



Wash Lane Common

Greenspace Action
Plan 2017 - 2022

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AMENDMENT DATE	SECTION UPDATED	DETAILS	OFFICER

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1. SITE SUMMARY

Site name	Wash Lane Common
Site address	Wash Lane South Mimms Potters Bar Nearest postcode EN6 3QA
Grid Reference	TL231003
Size	3.6 hectares (9 acres)
Manager	Hertsmere Borough Council
Designations	Registered Common Land Metropolitan Green Belt Local Wildlife Site

Vision Statement

The aim of the Wash Lane Common GAP is to enhance the value of Wash Lane Common for both recreation and biodiversity. This will maximise its potential to be an extremely well-used green space, resulting from its location next to a busy motorway service station.

This will be achieved through the following objectives:

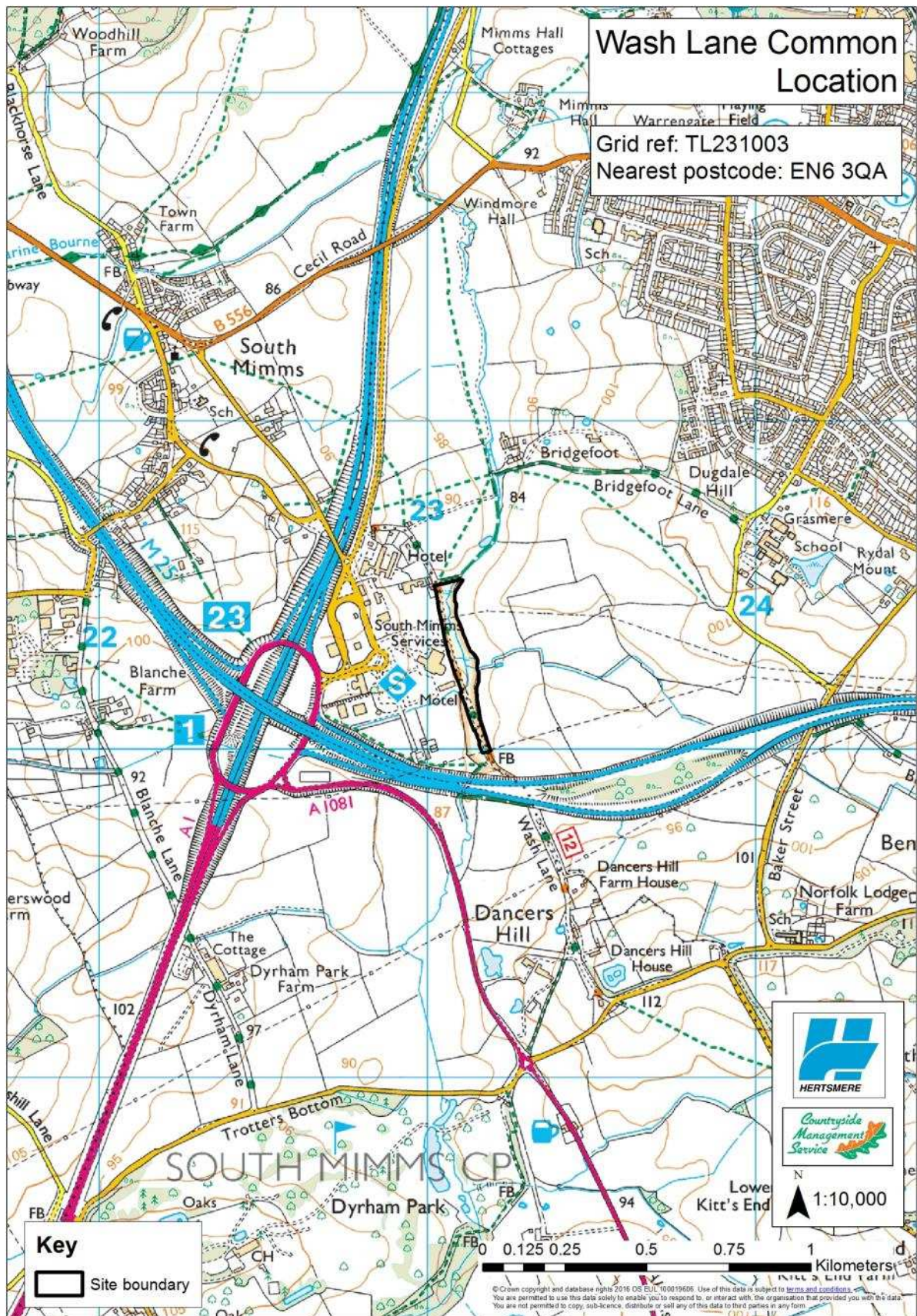
- To enhance the experience of using the Common for regular users and visitors.
- To ensure that visitors to Wash Lane Common feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times.
- To ensure the standard of maintenance is upheld and relevant across the site.
- To ensure sustainability of all management operations on site.
- To conserve and enhance the key habitats of Wash Lane Common.
- To develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community.
- To raise awareness of Wash Lane Common and substantially increase its visitor numbers.

The Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for Wash Lane Common sets out the management, maintenance and development framework for the site over five years.

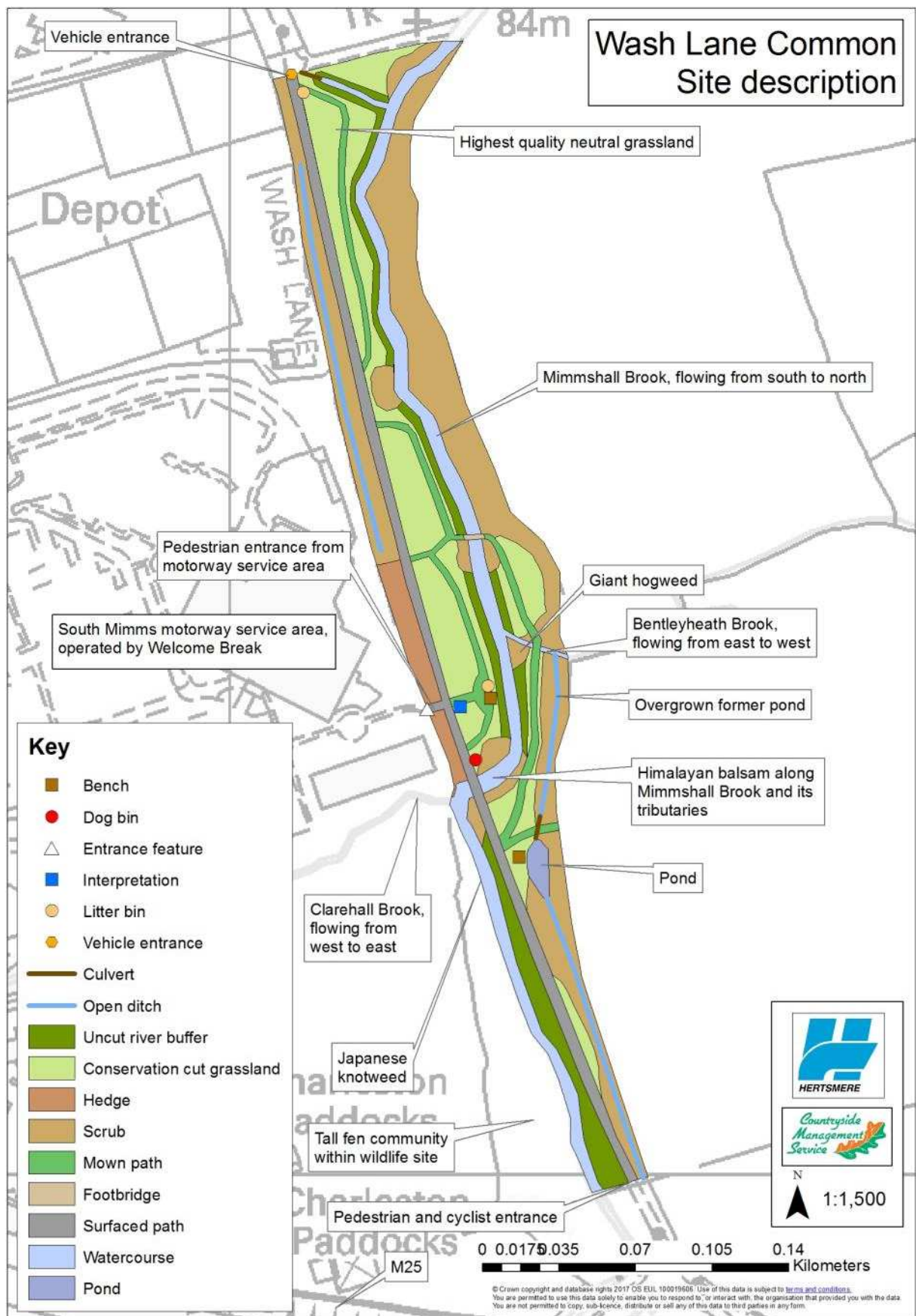
The GAP is reviewed annually, so that any outstanding tasks can be rescheduled as necessary. The GAP is also frequently reviewed in conjunction with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) and any other relevant bodies.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

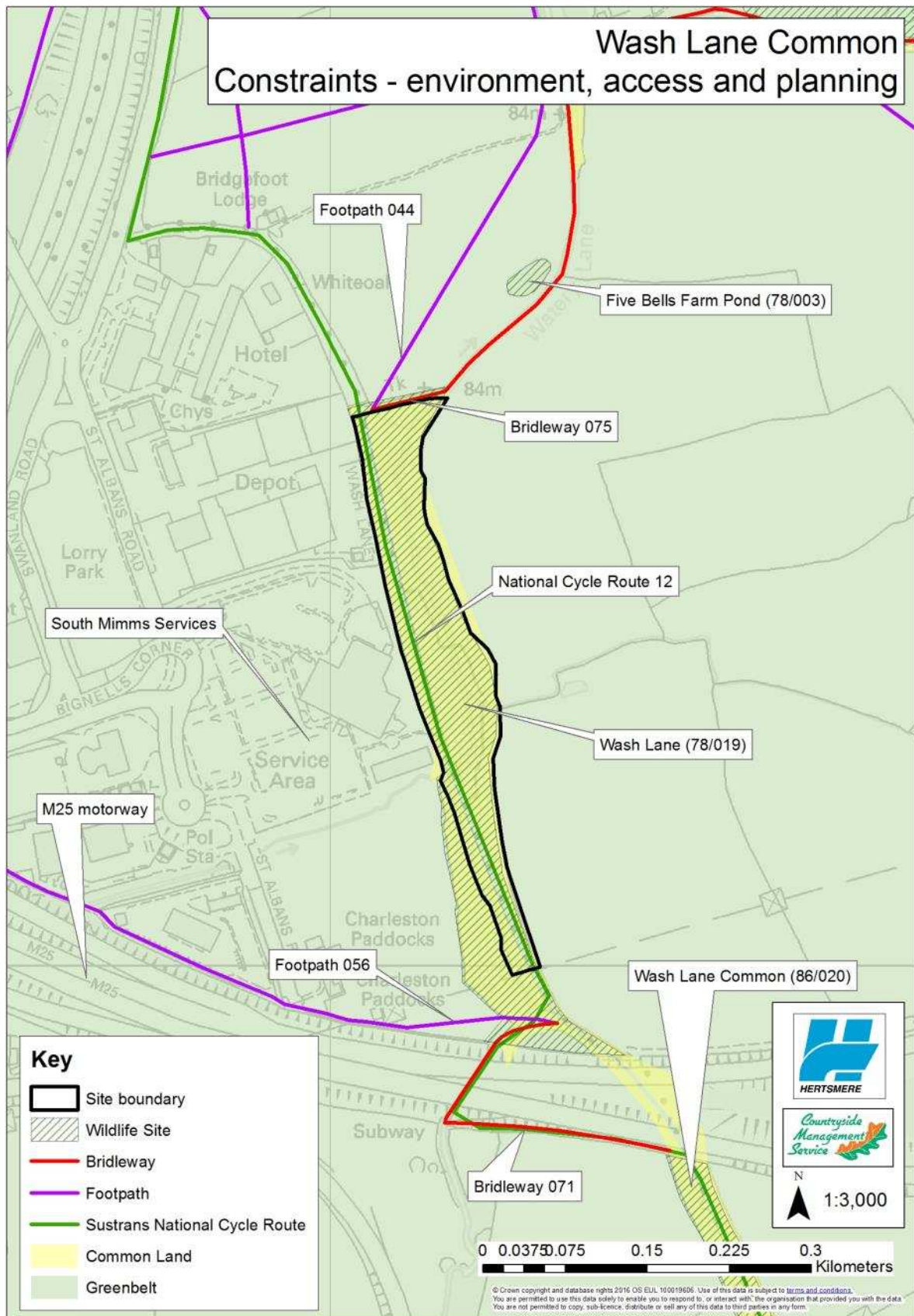
2.1 LOCATION MAP

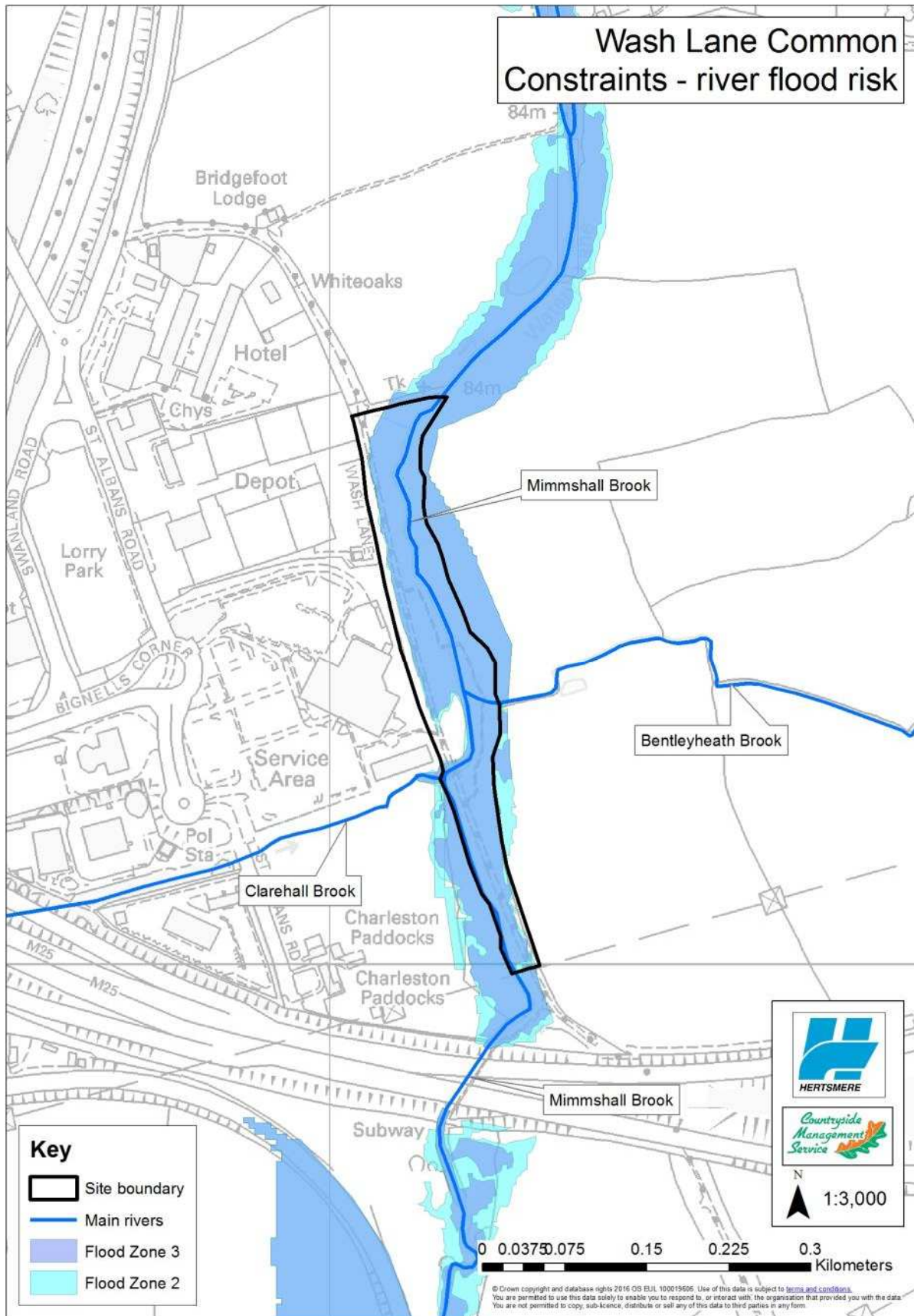


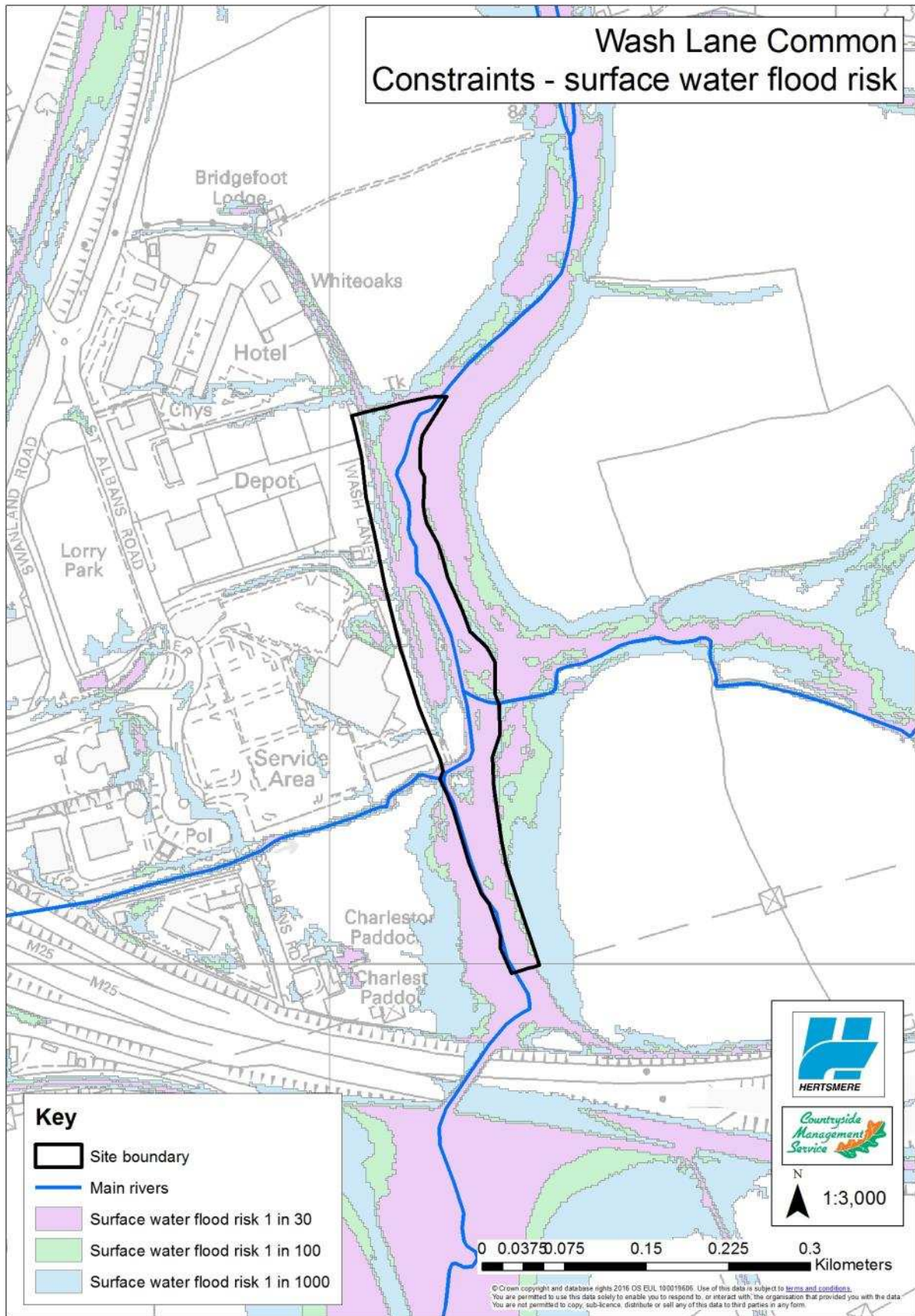
2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION MAP

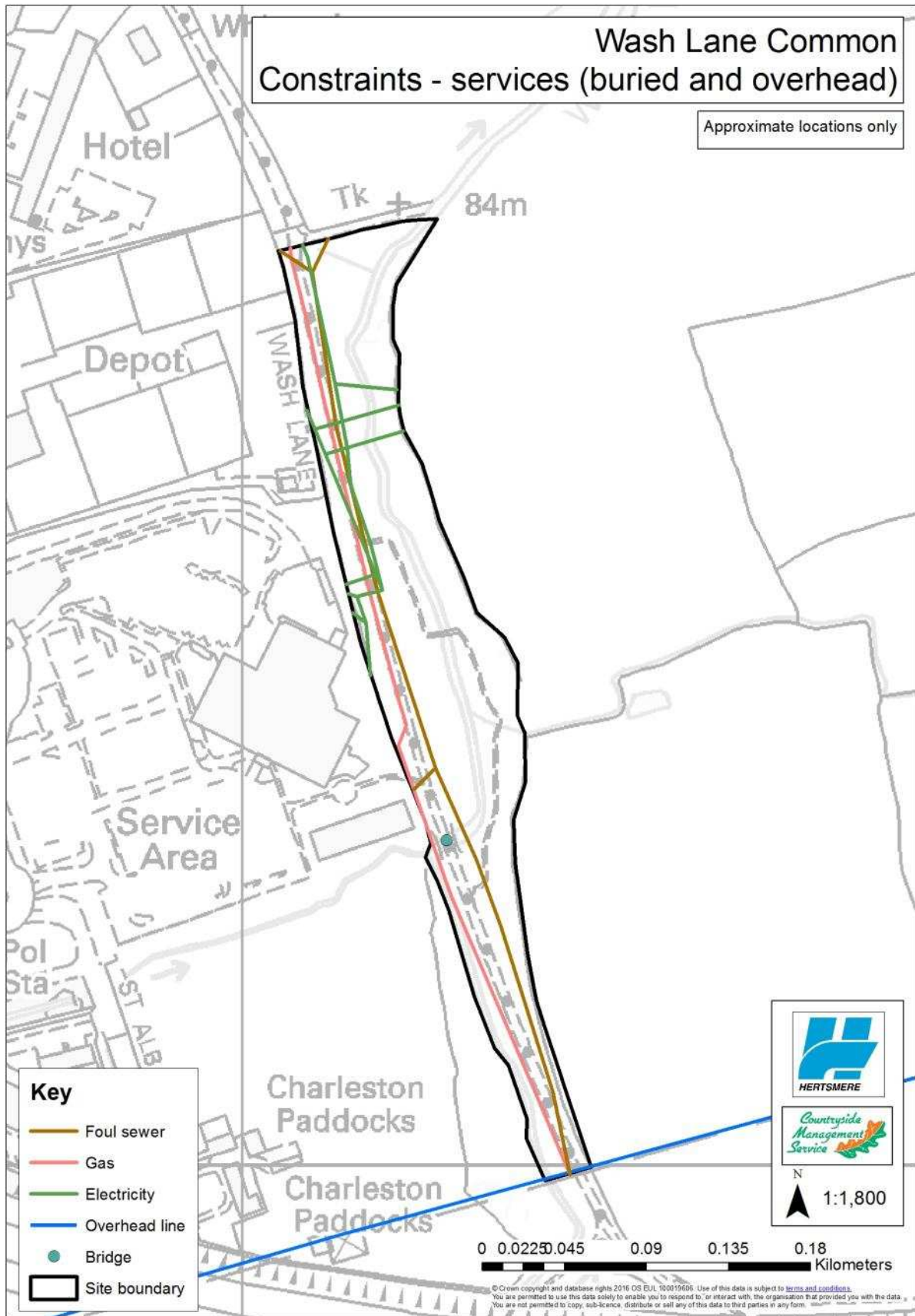


2.3 CONSTRAINTS MAPS









2.4 INTRODUCTION

Wash Lane Common is a three hectare green space managed by Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC). It is located next to South Mimms motorway service area, at the junction of the M25 and the A1(M). There is direct access from the services to the Common and its location is its biggest asset, giving it the potential to welcome a large number of visitors. The Common is also important for wildlife, as a Local Wildlife Site with valuable species-rich grassland, and access, forming part of the route of National Cycle Route 12.

2.5 GEOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE

Wash Lane Common is a narrow strip of land running north-south along the Mimmshall Brook. Two other main rivers, the Clarehall Brook and the Bentleyheath Brook, join the Mimmshall Brook within the site. To its west is the South Mimms motorway service area and the M25 runs close to its southern boundary. There is open arable farmland to its north and east, giving a surprisingly rural feel in such a developed area. There are no significant settlements in its immediate surroundings, although the edge of Potters Bar is less than a mile away.

The area managed by HBC is part of a larger area of registered common land. The site also lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, and is part of a Local Wildlife Site. There are no other designations applicable to it.

Wash Lane Common is highly vulnerable to both river and surface water flooding: the majority of the site is subject to at least a 1 in 100 risk of river flooding and a 1 in 30 risk of surface water flooding. Sections of Wash Lane both north and south of the entrance from South Mimms motorway service area suffer frequent flooding events, but given its location in the flood plain it is thought that it will be hard to reduce this.

2.6 HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Historically Wash Lane Common was largely a wetland referred to as 'Mimms Wash', as can be seen in the tithe map from the 1840s (Figure 1).

The only noteworthy historical feature on the site is the bridge which carries Wash Lane over the Mimmshall Brook. This dates from 1775, when Wash Lane was the main route from London to St Albans. It retained this role until 1826, when a new road was built 200m to the west, much improving the route.

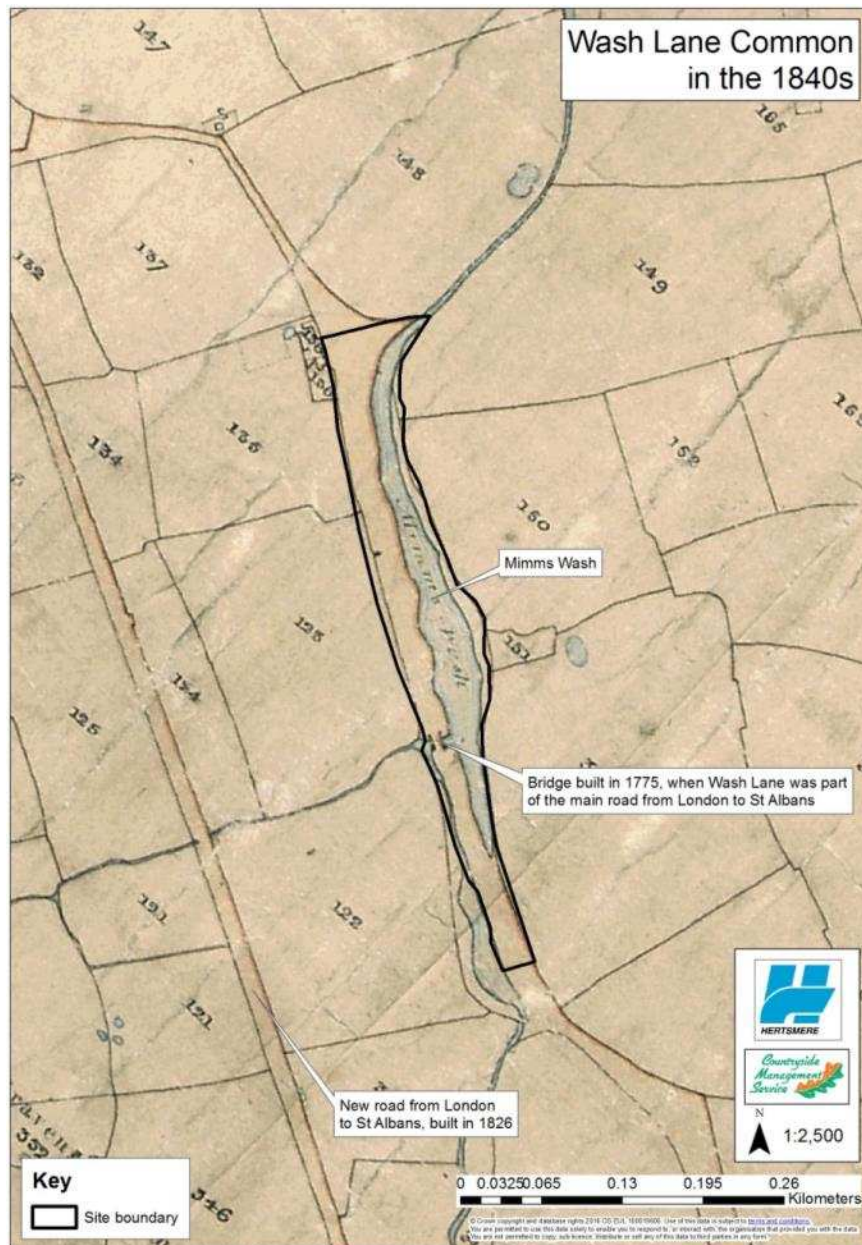


Figure 1 – Wash Lane Common in the 1840s

2.7 HABITATS AND WILDLIFE

The area managed by HBC lies within the Wash Lane Local Wildlife Site, which is locally important for its neutral grassland and wetland plant communities. In a 2016 survey, nine indicators of unimproved grassland were identified: common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and pepper saxifrage (*Silene silaus*). Five indicators of fen were also found, including lesser pond sedge (*Carex acutiformis*), reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*), however the main fen community in the wildlife site is outside the HBC management boundary. These results are similar to those from an earlier survey in 2005.

The streams and associated drainage ditches are overgrown with scrub and ruderal vegetation which shades much of the water. Nevertheless they support patches of water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).

The Common is bordered on both sides by wide hedges dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), which also include English elm (*Ulmus procera*) and have occasional pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) standards. Further patches of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation are developing and invading grassland in other parts of the site. While the expansion of scrub has negative consequences for the botanical interest of the site, it does support widespread scrub-breeding birds such as bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) and lesser whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*).

The only protected species recorded recently within the 1km square occupied by the Common is great crested newt. However, it is not known that this species occurs on the Common itself.

A number of invasive non-native species have been identified on the site. The most widespread of these is Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), which occurs along all the watercourses. In addition, orange balsam (*Impatiens capensis*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Hereacleum mantegazzianum*), Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) and Canadian waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*) all occur, in more restricted areas.

2.8 ACCESS, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Due to its status as an S193 urban common, the public have foot, horse and cycle access rights across the site. There are no public rights of way within the site, but the route of Sustrans National Cycle Route 12 passes through the Common. When complete, this route will run from north London to Lincolnshire.

There are three access points. The main entrance for pedestrians is from the motorway service area to the west, with a decorative entrance feature and an interpretation board. Wash Lane provides access points for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders at the northern and southern ends of the site, and is the only surfaced route through the Common. There are lockable bollards at the northern end to prevent vehicles from accessing the Common, and there are no structures at the southern boundary. A small number of benches, litter and dog bins are provided.

2.9 COMMUNITY, MANAGEMENT AND EVENTS

The main potential user group for the Common is visitors to the motorway service area, as it is separated from any substantial local community. It is difficult to assess to what extent the Common is currently used by service area visitors, but it is clear that it is not well advertised within the service area.

This large user group represents a huge opportunity for the site, as it is rare to have direct access to a green space of any kind from a motorway service area. Wash Lane Common

can provide valuable services to users of the service area, as an attractive, wildlife-filled space to walk a dog, take a short stroll or picnic next to a stream.

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3. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

3.1 A WELCOMING PLACE

The welcome to Wash Lane Common should start at the main entrance from South Mimms motorway service area. The existing entrance feature should be replaced by new welcome signage which uses the 'Wash Lane Common Nature Reserve' name (see 3.7). This should be highly visible to encourage as many service area visitors as possible to explore the Common. Just beyond it, the existing, ageing interpretation should be replaced with new attractive interpretation which promotes the special features of the Common and provides information on the facilities it offers.

The prominence of the site has recently been improved by the establishment of a new restaurant close to the entrance of the Common, drawing more people out of the main service building to areas from which the Common is visible. This creates an opportunity for these improvements to have a greater impact.



Figure 2 - Existing entrance feature and interpretation board

There are currently two benches on the Common. Expanding this by providing further benches and picnic tables, in particular in the area overlooked by the service area, would help encourage people to enter the Common, and make them feel more welcome within it. Close to this new seating, an annual cut and lift of vegetation along the Mimms Brook would allow visitors to view the stream more easily. This should be carried out annually along short, well-visited sections of the river bank.

Although Wash Lane currently provides an easy access route through the site, there is no short surfaced circular route available for visitors to use in all ground conditions. This should be addressed by surfacing one of the existing grass paths to create a loop across the footbridge. This short circuit would be ideal for dog owners who stop at the service area and would give any visitor an excellent introduction to the site.

Wash Lane Common is highly vulnerable to both river and surface water flooding, and initial consultation with the Environment Agency indicates that it would be very difficult to reduce the incidence of flooding on the site. As a result, the focus of this plan is to manage the effect of flooding when it occurs. Existing ditches should be cleared to improve drainage of Wash Lane, ensuring that when it does flood, water drains from it as quickly as possible after

the flood event. This work can only be carried out with care, due to the constraints imposed by underground services shown in 2.3.

3.2 HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

It is important to ensure that the Common is a safe place to visit, and that visitors to the motorway service area feel as secure in all areas of the Common as they do within the services.

This can be achieved by keeping paths open, cutting back scrub as required to maintain good sight lines on the path network, especially on the section on the far side of the Mimmshall Brook from the services. Continuing this work would make the paths feel as safe as possible. There should also be a proactive response to any misuse of the site and any tree safety issues which are identified should be addressed through reactive tree works.

3.3 CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

Similarly to 3.2, the Common should have a sufficiently high standard of maintenance that it feels like an extension of the service area, to ensure that visitors from the services feel comfortable within the Common. This includes managing and maintaining the grass paths, ensuring pot holes along Wash Lane are filled as required and regularly carrying out litter picking and emptying litter bins and dog bins. Regular hedgerow management and small scale vegetation management should also take place.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

As a Local Wildlife Site, the environment is a high priority in the management of Wash Lane Common. This means that management should always be led by environmental best practice. Herbicides should not be used on the site except where there is no alternative to achieve effective control, as in the case of Japanese knotweed, and annual management should be as sustainable as possible.

In order for the improvements proposed in this plan to be carried out, external funding will be required, and therefore funding bids should be developed in the early stages of the plan. Any improvements should take into account maintenance costs, as ongoing maintenance should remain financially sustainable.

3.5 CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

The key habitats of the Wash Lane Local Wildlife Site have seen only limited management in recent years, and as a result some more significant work is required to bring its habitats back into good condition over the period of this plan. The main current management of the common is an annual cut and lift of the conservation grassland area shown on the site description.

Moving beyond existing management, the wide river buffer zone currently dominated by tall vegetation should be cut and cleared. This area should then be incorporated in the annual

grassland cut and lift, leaving a 1m buffer along the edge of the river, much narrower than the existing river buffer.

Himalayan balsam control should be considered, but eradication is unlikely to be achieved as Himalayan balsam also occurs upstream of Wash Lane Common and its seeds will enter the site annually along the Mimmshall Brook. Effective control can only be achieved by ongoing annual management, involving pulling or cutting below the lowest node before flowering. Himalayan balsam would quickly return when annual management ceased.

Other significant invasive species found on the site are Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed. Both occur only in small areas, identified on the site description map, and should be eradicated. Japanese knotweed requires chemical treatment in late summer followed by monitoring and control of any regrowth, and will take around three years to eradicate. Giant hogweed is also best controlled chemically, visiting in spring when plants are around 1m tall. Seeds can remain viable for as much as 15 years, so annual visits are necessary following initial treatment to control any new plants growing from seed. It is important to remember that the operator requires a special license to apply herbicides near a watercourse.

The Mimmshall Brook is currently very shady along much of its length within the Common. Coppicing selected scrub along its banks would allow more light through to the stream, bringing additional life to the channel. However, this should be done carefully, avoiding opening up the channel too much, as the risk of invasion by Himalayan balsam is very high. At the same time, where scrub is encroaching into the grassland, areas should be coppiced on a long rotation, to prevent further encroachment and to initiate the development of a varied age structure in the scrub.



Figure 3 - Mimmshall Brook looking north from the footbridge; Himalayan balsam along the stream

There were two ponds on site, both south-east of the confluence of the Mimmshall Brook and the Bentleyheath Brook. One of these has almost entirely disappeared, but the other remains. Both should be restored by desilting and clearing encroaching vegetation, and if possible their size should be increased at the same time. The presence of a foul sewer will make this work more difficult. Although great crested newt is not known to occur on the site, given that it has been recorded in the same 1km square, the possibility should be considered in the context of any future work on or close to the ponds.

This work would provide an opportunity to create an additional pond adjacent to the entrance from the motorway service area. This would be a strong visual attraction to visitors to the services, particularly as it would be visible from their outside seating area. This would require an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency, and any excavations would have to be removed from the flood plain. Although it is not expected that flood risk on the Common can be significantly reduced, additional flood storage in the form of a pond can only have a positive effect.

3.6 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As noted above the only community in the immediate vicinity of the Common is associated with the South Mimms motorway service area. To fully realise the potential of the site, a mutually beneficial relationship between the managers of the Common (HBC) and the motorway service area (Welcome Break) should be developed.

Wash Lane Common has the potential to be a huge asset to the South Mimms motorway service area as a unique selling point, improving the experience of its users and making people more likely to return. The work proposed in this plan will help the Common realise that potential through major improvements to its promotion, facilities and access. The involvement of Welcome Break could increase the impact of the project by extending promotion of the Common to relevant locations within the service area. At the same time, Welcome Break may be in a position to become a partner in a major improvement project or to support ongoing maintenance of the site, due to the benefits it could realise.

3.7 MARKETING

The central aim of this GAP is to maximise the potential provided by its location to make it an extremely well-used green space. Alongside all the improvements described above, this can be achieved by improving the way and the extent to which the Common is marketed, in particular within the South Mimms motorway service area.

Existing signage does not make it clear to users of South Mimms motorway service area what the Common can offer them. Re-branding the site as 'Wash Lane Common Nature Reserve' in all signage and promotional material would make this much more obvious. The name change is a simple process which does not require any formal change in the status of the site.

There is not currently a site leaflet. A new leaflet should be produced, in a similar design to previous HBC leaflets (for example Composers Park & Beyond, Parkfields & Beyond). This would advertise the opportunity to take a short walk in the Common or to go beyond it into the wider countryside. The new leaflet could be made available both within South Mimms motorway service area and elsewhere.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 A WELCOMING PLACE

To enhance the experience of using the Common for regular users and visitors.

- 1A Design and install a highly visible entrance feature at the entrance from South Mimms services, using the 'Wash Lane Common Nature Reserve' name (see 7A).
- 1B Design and install new interpretation at the entrance from South Mimms services.
- 1C Install additional picnic tables and benches at selected locations along the Mimmshall Brook.
- 1D Design and install metal sculptures to create a short sculpture trail in-keeping with the landscape.
- 1E Carry out an annual cut and lift of vegetation along the bank of the Mimmshall Brook opposite the service area, to allow visitors to view the stream.
- 1F Surface the existing mown grass path to create a short easy access trail.
- 1G Clear ditches to improve drainage of site where not constrained by underground services.

4.2 HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

To ensure that visitors to Wash Lane Common feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times.

- 2A Ensure that visitors feel safe and secure in all areas of the site.
- 2B Keep paths open and maintain good sight lines on the path network, promoting a feeling of safety.
- 2C Respond proactively to any misuse of the site.
- 2D Carry out reactive tree works to address any safety issues.

4.3 CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

To ensure the standard of maintenance is upheld and relevant across the site.

- 3A Manage and maintain the paths.
- 3B Regularly carry out litter picking and empty litter bins and dog bins.
- 3C Carry out hedgerow management and small scale vegetation management.
- 3D Fill pot holes along Wash Lane as required, to maintain a good surface for the National Cycle Network route.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure sustainability of all management operations on site.

- 4A Develop an external funding bid to support improvements to access, interpretation and marketing.
- 4B Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.
- 4C Carry out management according to environmental best practice, only using herbicides where required to control invasive non-native species, and using sustainable management practices.

4.5 CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

To conserve and enhance the key habitats of Wash Lane Common.

- 5A Carry out an annual conservation cut and lift to maintain the current extent of conservation grassland.

- 5B Cut and clear areas along the river currently dominated by tall vegetation to prevent succession to scrub and re-establish an annual conservation cut, leaving a 1m buffer to the river.
- 5C Carry out control of Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed along the Mimmshall Brook.
- 5D Restore two existing ponds by desilting and clearing encroaching vegetation.
- 5E Create an additional pond in a part of the site visible from South Mimms services.
- 5F Coppice encroaching scrub to develop a varied age structure in the scrub, prevent further encroachment into the grassland, and reduce shading of the Mimmshall Brook.

4.6 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community.

- 6A Build a mutually beneficial relationship between South Mimms motorway service area and the Common.

4.7 MARKETING

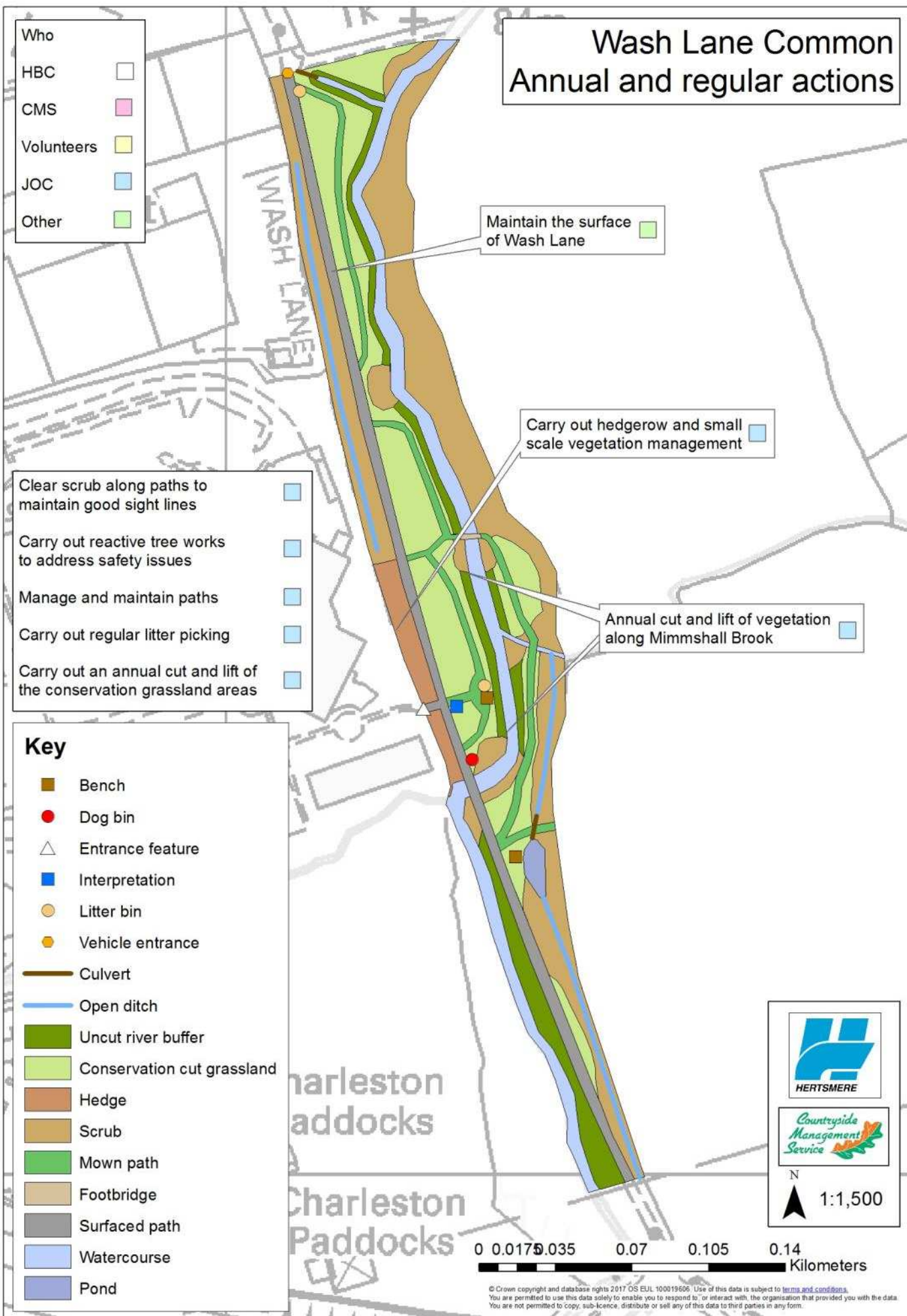
To raise awareness of Wash Lane Common and substantially increase its visitor numbers.

- 7A Re-brand the site as 'Wash Lane Common Nature Reserve' to increase its appeal as viewed from South Mimms services.
- 7B Seek opportunities to market the Common within South Mimms motorway service area.
- 7C Design and produce a new site leaflet to be available within South Mimms services and elsewhere, advertising the opportunity to take a short walk in the Common or beyond.

5. ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Annual cut and lift of vegetation along selected section of Mimmshall Brook	1E	Jul	JOC	GM budget			
Clear scrub along paths to maintain good sight lines	2B	Nov	JOC	GM budget			
Carry out reactive tree works to address safety issues	2D	Ongoing	JOC	GM budget			
Manage and maintain the paths	3A	Ongoing	JOC	GM budget			
Carry out regular litter picking	3B	Ongoing	JOC	GM budget			
Carry out hedgerow and small scale vegetation management	3C	Ongoing	JOC	GM budget			
Maintain the surface of Wash Lane by filling potholes	3D	Ongoing	HCC Highways				
Carry out an annual cut and lift of the conservation grassland areas	5A	Jul	JOC	GM budget			



YEAR 1 ACTION PLAN 2017 – 2018

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Develop an external funding bid to support improvement project	4A	Apr	CMS/HBC	Officer time			
Cut and clear vegetation along Mimmshall Brook, leaving a 1m river buffer	5B	Jul	HBC				
Coppice encroaching scrub	5F	Feb	CMS/volunteers	Officer time/volunteers			
Seek support from Welcome Break for external funding bid	6A	Apr	CMS/HBC	Officer time			
Seek opportunities to market the Common within the motorway service area	7B	Apr	CMS/HBC	Officer time			
Carry out initial control of giant hogweed	5C	May	HBC	GM budget			
Carry out initial control of Japanese knotweed	5C	Aug	HBC	GM budget			

Wash Lane Common Year 1 Actions 2017-18

Who	
HBC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CMS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOC	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Develop an external funding bid to support improvement project	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek support from Welcome Break for external funding bid	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek opportunities to market the Common within the motorway service area	<input type="checkbox"/>

Key

	Bench
	Dog bin
	Entrance feature
	Interpretation
	Litter bin
	Vehicle entrance
	Culvert
	Open ditch
	Uncut river buffer
	Conservation cut grassland
	Hedge
	Scrub
	Mown path
	Footbridge
	Surfaced path
	Watercourse
	Pond

Cut and clear vegetation along Mimmshall Brook ☐

Coppice encroaching scrub ☐

Carry out initial control of giant hogweed ☐

Cut and clear vegetation along Mimmshall Brook ☐

Carry out initial control of Japanese knotweed ☐



0 0.0175 0.035 0.07 0.105 0.14 Kilometers

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YEAR 2 ACTION PLAN 2018 – 2019

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Design and install entrance feature	1A	Sep	CMS/HBC	External			
Design and install new interpretation	1B	Sep	CMS/HBC	External			
Install new picnic tables and benches along Mimmshall Brook	1C	Sep	CMS/HBC	External			
Design and install metal sculptures along a short sculpture trail	1D	Sep	CMS/HBC	External			
Create a short easy access surfaced loop	1F	Sep	CMS/HBC	External			
Clear ditch to improve drainage	1G	Jan	CMS/HBC	External			
Extend conservation grassland cut to areas along river cleared in year 1, annually from 2018	5A	Jul	JOC	GM budget			
Restore existing ponds by desilting and clearing encroaching vegetation	5D	Jan	CMS/HBC	External			
Create a new pond opposite the service area	5E	Jan	CMS/HBC	External			
Design and produce a new 'Wash Lane and Beyond' leaflet	7C	Sep	CMS/HBC	External			
Monitor and control regrowth of giant hogweed	5C	May	HBC	GM budget			
Monitor and control regrowth of Japanese knotweed	5C	Aug	HBC	GM budget			

Wash Lane Common Year 2 Actions 2018-19

Who	
HBC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CMS	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>
JOC	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Create new pond opposite motorway service area ☐

Extend grassland conservation cut to areas cleared in year 1 ☐

Design and produce a new 'Wash Lane and Beyond' leaflet ☐

Install new picnic tables and benches along Mimmshall Brook ☐

Create a short easy access surfaced loop ☐

Monitor and control regrowth of giant hogweed ☐

Design and install new interpretation ☐

Design and install metal sculptures ☐

Restore existing ponds ☐

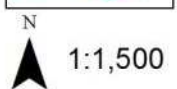
Clear ditch to improve drainage ☐

Design and install new entrance feature ☐

Monitor and control regrowth of Japanese knotweed ☐

Key

- Bench
- Dog bin
- Entrance feature
- Interpretation
- Litter bin
- Vehicle entrance
- Culvert
- Open ditch
- Uncut river buffer
- Conservation cut grassland
- Hedge
- Scrub
- Coppiced scrub
- Mown path
- Footbridge
- Surfaced path
- Watercourse
- Pond



0 0.0175 0.035 0.07 0.105 0.14 Kilometers

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YEAR 3-5 ACTION PLAN 2019 – 2022

Action	Obj. Ref	When	Responsibility	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref	Status
Coppice encroaching scrub	5F	Feb 20	CMS/volunteers	Officer time/ volunteers			
Coppice encroaching scrub	5F	Feb 22	CMS/volunteers	Officer time/ volunteers			
Monitor and control regrowth of Japanese knotweed	5C	Aug 19	HBC	GM budget			
Monitor and control regrowth of giant hogweed	5C	May 19 – May 21	HBC	GM budget			
Draft new Greenspace Action Plan		Jan 22	CMS/HBC	Officer time			

Wash Lane Common Year 3-5 Actions 2019-22

Who	
HBC	
CMS	
Volunteers	
JOC	
Other	

Coppice encroaching scrub
(Y5)

Coppice encroaching scrub
(Y3)

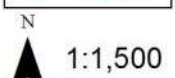
Monitor and control regrowth
of giant hogweed (Y3-Y5)

Draft new Greenspace
Action Plan (Y5)

Key

	Bench
	Dog bin
	Entrance feature
	Interpretation
	Litter bin
	Vehicle entrance
	Culvert
	Open ditch
	Uncut river buffer
	Conservation cut grassland
	Hedge
	Scrub
	Coppiced scrub
	Mown path
	Footbridge
	Surfaced path
	Watercourse
	Pond

Monitor and control regrowth
of Japanese knotweed (Y3)



1:1,500

0 0.017 0.035 0.07 0.105 0.14
Kilometers

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6. SPECIFICATIONS

Note: full specifications to be included in final GAP.

