and Management Plan:**

Management plan covers the 360ha of Esher Commons SSSI, comprising Esher Common, West End Common, Arbrook Common, Fairmile Common, Oxshott Heath and Winterdown Wood.

**Countryside Stewardship agreement:**

Countryside Stewardship provides financial incentives for farmers, foresters, and land managers to look after and improve the environment. The agreement is with the Forestry Commission and Natural England to provide conservation management in line with prescribed outputs.

**Forestry Commission:**

The Forestry Commission is a non-ministerial government department responsible for the management of publicly owned forests and the regulation of both public and private forestry in England.

**Natural England:**

Natural England is a non-departmental public body in the United Kingdom sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It is responsible for ensuring that England's natural environment, including its land, flora and fauna, freshwater and marine environments, geology, and soils, are protected and improved. It also has a responsibility to help people enjoy, understand, and access the natural environment.

**Countryside Consultative Group (CCG):**

The Countryside Consultative Group acts as a forum where issues relevant to the implementation of the Council's Countryside Strategy can be raised and provides the opportunity for liaison between its members on good practice in countryside management and the exchange of information.

**Green space:**

Green space is undeveloped land, not necessarily provided for formal recreation or public amenity, which makes a positive visual and environmental contribution to the town.

**Open space:**

Land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground.

**Common:**

Common land is land owned by a person or collectively by a number of persons, over which other persons have certain common rights which in this case is the right of access.

**Heathland:**

Heaths are wide open landscapes dominated by plants such as Heathers, Gorse and heathland grasses and punctuated by scattered trees such as Silver Birch. They are historic landscapes and are essentially a man-made habitat.



# Appendices

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# Appendix 1: Countryside Stewardship Agreement

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Mr Hamish White  
Elmbridge Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
High Street  
Esher  
Surrey  
KT10 9SD

Natural England  
Countryside Stewardship Delivery  
Services  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, North Gate House  
21-23 Valpy Street  
Reading, Berkshire  
RG1 1AF  
Telephone 02080 267 254  
Email  
ts.reading@naturalengland.org.uk  
www.gov.uk/natural-england

Date 08/02/2019  
SBI Ref 107133110

Dear Mr White

#### Countryside Stewardship Agreement Offer

**Esher Commons Complex**  
SBI / Agreement reference: 107133110 / 620433 (Please quote in future correspondence)

We are pleased to confirm that the final checks relating to your application have been completed and we would like to offer you a Countryside Stewardship Agreement.

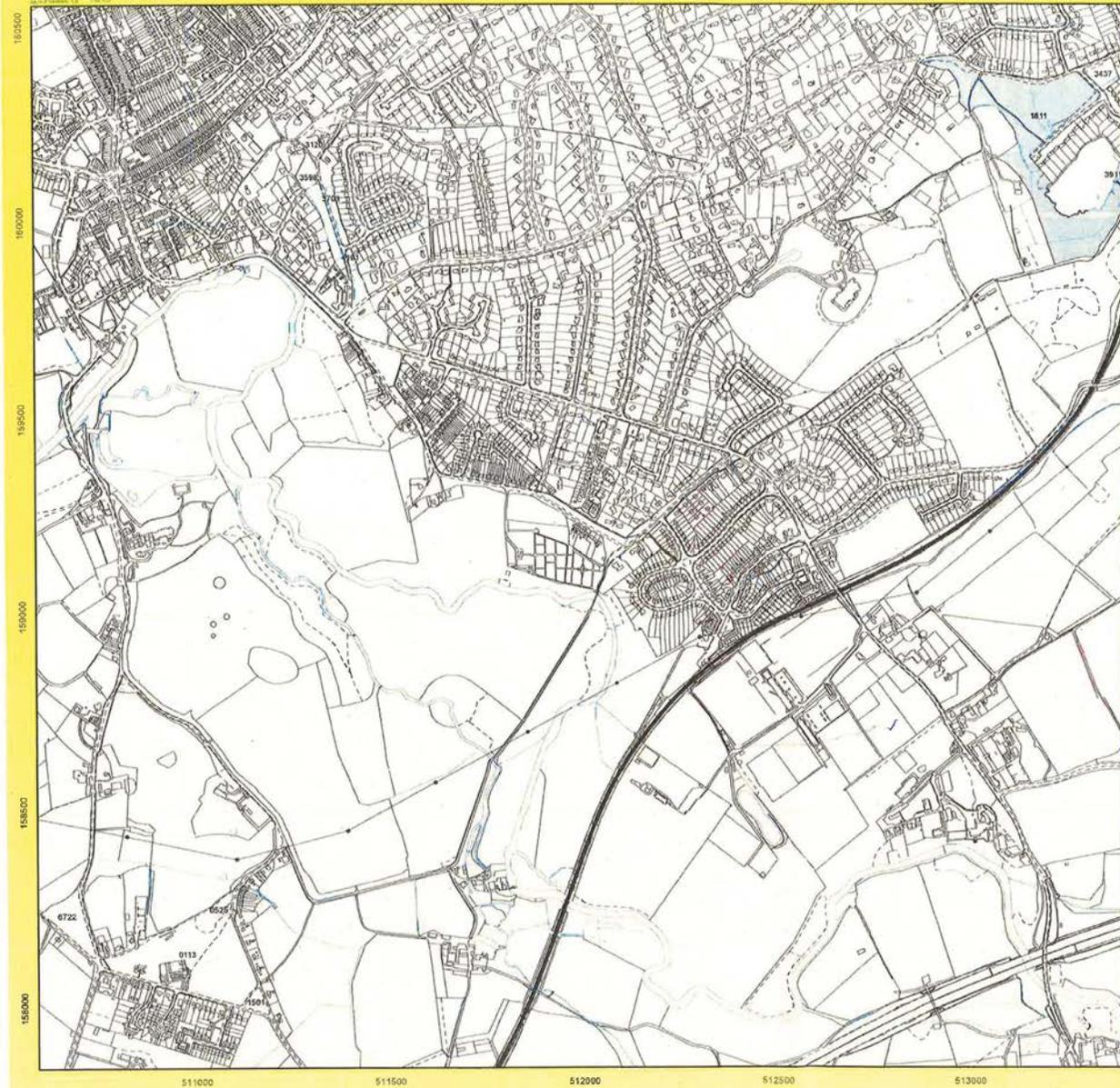
This agreement will be effective from **1 January 2019**.

The Countryside Stewardship Agreement we are offering you consists of the following documents:

- Countryside Stewardship Terms and Conditions, which are set out in Annex 1 of the appropriate version of the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Manual, marked as applying to all Higher Tier agreements commencing on 1 January 2019, which is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-tier-manual-for-1-january-2019-agreements-countryside-stewardship>, and;
- Agreement Document and the supporting documents specified in it which are enclosed with this letter.

In relation to the Baseline Evaluation of Higher Tier Agreements (BEHTA) which is one of the supporting documents, the enclosed BEHTA map displays the environmental features at which management is directed. The accompanying key explains how the codes used on that map relate to the features recorded. Please note that removal or damage to a BEHTA feature would be an agreement breach except where this is expressly permitted under the agreement.

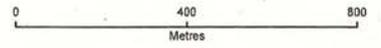
Please read each part of the proposed agreement carefully to ensure that you are fully aware of the commitments that you will have to undertake during and after the period covered by your agreement.



### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Assigned colour	Options	Applicants colour match
Green line	BE Management of hedgerows	Green line
Blue line	WT Management of ditches of high environmental value	Blue line
Yellow line	WD Woodland edges	Yellow line
Green circle with '6'	BE Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	Green circle with '6'
Red box	BE Options for orchards and trees	Red box
Yellow box	WD Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	Yellow box
Orange star	HS Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	Orange star
Orange hatched box	HS Options to protect historic environment features	Orange hatched box
White box with text	AB,SW,WT Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	White box with text
Yellow box	AR Options for arable land	Yellow box
Blue hatched box	SW Options to protect soil and water	Blue hatched box
Yellow hatched box	GS Options for grassland	Yellow hatched box
Pink box	UP Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	Pink box
Orange box	LH Lowland heathland options	Orange box
Blue box	CT Inter-tidal and coastal options	Blue box
Blue hatched box	WT Wetland options	Blue hatched box
Black dot	WT Management of ponds < 100 sqm	Black dot
Blue hatched box	OP,OR,OT Options for organic land	Blue hatched box
Black circle with 'FG12'	FG12 Capital item	Black circle with 'FG12'
Black circle with 'BN'	BN Capital item	Black circle with 'BN'
Black circle with '5678'	5678 Field number	Black circle with '5678'
Grey box	Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)	Grey box

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP6, UP3

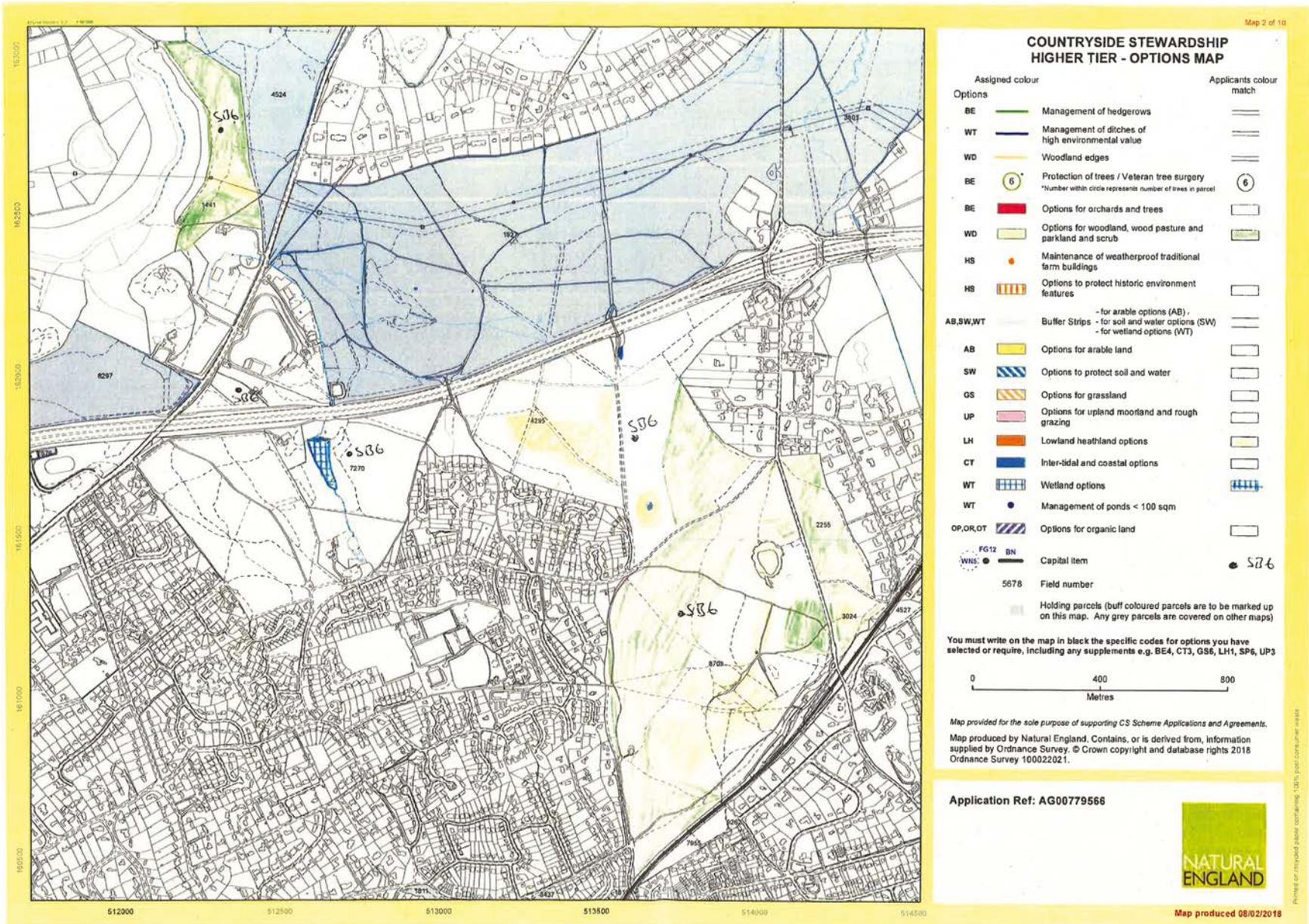


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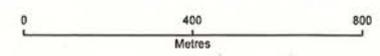




### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Assigned colour	Applicants colour match
BE  Management of hedgerows	
WT  Management of ditches of high environmental value	
WD  Woodland edges	
BE  Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	
BE  Options for orchards and trees	
WD  Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	
HS  Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	
HS  Options to protect historic environment features	
AB,SW,WT  Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	
AB  Options for arable land	
SW  Options to protect soil and water	
GS  Options for grassland	
UP  Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	
LH  Lowland heathland options	
CT  Inter-tidal and coastal options	
WT  Wetland options	
WT  Management of ponds < 100 sqm	
OP,OR,OT  Options for organic land	
FG12 BN  Capital item	
5678  Field number	
Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)	

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP6, UP3

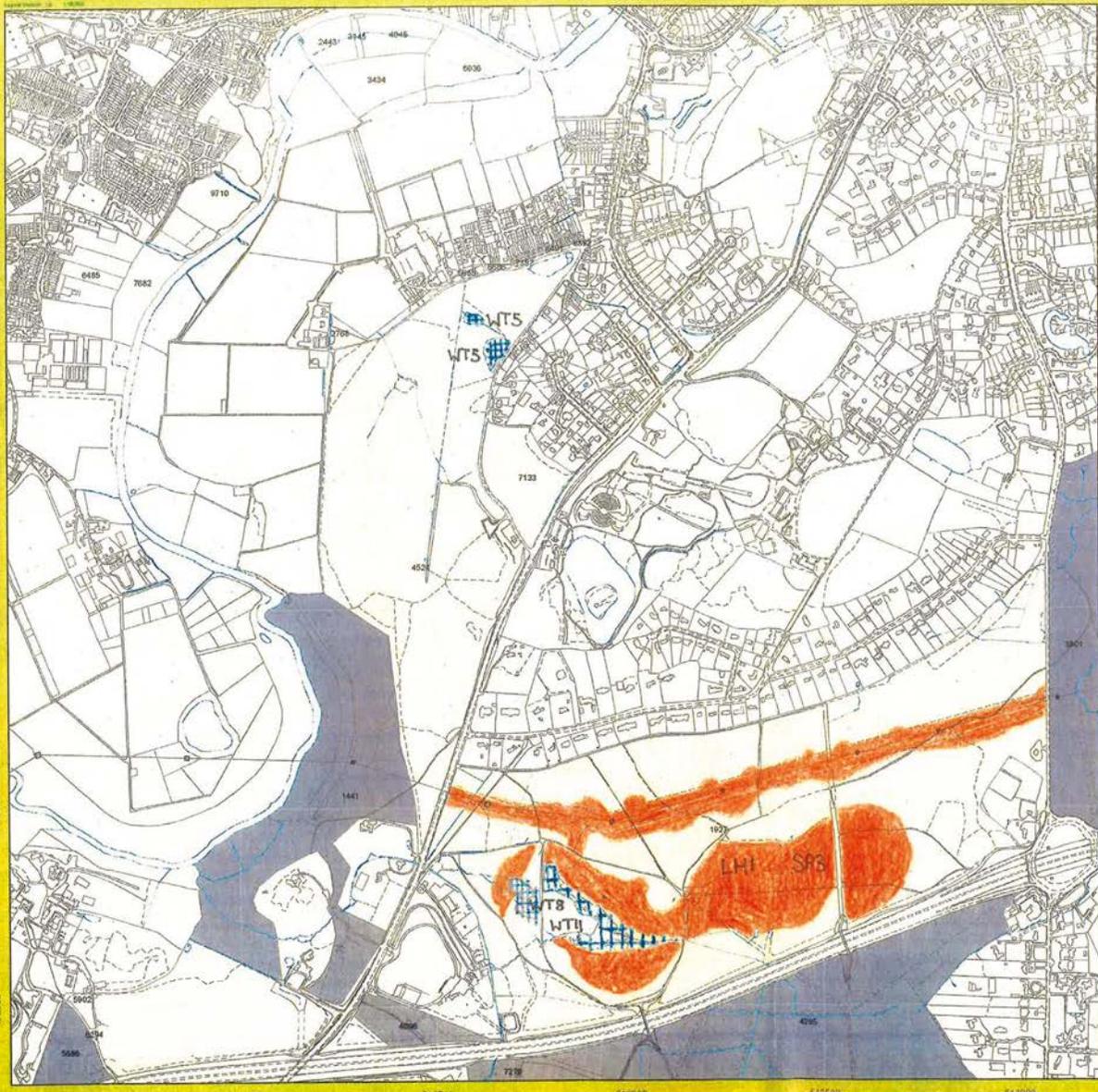


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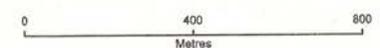
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### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Assigned colour	Applicants colour match
<b>Options</b>	
BE  Management of hedgerows	
WT  Management of ditches of high environmental value	
WD  Woodland edges	
BE  Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	
BE  Options for orchards and trees	
WD  Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	
HS  Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	
HS  Options to protect historic environment features	
AB,SW,WT  Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	
AB  Options for arable land	
SW  Options to protect soil and water	
GS  Options for grassland	
UP  Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	
LH  Lowland heathland options	
CT  Inter-tidal and coastal options	
WT  Wetland options	
WT  Management of ponds < 100 sqm	
OP,OR,OT  Options for organic land	
Capital item	
Field number	
Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)	

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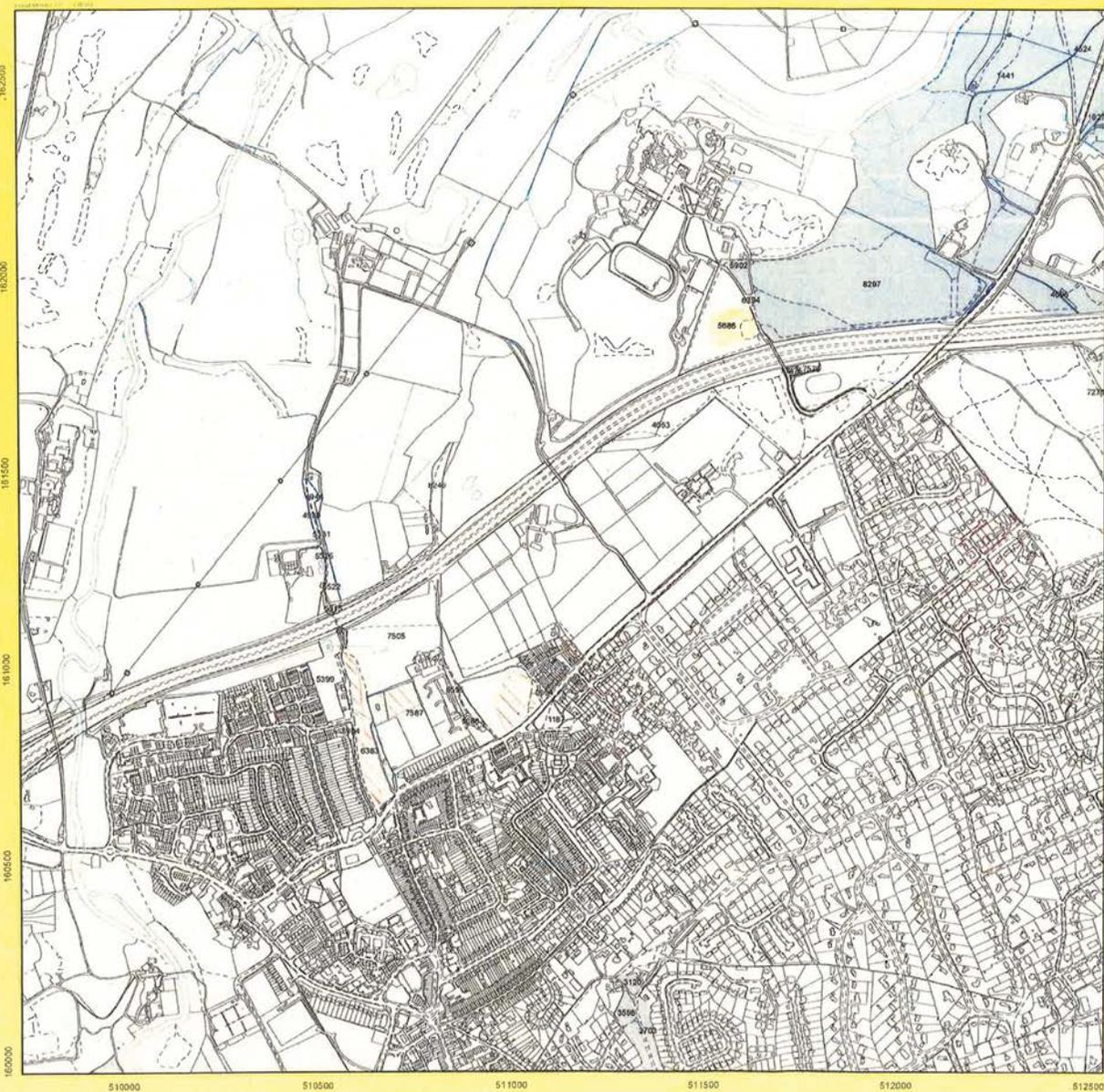


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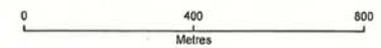
Map produced 08/02/2018



### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Assigned colour		Applicants colour match
Options		
BE	Management of hedgerows	=====
WT	Management of ditches of high environmental value	=====
WD	Woodland edges	=====
BE	Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	(6)
BE	Options for orchards and trees	□
WD	Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	□
HS	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	□
HS	Options to protect historic environment features	□
AB,SW,WT	Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	□
AB	Options for arable land	□
SW	Options to protect soil and water	□
GS	Options for grassland	□
UP	Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	□
LH	Lowland heathland options	□
CT	Inter-tidal and coastal options	□
WT	Wetland options	□
WT	Management of ponds < 100 sqm	●
OP,OR,OT	Options for organic land	□
PG12	Capital item	●
BN	Capital item	●
5678	Field number	
	Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)	

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP6, UP3



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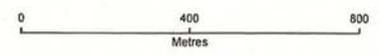
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### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Assigned colour		Applicants colour match
Options		
BE	Management of hedgerows	—
WT	Management of ditches of high environmental value	—
WD	Woodland edges	—
BE	Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	⊙
BE	Options for orchards and trees	□
WD	Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	■
HS	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	□
HS	Options to protect historic environment features	□
AB,SW,WT	Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	—
AB	Options for arable land	□
SW	Options to protect soil and water	□
GS	Options for grassland	□
UP	Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	□
LH	Lowland heathland options	□
CT	Inter-tidal and coastal options	□
WT	Wetland options	□
WT	Management of ponds < 100 sqm	●
OP,OR,OT	Options for organic land	□
FG12	BN	Capital item
WNS	●	Field number
5678		Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP8, UP3



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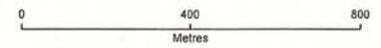
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### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Options	Assigned colour	Applicants colour match
BE	Management of hedgerows	<input type="checkbox"/>
WT	Management of ditches of high environmental value	<input type="checkbox"/>
WD	Woodland edges	<input type="checkbox"/>
BE	Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BE	Options for orchards and trees	<input type="checkbox"/>
WD	Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	<input type="checkbox"/>
HS	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>
HS	Options to protect historic environment features	<input type="checkbox"/>
AB,SW,WT	Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	<input type="checkbox"/>
AB	Options for arable land	<input type="checkbox"/>
SW	Options to protect soil and water	<input type="checkbox"/>
GS	Options for grassland	<input type="checkbox"/>
UP	Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	<input type="checkbox"/>
LH	Lowland heathland options	<input type="checkbox"/>
CT	Inter-tidal and coastal options	<input type="checkbox"/>
WT	Wetland options	<input type="checkbox"/>
WT	Management of ponds < 100 sqm	<input type="checkbox"/>
OP,DR,OT	Options for organic land	<input type="checkbox"/>
FG12 BN	Capital item	<input type="checkbox"/>
5678	Field number	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)	<input type="checkbox"/>

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP6, UP3



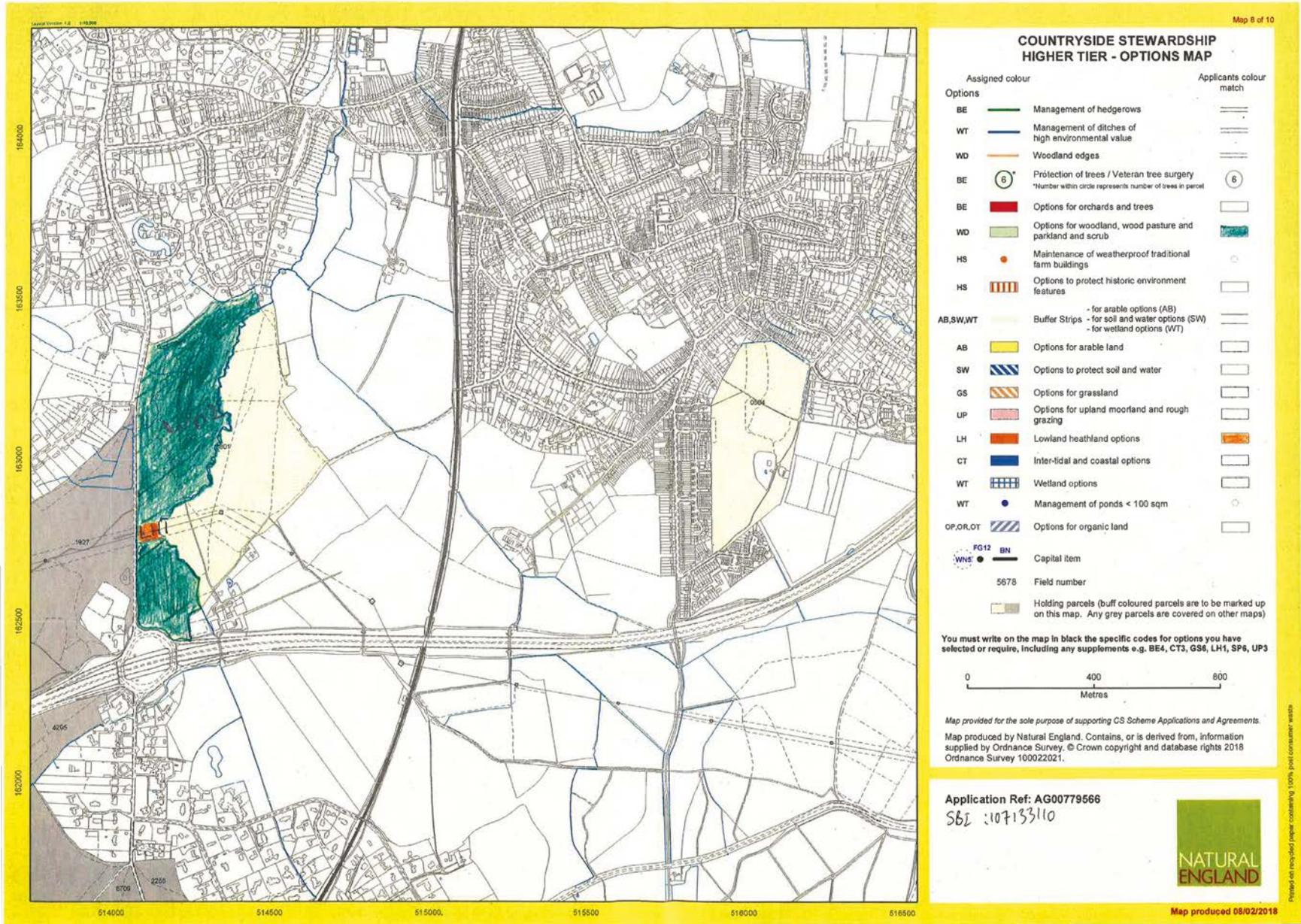
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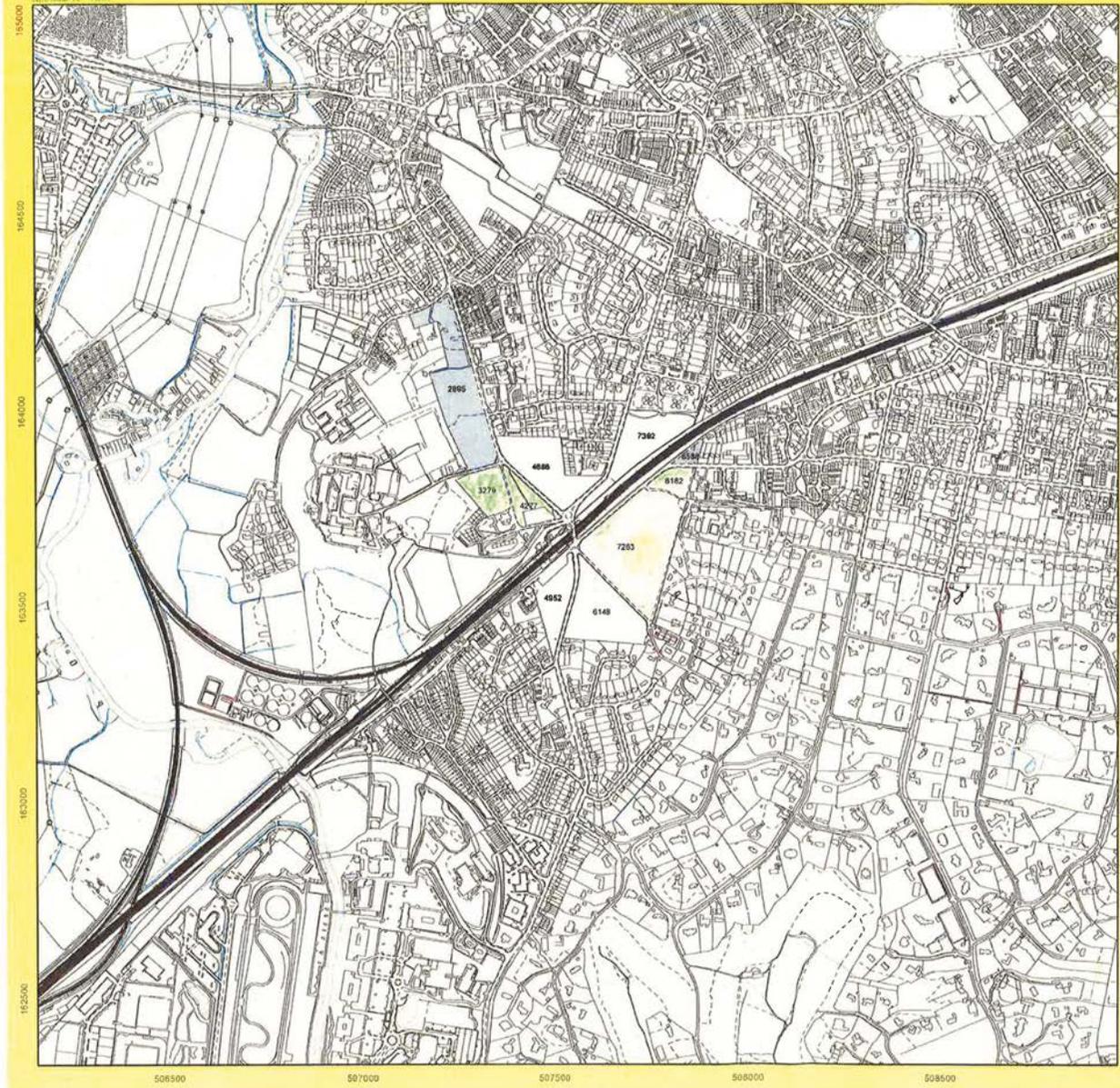
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Map produced 08/02/2018

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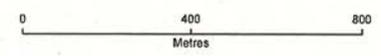




### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Options	Assigned colour	Applicants colour match
BE	Management of hedgerows	—
WT	Management of ditches of high environmental value	—
WD	Woodland edges	—
BE	Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	(6)
BE	Options for orchards and trees	□
WD	Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	■
HS	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	□
HS	Options to protect historic environment features	□
AB,SW,WT	Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	—
AB	Options for arable land	□
SW	Options to protect soil and water	□
GS	Options for grassland	□
UP	Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	□
LH	Lowland heathland options	□
CT	Inter-tidal and coastal options	□
WT	Wetland options	□
WT	Management of ponds < 100 sqm	●
OP,OR,OT	Options for organic land	□
FG12 BN	Capital item	●
5678	Field number	□
	Holding parcels (buff coloured parcels are to be marked up on this map. Any grey parcels are covered on other maps)	□

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP6, UP3



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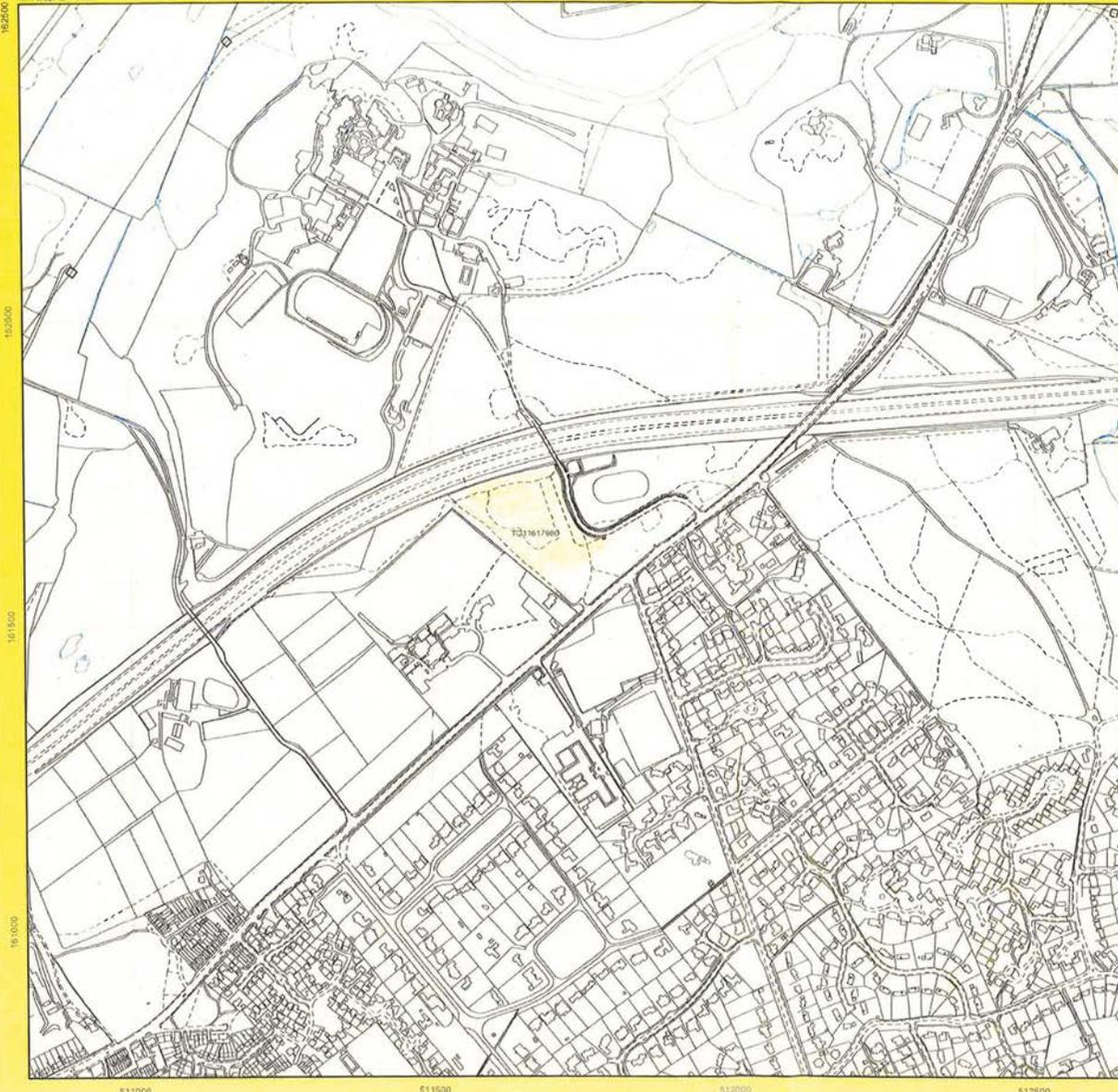
Application Ref: AG00779566



Map produced 08/02/2018

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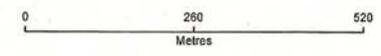




### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Options	Assigned colour	Applicants colour match
BE	Management of hedgerows	▬▬▬
WT	Management of ditches of high environmental value	▬▬▬
WD	Woodland edges	▬▬▬
BE	Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	⊙ (6)
BE	Options for orchards and trees	▭
WD	Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	▭
HS	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	▭
HS	Options to protect historic environment features	▭
AB,SW,WT	- for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	▬▬▬
AB	Options for arable land	▭
SW	Options to protect soil and water	▭
GS	Options for grassland	▭
UP	Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	▭
LH	Lowland heathland options	▭
CT	Inter-tidal and coastal options	▭
WT	Wetland options	▭
WT	Management of ponds < 100 sqm	●
OP,OR,OT	Options for organic land	▭
FG12	BN	Capital item
WNS	●	Field number
SX12345678		Holding parcels

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP6, UP3



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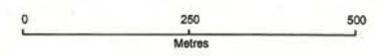


### COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP HIGHER TIER - OPTIONS MAP

Assigned colour	Options	Applicants colour match
Green	Management of hedgerows	Green line
Blue	Management of ditches of high environmental value	Blue line
Yellow	Woodland edges	Yellow line
Green with circle 6	Protection of trees / Veteran tree surgery <small>*Number within circle represents number of trees in parcel</small>	Green circle with 6
Red	Options for orchards and trees	Red box
Yellow	Options for woodland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub	Yellow box
Black	Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings	Black line
Orange	Options to protect historic environment features	Orange box
Blue/White	Buffer Strips - for arable options (AB) - for soil and water options (SW) - for wetland options (WT)	Blue/White box
Yellow	Options for arable land	Yellow box
Blue/White	Options to protect soil and water	Blue/White box
Orange	Options for grassland	Orange box
Pink	Options for upland moorland and rough grazing	Pink box
Orange	Lowland heathland options	Orange box
Blue	Inter-tidal and coastal options	Blue box
Blue/White	Wetland options	Blue/White box
Black	Management of ponds < 100sqm	Black line
Blue/White	Options for organic land	Blue/White box

**FG12 BN** Capital item ● 316  
**SX12345678** Field number  
 Holding parcels

You must write on the map in black the specific codes for options you have selected or require, including any supplements e.g. BE4, CT3, GS6, LH1, SP8, UP3



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Application Ref: AG00779566



Map produced 08/04/2018

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## Appendix 2: Countryside Consultative Group Terms of Reference

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### The Countryside Consultative Group:

1. Acts as a forum where issues relevant to the implementation of the Council's Countryside Strategy can be raised and provides the opportunity for liaison between its members on good practice in countryside management and the exchange of information.
2. Has the following responsibilities linked to the Council's Countryside Strategy:
  - the annual review of performance against the Strategy;
  - advises Cabinet on the recommended annual action plan and performance indicators.
3. Where appropriate, consider and comment upon proposals or plans affecting sites adjacent to the areas covered by these Terms of Reference.
4. Areas of land covered by these Terms of Reference:
  - Arbrook Common
  - Brookland Community Park
  - Claygate Common
  - Desborough Island\*
  - Ditton Common and Weston Green
  - Downside Common
  - Esher Common
  - Fairmile Common
  - Hersham Riverside Park
  - Leigh Hill Road Common

- Littleheath Common
  - Littleworth Common
  - Molesey Heath\*
  - Old Common
  - Oxshott Heath
  - Stokes Field\*
  - Telegraph Hill\*
  - Tilt Common
  - West End Common and Winterdown Woods
  - Weybridge Heath
5. The membership of the Group is as follows:
    - Elmbridge Borough Council Members: seven Councillors in accordance with the political composition of the Council.
    - (The Cabinet Member holding the portfolio for Leisure and Culture as well as any other Member of the Council, may attend meetings of the Group but not vote).
    - One representative of each of the following bodies or interest groups:
      - Equestrian representative
      - Forestry Commission
      - Lower Mole Partnership
      - Natural England
      - Oxshott Heath Conservators
      - Ramblers' Association
      - Surrey Wildlife Trust
    - The following officers of the Leisure and Cultural Services team will normally be in attendance at its meetings:

- Head of Leisure and Cultural Services
  - Greenspaces Manager
  - Countryside Officer
  - Countryside Estates Officer
6. The Countryside Consultative Group will appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman annually at its first meeting of the Municipal Year.
  7. The required quorum of the Countryside Consultative Group is one-quarter of its membership.
  8. Should a vote be required in the determination of a recommendation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appointed Councillors and External Representatives (from the bodies/interest groups listed above) will be allowed to exercise one vote each.
  9. It is proposed that the Group meet on at least three occasions each year.
  10. Should any member of the Countryside Consultative Group be unable to attend a meeting, notice of a substitution will be accepted from the relevant Group Leader prior to the meeting.
  11. All recommendations of the Countryside Consultative Group will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the relevant Minute.

\*Not Common Land

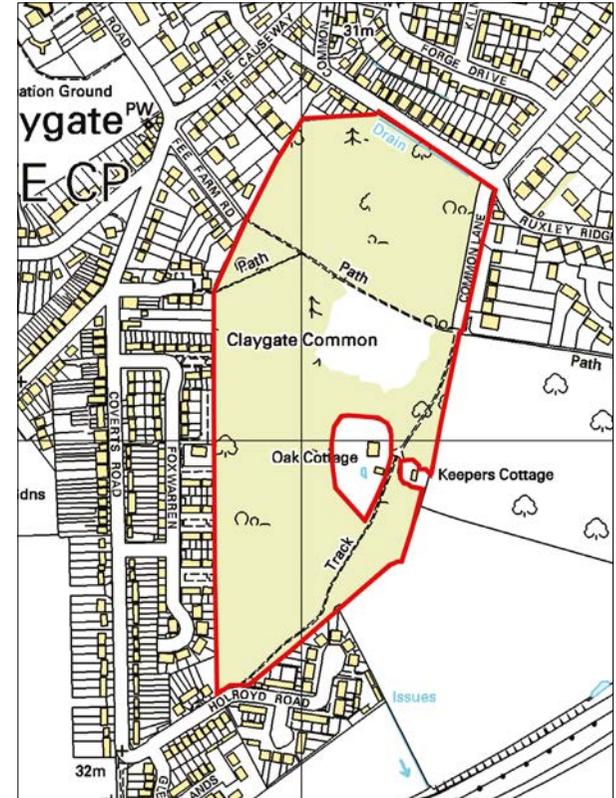
# Appendix 3: Countryside Site Maps



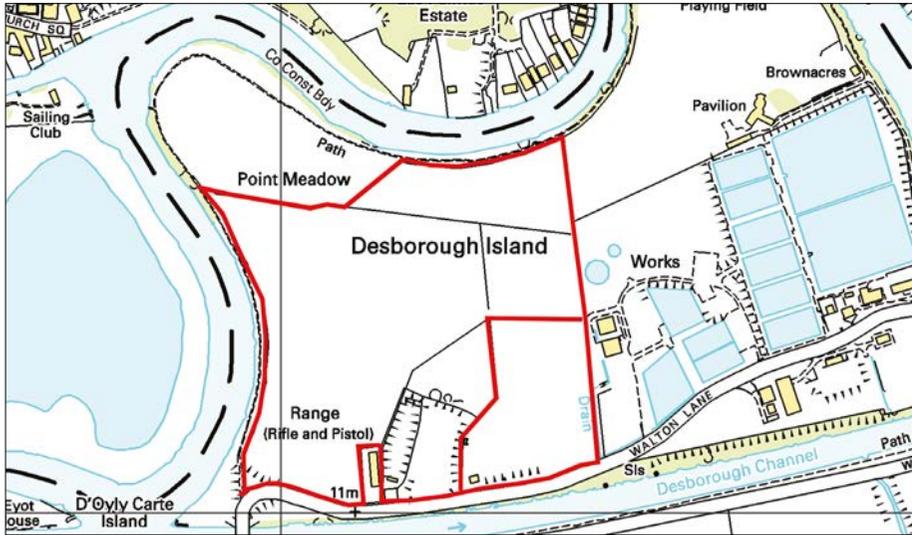
Arbrook Common (SSSI)



Brookland Community Park (SANG)



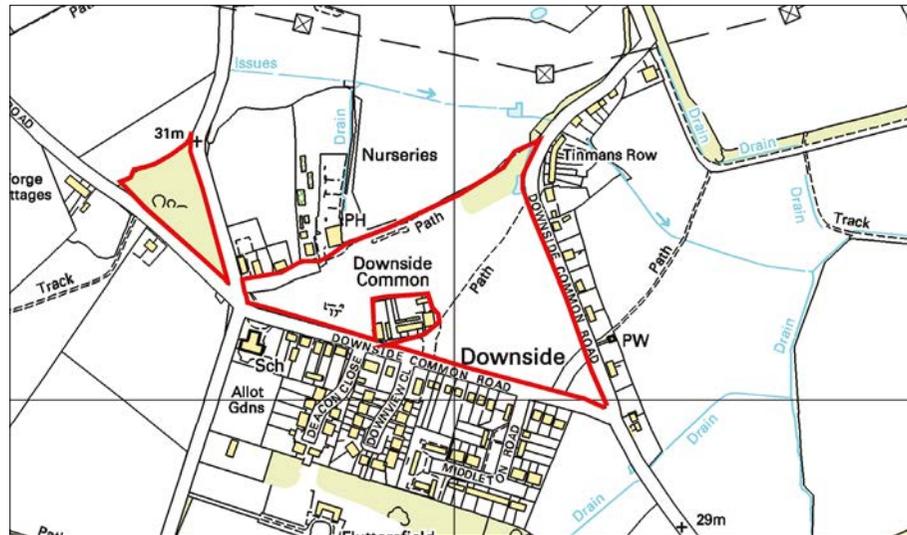
Claygate Common (LNR) (SNCI)



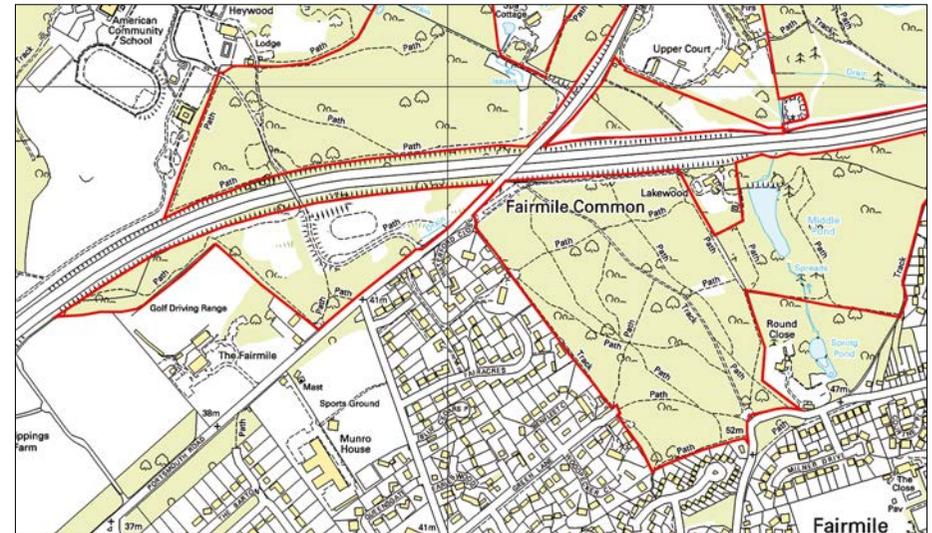
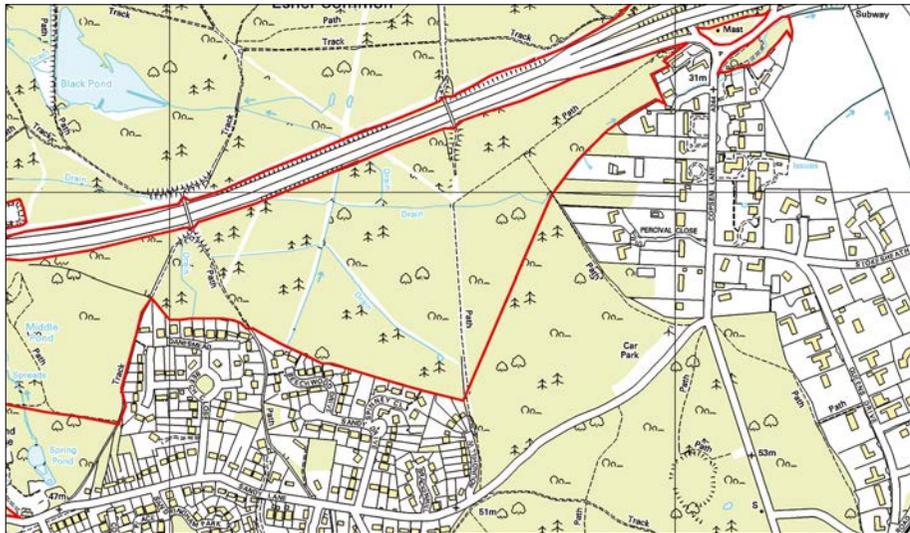
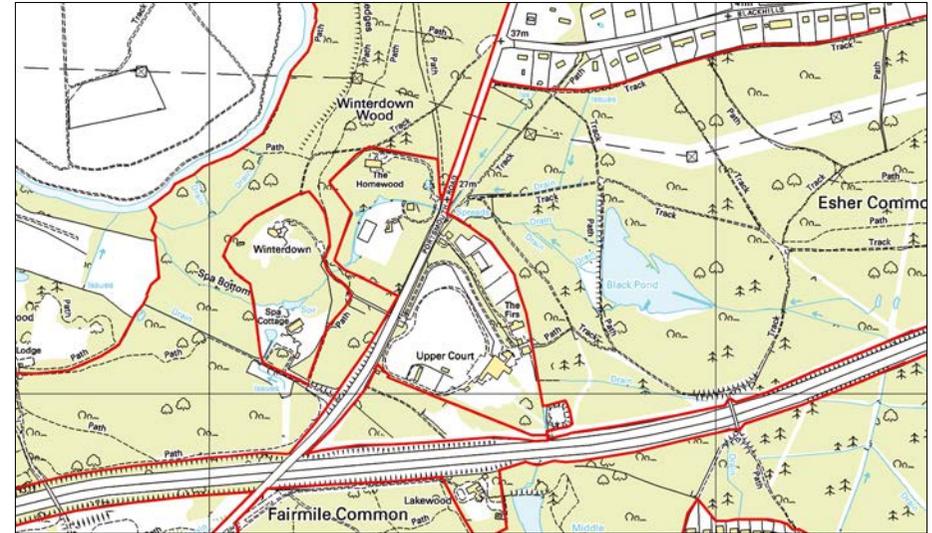
Desborough Island\* (LNR) (SNCI)



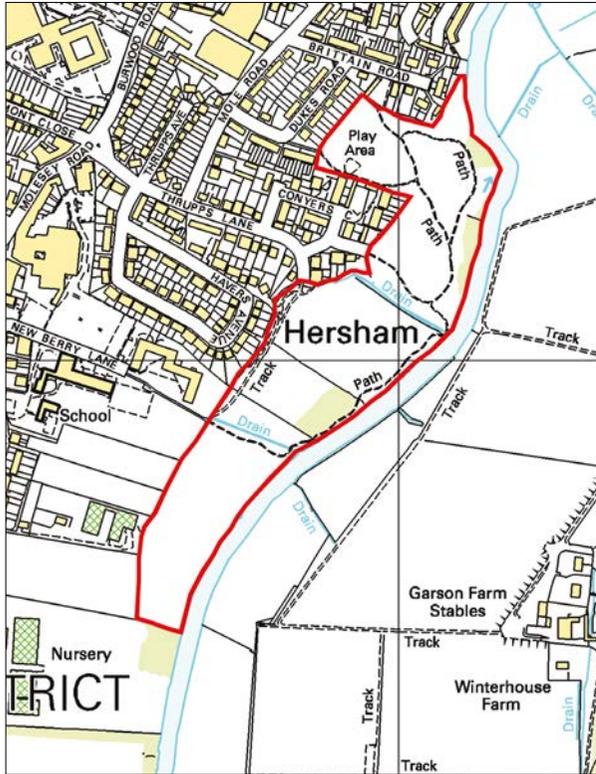
Ditton Common and Weston Green (SNCI)



Downside Common



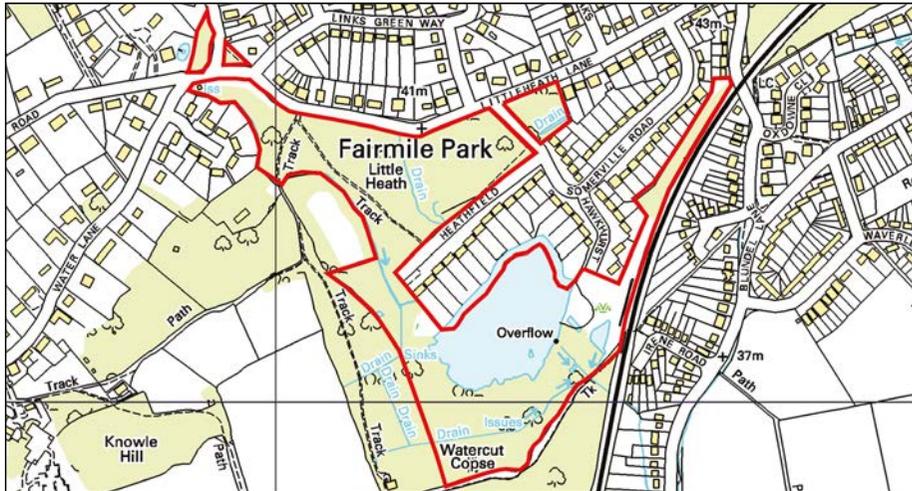
Esher Common (SSSI)



Hersham Riverside Park



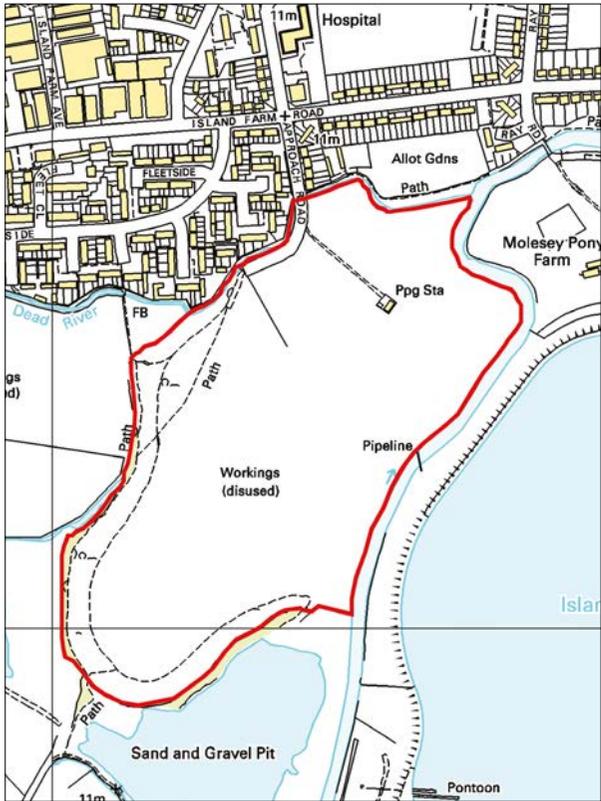
Leigh Hill Road Common



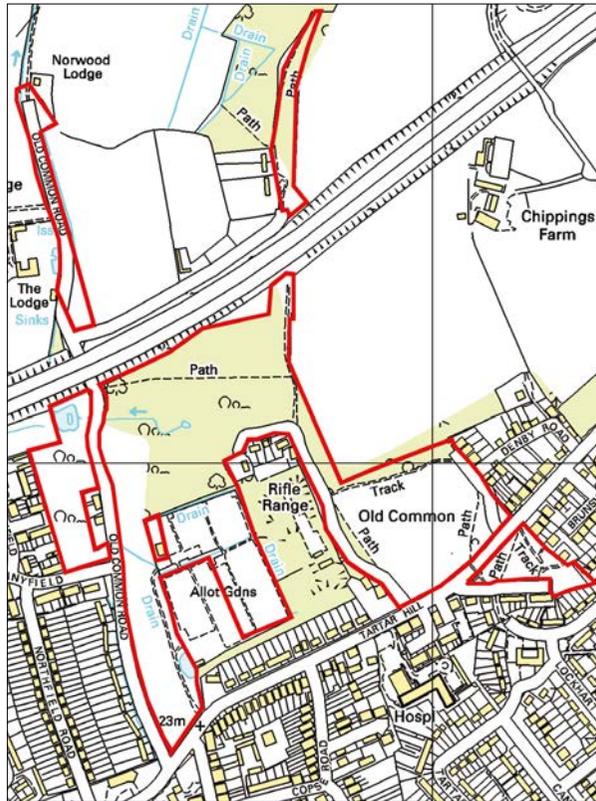
Littleheath Common



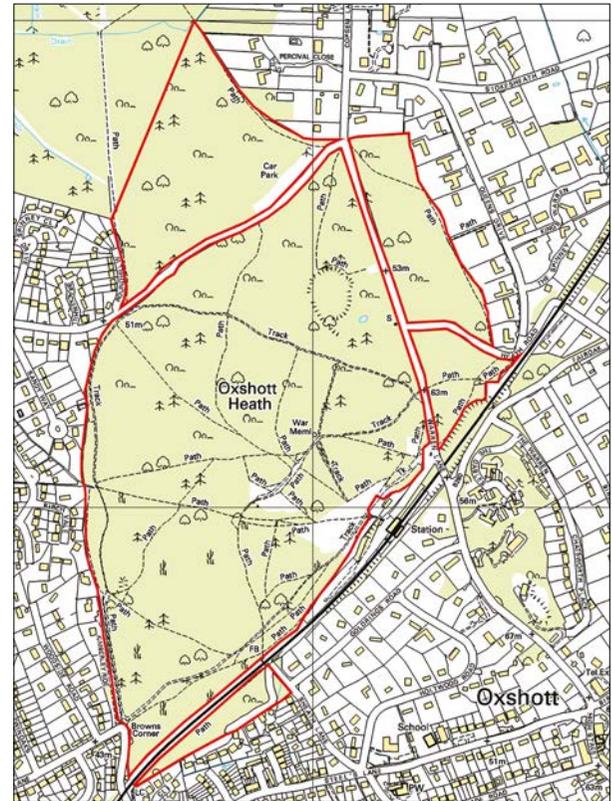
Littleworth Common (SNCI)



Molesey Heath\* (LNR)

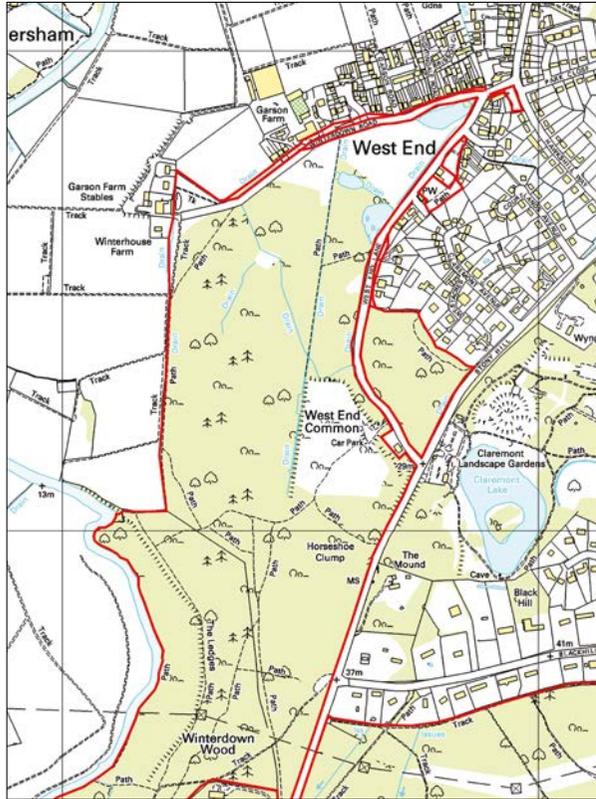


Old Common (SNCI)

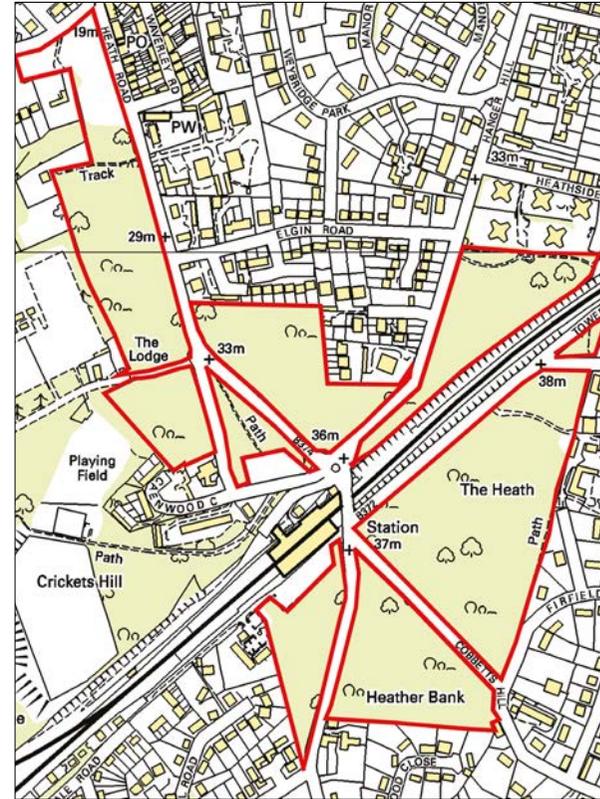


Oxshott Heath (SSSI)





West End Common and Winterdown Woods (SSSI, LNR)



Weybridge Heath (SNCI)

# Appendix 4: Summary of Greenspaces and Countryside Sites Survey 2021



**Elmbridge**  
Borough Council  
... bridging the communities ...

**Green spaces and countryside sites  
survey 2021 -  
Summary of results**

## Introduction

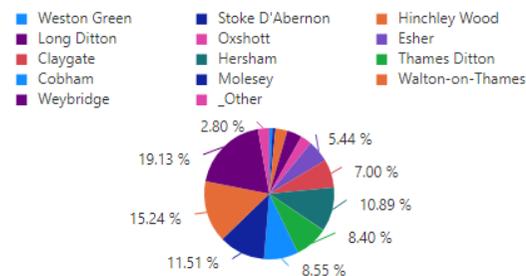
This survey ran from 1 June to 15 August 2021. In total, 655 residents and visitors took part.

71% of respondents were female and 27% male.

71% of responses were received from the 36-65 age group. Responses amongst other age groups were as follows:

56-65	36-45	46-55	66-79	26-35	16-25	80+
24%	24%	23%	18%	9%	1%	1%

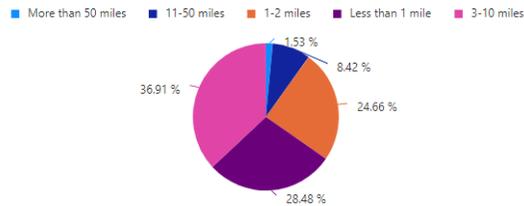
The highest number of responses came from residents living in Weybridge (19%) and Hinchey Wood (15%). Responses from other borough areas were as follows:



## 1) General information relating to open spaces and countryside sites

### 1- Travelling to open spaces and countryside sites

As shown in the chart below, most respondents live near open spaces or countryside sites, with 28% of respondents living less than 1 mile from the open spaces they visit and 37% between 3 to 10 miles.



With 28% of respondents living less than 1 mile away, walking is the preferred way to travel to sites followed by car/van travel (38%). 14% said they cycled to sites and 4% use public transport.

## 2- Free time spent outdoors in green and natural spaces (parks, recreations grounds, sports fields and countryside sites)

Most respondents were regular visitors; visiting open spaces daily: 60% and 31% more than twice a week (31%).



## 4- Types of green and natural spaces visited

The most popular destinations were commons or woodlands

Woodland, forest, heathland or commons	30%
Riverside sites	28%
Park, recreation grounds, play areas and sports fields	24%
Grounds of a historic property or country park	18%

## 5- Importance and value attributed to green and open spaces:

96% of respondents said access to quality local green and natural spaces was very important to them and 3.5% important.

The value attached to green and open spaces is reflected in their plans to carry on visiting in the future once the impact of the Pandemic has passed. 97% said they were very likely to carry on visiting. 3% very likely.

## II) Feedback on green and open spaces

### 1- Levels of satisfaction with service

Grass cutting in parks recorded the highest levels of satisfaction; with 65% of respondents saying they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with the service.

58% of respondents said they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with shrub and bed maintenance and flowerbeds in parks. 37% were 'somewhat satisfied' with footpath maintenance.

Wildflowers in parks also attracted interested with a total of 46% saying they were 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with them.

Service area	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Grass cutting in parks	31%	34%	18%	8%	4%	6%
Flowerbeds in parks	19%	35%	24%	9%	3%	11%
Shrub / bed maintenance in parks	19%	39%	24%	8%	3%	8%
Leaves cleared in the autumn	16%	36%	25%	10%	5%	8%
Wildflower areas in parks	16%	30%	21%	19%	8%	8%
Highway hanging baskets	14%	24%	24%	9%	6%	16%
Grass verges maintenance	14%	34%	22%	17%	12%	3%
Footpath maintenance	8%	37%	17%	22%	13%	4%
Dog bin collection	8%	18%	17%	19%	15%	24%
Play area maintenance	8%	17%	20%	13%	8%	35%
Litter bin collection	7%	20%	15%	32%	23%	4%
Roadside and highway planting	7%	31%	26%	22%	11%	5%

Tennis courts maintenance	5%	11%	25%	5%	2%	52%
Site litter clearance	5%	23%	18%	31%	18%	6%
Cricket squares	5%	11%	24%	3%	0%	57%
Football pitches	4%	10%	26%	4%	2%	54%
Outdoor gym maintenance	3%	11%	27%	5%	3%	52%
Basketball court maintenance	2%	7%	25%	3%	3%	59%
Skate park maintenance	2%	6%	25%	3%	3%	61%

#### 6- Areas requiring service improvement

Respondents highlighted litter bin collection and site litter clearance as areas in need of improvement, with a total of 55% saying litter collection and 49% saying site clearance were unsatisfactory. 34% also said they were 'somewhat dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with dog bin collection.

Service area	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Litter bin collection	<b>32%</b>	<b>23%</b>	4%
Site litter clearance	<b>31%</b>	<b>18%</b>	6%
Footpath maintenance	22%	13%	4%
Roadside and highway planting	22%	11%	5%
Dog bin collection	<b>19%</b>	<b>15%</b>	24%
Wildflower areas in parks	19%	8%	8%
Grass verges maintenance	17%	12%	3%
Play area maintenance	13%	8%	35%
Leaves cleared in the autumn	10%	5%	8%
Highway hanging baskets	9%	6%	16%
Flowerbeds in parks	9%	3%	11%

Grass cutting in parks	8%	4%	6%
Shrub / bed maintenance in parks	8%	3%	8%
Tennis courts maintenance	5%	2%	52%
Outdoor gym maintenance	5%	3%	52%
Football pitches	4%	2%	54%
Basketball court maintenance	3%	3%	59%
Cricket squares	3%	0%	57%
Skate park maintenance	3%	3%	61%

#### 7- Level of service vs budget cuts

When asked about their priorities or suggestions regarding how much time and money the council should spend on looking after green spaces with a more limited council budget in the years ahead, 99% of residents thought that the council should spend the same on litter. 85% wanted the same to be spent on play area maintenance, 84% on new trees and 80% on wildflower areas in parks.

Grass cutting came in 5<sup>th</sup> position with 75% of residents thinking we should spend the same. 52% of residents thought the council could spend less on flower baskets, 51% on outdoor gym maintenance, 45% on basketball courts and 41% on skate parks maintenance.

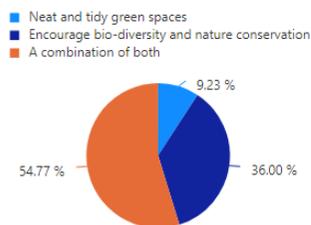
Service area	same	less
Litter	<b>99%</b>	1%
Play area maintenance	<b>85%</b>	15%
New trees in parks	<b>84%</b>	16%
Wildflower areas in parks	<b>80%</b>	20%
Grass cutting in parks	75%	25%
Football pitches	69%	31%
Flowerbeds and shrubs	68%	32%
Tennis courts maintenance	68%	32%
Cricket squares	65%	35%
Skateparks	59%	<b>41%</b>
Basketball courts	55%	<b>45%</b>
Outdoor gym maintenance.	50%	<b>51%</b>
Flower baskets	48%	<b>52%</b>

### 8- Preferred approach for maintenance of local green spaces

Only 9% of respondents said they preferred to see neat and tidy green spaces – with 36% of respondents in favour of a green spaces management approach benefiting biodiversity and nature conservation.

This demonstrates the views that biodiversity is an important factor to respondents (as mentioned above, 46% of residents were satisfied with wildflowers areas in parks. 84% of them wanted the same level of future spending on new trees and 80% on wildflower areas in parks).

However, in contrast, 65% of respondents said they were satisfied with grass cutting in parks and 75% would like the same budget to be spent on grass cutting, going forward. This might explain why a majority of 55% favoured a combination of 'neat and tidy' greens spaces with 'wilder' areas.



### III) Feedback on countryside sites

60% of respondents regularly visit local countryside sites.

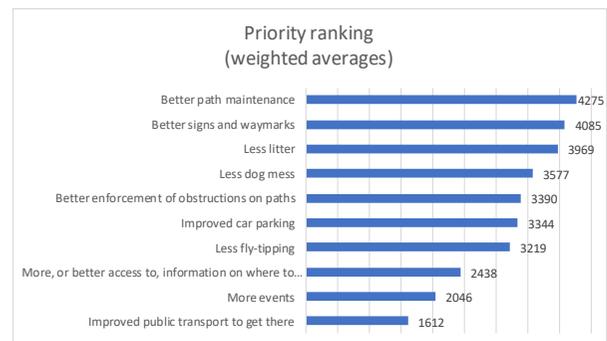
#### 1- Factors that would make visits to countryside sites easier or more enjoyable

Respondents were given a list of various factors to rate from 10 being the most important to 1 being the least important. Every response from individual respondents was allocated an individual weight according to their preferences.

Better path maintenance and better signs and waymarks were the most influencing factors; with less litter and dog mess taking 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> positions.

Given the fact that respondents prefer ways to get to sites were by walking and driving, the least importance was given to improved public transport.

Priority ranking  
(weighted averages)



### 2- Footpath, cycle path and bridleway network

When asked about the distribution and availability of footpaths, 86% respondents thought the network of footpaths was very good or fair. We saw from the previous factor ranking response that path maintenance is a very important to respondents.

This figure goes down to 48% for bridleways. 46% did not know about bridleway; perhaps indicating that respondents were not aware of bridleways' locations on the commons and countryside.

	Very good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
Footpaths	29%	57%	10%	3%	1%
Cycle paths	16%	39%	16%	5%	24%
Bridleways	13%	34%	6%	2%	46%

### 3- Path maintenance vs future budget cuts

With future budgets becoming more stretched, residents were asked how they would prefer paths to be maintained in years to come. Regardless of budget reductions, 49% of respondents said that all paths should be maintained. 36% thought that it would be best to maintain/improve the busier paths. 15% wanted to see less used paths also maintained. Again, this aspect of the service is highlighted as an important influencing factor on visits to countryside sites.

### 4- Information boards and displays on site

Respondents were given a series of statements to agree or disagree with various aspects in relation to countryside site information boards and notices.

57% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that information boards were relevant. 65% found them easy to understand, 53% useful and 56% informative. 47% thought they were

presentable. There was little negative feedback on the boards; although 13% said the presentation could improve.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Relevant	11%	46%	27%	4%	0%	13%
Easy to understand	14%	51%	21%	2%	1%	12%
Useful	11%	42%	28%	6%	0%	13%
Informative	11%	45%	26%	5%	0%	13%
Presentable	10%	37%	29%	11%	2%	12%

### 5- Countryside family events in the last 2 years

Only 13% of respondents had attended a countryside event in the last 2 years prior to Covid.

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
Entertainment value	6%	9%	6%	0%	0%	79%
Suitability for children's age group	5%	7%	6%	1%	0%	81%
Education value	6%	9%	6%	0%	0%	80%

There seems to be a lack of general awareness of countryside events with a majority of residents unable to give their views about their entertainment value, suitability and education value.

This resulted in a high number of respondents unlikely to recommend countryside events (73%) and only 12% likely to do so.

### 6- Satisfaction level with the management works carried out by the Countryside Team

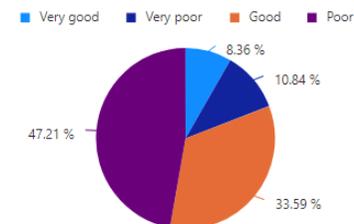
68% rated the work management works carried out by the Countryside Team as beneficial to users and 73% as beneficial to the landscape /wildlife/environment

Only 3.8% stated that their work had no benefit to users and 5.8% to the landscape /wildlife/environment.

27% had no opinions on any benefits related to the landscape/wildlife/environment and 24% to users.

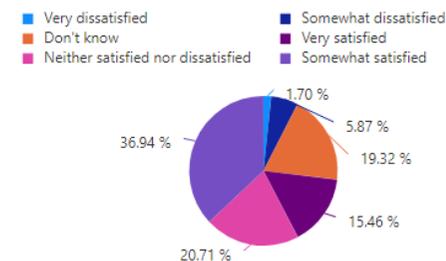
### 7- Levels of awareness of local countryside management works and conservation projects?

52% of respondents said they had low levels of awareness of local countryside management works and conservation projects. With only 34% thinking they had a good knowledge. This is an area that will need development with more regular communications about on-going works.



### 8- Levels of satisfaction with the impact of the Countryside Team on the Elmbridge commons and woodlands.

55% of respondents said they were 'satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with the impact of the Countryside Team on the Elmbridge commons and woodlands. The fact that 19% said they did not know about the team's impact might be linked to their lack of awareness of on-going management works.



### IV) Community involvement in managing local green spaces and countryside sites

40% of respondents said they would like to be involved in the management of local green spaces and countryside sites.

Conservation management and litter were the areas respondents showed the most interest in. As shown in the table below, 22% would be interested in carrying out volunteering tasks and 20% in joining a litter picking group.

Conservation, biodiversity management and litter are topics that also feature highly in additional comments made by respondents (available in appendix)

By joining a countryside volunteering group	22%
By setting up or joining a litter picking group	20%
By playing a monitoring role for the countryside or green spaces team	19%
By helping with physical improvement to sites (habitat features)	14%
By helping with flowerbed creation or maintenance (planting, weeding)	11%

#### V) Sources of information for the Countryside or Green Spaces Team's work

87% of respondents would turn to social media to find information (whether the EBC or local social media channels. 39% said they would look at the EBC website and 33% at site noticeboards.

Social media channels	49%
Local social media	38%
Website	39%
Site noticeboards	33%
Local magazines	28%
Site posters	27%
Public meetings on open spaces	10%
Others	5%

#### VI) Comments - summary

Full comments are available to view in the appendix document. You can find a summary of the main trends in comments below:

##### a- Additional comments about green spaces

Topics	Number of times appearing in comments
Dog control issues / dogs on lead / dog litter	106
Litter issues	101
Encourage biodiversity in green spaces management – wildflower meadow areas in parks – on grass verges	94

Lack of bins in open spaces	72
Trees – plant more trees	48
Sharing open spaces walkers/cyclists/riders	12
Overgrown areas / paths	11

##### b- Additional comments about what particular things respondents like, do not like or would like to see being done differently when considering the management of the Countryside Sites

More bins /emptying bins	15
Dogs on lead/ number of dogs / dog control	6
Enforcement – litter – sharing space walkers/cyclists/riders	6
Accessibility	6
Signs	3
Works management information	2
Biodiversity	

##### c- Additional comments about countryside events

No comments	14
Not aware of events	55
Not applicable / not interested	10
Have attended and found them good	3