

Opportunities for biodiversity improvement in East Hagbourne Parish

A discussion document from
East Hagbourne Parish Council (EHPC)
Hagbournes and Upton Group for Sustainability (HUGS)



July 2022



Why improve biodiversity?



- Biodiversity is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. *Royal Society*
 - Nearly half of Britain's biodiversity gone since industrial revolution. *NHM*
 - 13% decline in abundance of wildlife in the UK since the 1970s. *Royal Society*
- Conserving nature and adapting to climate change are two sides of the same coin: *Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme.*
- The Environment Act calls for restoration of natural habitats and increasing biodiversity.
 - DEFRA working on initiatives for Future Farming
- SODC/VOWH have both declared Climate Emergencies
 - SODC have also declared an “Ecological Emergency”

EHPC Strategy and Objectives

- EHPC recognises and values the rural area in which we live
 - Sustainability & biodiversity feature in the Parish Plan of 2010
- The Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2019 emphasizes
 - The valued landscapes of open country and the wide views
 - Designates three "Local Gaps" to preserve separation from Didcot VC1a-c
 - Calls for conservation and enhancement of the landscape to achieve a net biodiversity gain and habitat connectivity Policies SD1, E2
 - Recognises EH's role as "green lungs" for Didcot Garden Town
- EHPC working through its Community Project Strategy
 - Features that contribute to landscape quality and biodiversity have been identified and reported [here](#)
- Adopted principles of the Woodland Trust Charter for Trees. Feb 2019
 - Commissioned report from Oxfordshire Treescape June 2022

HUGS: Activities and achievements

- Hagbourne Environment Group active for many years.
- Reinvigorated as HUGS in 2020 with wider remit.
 - To restore and protect nature and the environment.
 - Facilitate and advocate for sustainable lifestyles.
- Recent achievements:
 - 21 owl nest boxes installed in the Hagbournes SODC funding
 - Wildlife walk, garden competition
 - 721 trees/hedging plants Over 2 years: Gardens + Moor Lane, Butts Piece, Yew Tree Farm, FP18 . . .
 - Grassland restoration at Butts Piece to increase floral diversity.
 - Liaising with activities in Upton
 - New liaison with Hagbourne School

Purpose of this document

- To engage with farmers and other landowners
- To understand their needs and concerns
- To encourage efforts to increase biodiversity
- To highlight our current wildlife assets
- And discuss what could be done in the future



Biodiversity Opportunities: What do we mean?



- DEFRA says DEFRA Mission, 2010
 - Halt biodiversity loss, support healthy ecosystems, establish coherent ecological networks, more and better places for nature
 - for the benefit of wildlife and people.
- Value existing habitats - extend/improve if we can
- Sensitive planting of trees/hedges
- Extend/enrich grasslands
- Oxfordshire Treescape interested in forestry, but also talk about agro-forestry, community orchards, grasslands, hedges, nature recovery networks.

Constraints

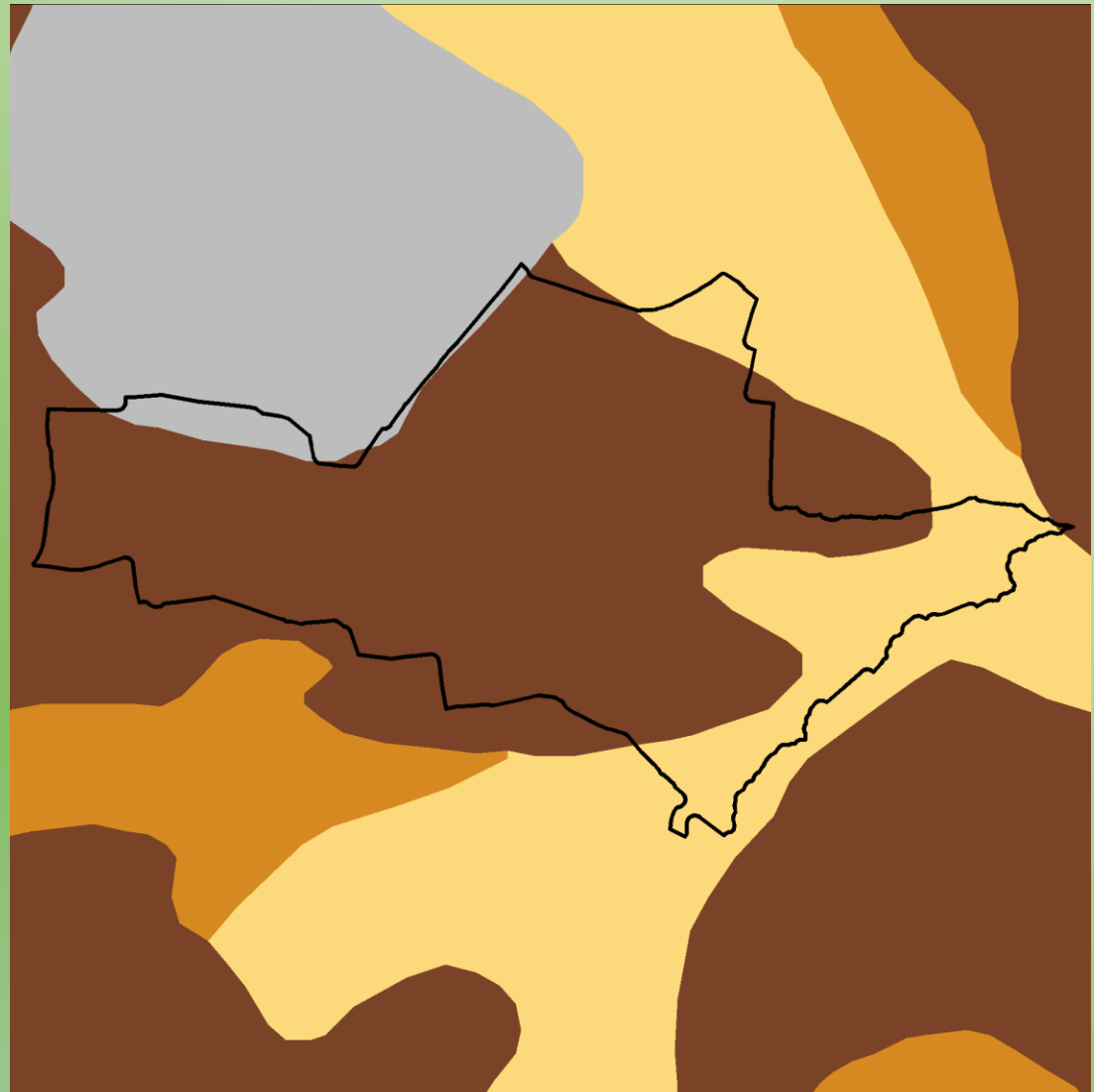
- Much of EH is high grade agricultural land, important for food production.
- EHNP values the open landscape with wide views.
- Practicalities of farming and land management.
- Current information covers mainly East Hagbourne
 - Updating to include adjoining areas would be valuable



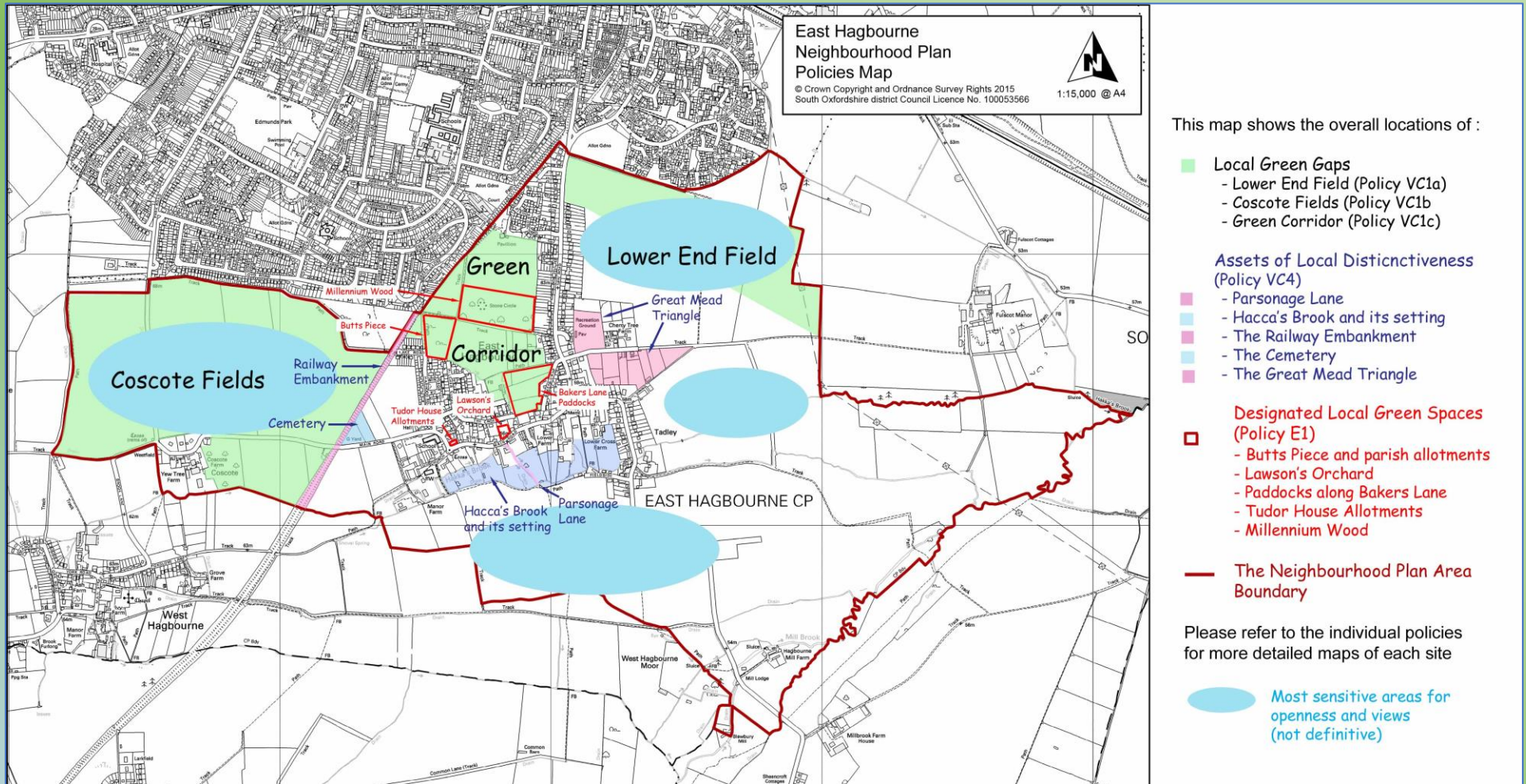
Agricultural Land

Information from Oxfordshire Treescape Project

- Most of parish is Grade 2 land
 - Valuable arable land.
- Grade 4 land 'alluvial lowlands' largely under grass
 - Suitable for more trees?
- Is agro-forestry attractive in this landscape?
- Are there opportunities to restore relict orchards?



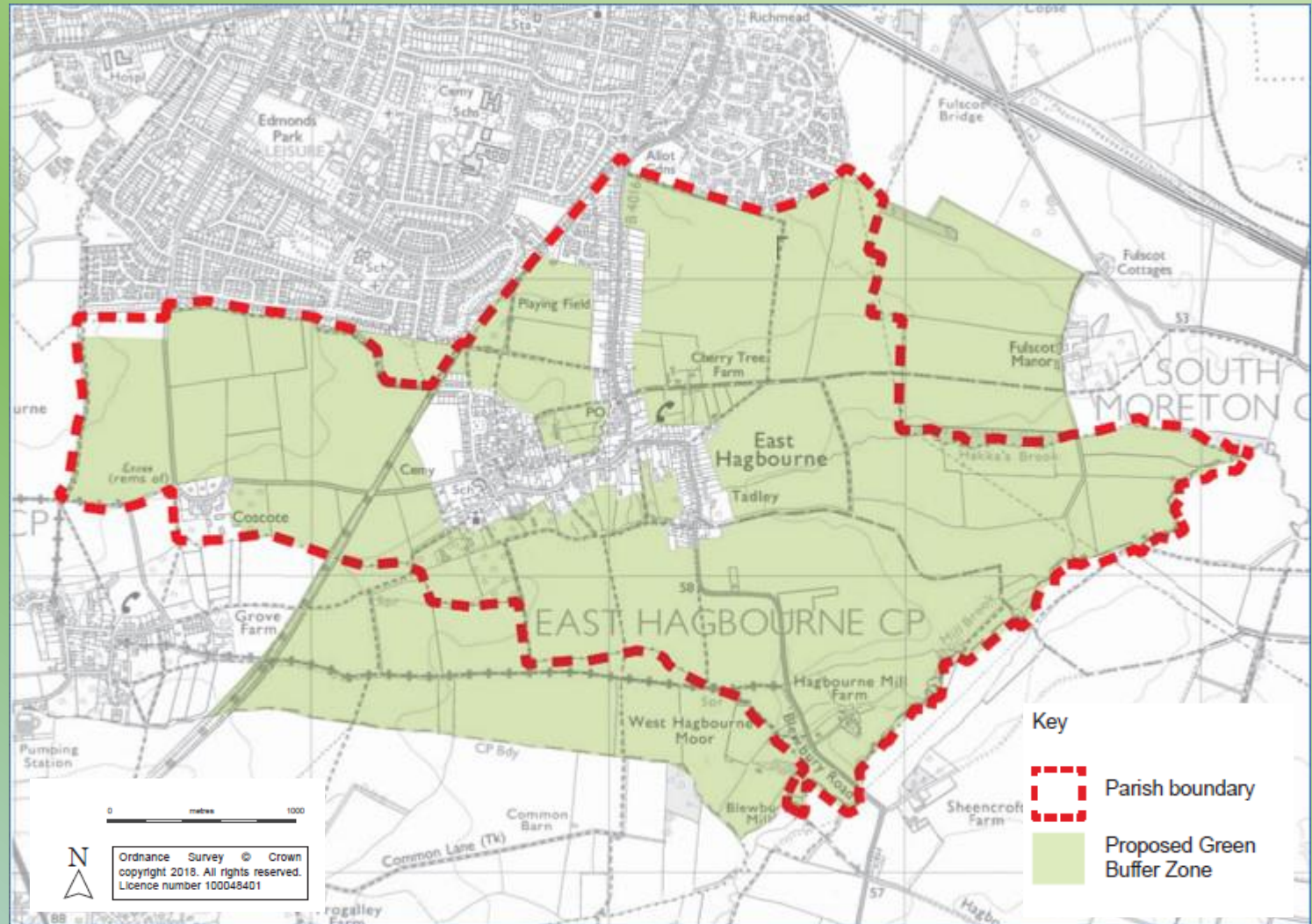
Open Landscape and Views



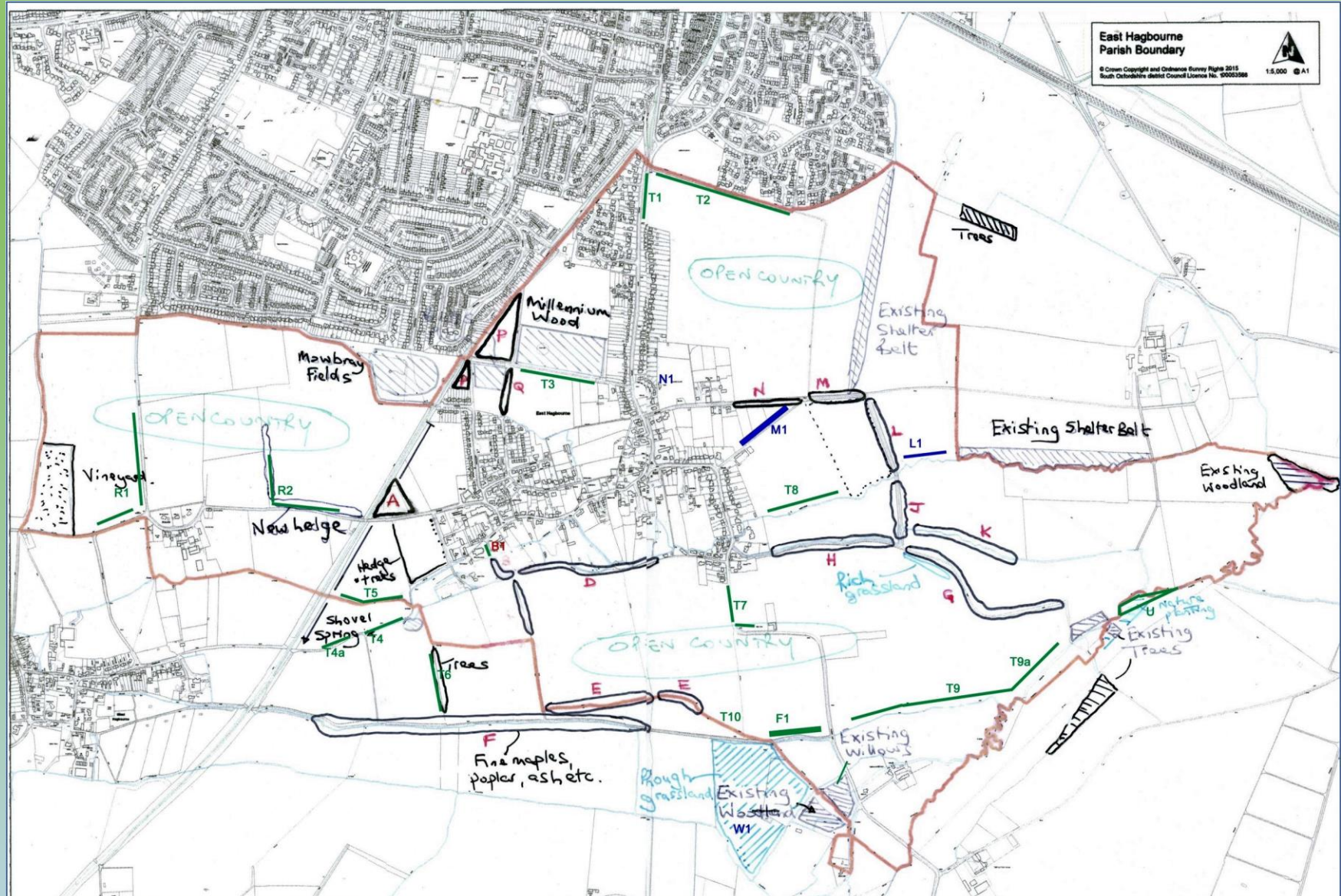
Annotated from EHNP Policies Map

Didcot Garden Town Green Buffer

- From EHNP Appendix 10
- Green Buffer Landscape Study



Existing biodiversity/landscape assets



Discussion - opportunities

| Treescapes | Thought starters |
|--------------------|---|
| Woodland | Are there opportunities on alluvial lowlands. Thicken existing tree belts? |
| Boundary trees | Fill in gaps along streams, field boundaries, Moor Lane etc? |
| Hedgerows | Allowing existing hedges to grow taller? Non-intrusive locations for new hedges? |
| Grasslands | Can diversity of existing grassland be improved? Field edge wildlife areas? |
| Orchards | Are there relict orchard sites that could be restored? |
| Agro-forestry | Does this make sense in our area? |
| Wildlife corridors | Maintenance, are there gaps that could be filled? |



Supplementary Slides

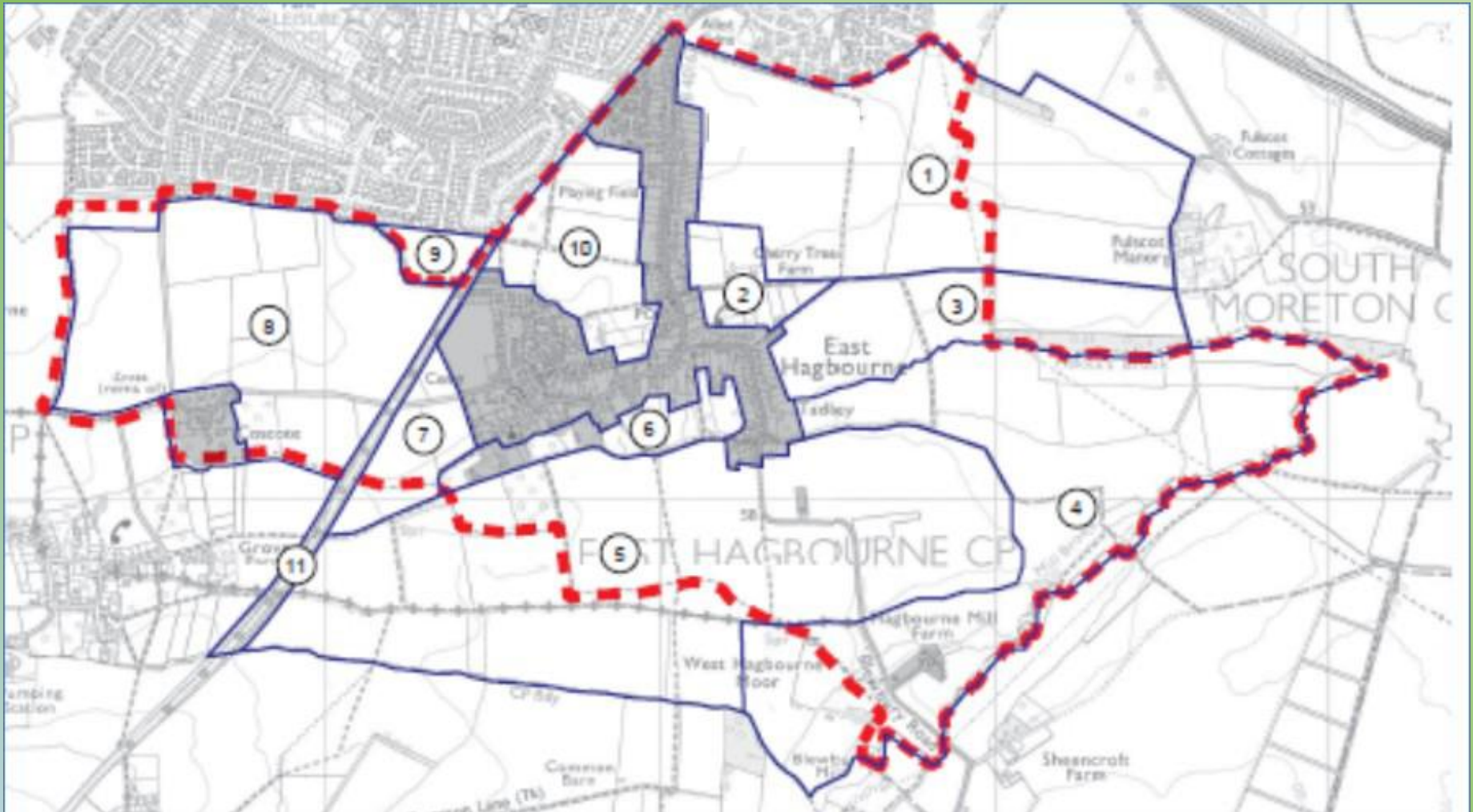
1. Oxfordshire Treescap Project

- The Oxfordshire Treescap Project (<https://www.oxtrees.uk/>) aims to find ways for farmers and landowners to increase tree cover on their land.
- They offer detailed reports of treescap opportunities on individual areas of land, showing where treescapes will bring the most environmental benefit.
 - Reports for farmers, landowners, land managers or land agents on their own land.
 - Reports for parish councils/community groups on opportunities within a parish.
 - The scoring is based on the uplift in DEFRA biodiversity units per hectare
 - Explanatory guide can be downloaded [here](#) .
- Our experience:
 - A good collation/presentation of information on existing assets and biodiversity .
 - But some detail omissions - lacks the local knowledge that we have.
 - Objective evaluation of biodiversity uplift for different options.
 - Bur recommendations/opportunities are based primarily on environmental benefits.
 - Value of arable land is recognised, but wider landscape and social factors not integrated.
 - Best viewed as an information resource rather than a complete analysis.

2. Priorities & Opportunities

- a personal view, guided by Novell Tullett assessment

Guidance from Novell Tullett Green Buffer Assessment (EHNP Appendix 10)



A personal view (guided by Novell Tullett)

- Novell Tullett advise:
 - Conserve existing views: avoid placing trees in sensitive open areas.
 - Conserve/enhance existing trees along trackways, waterways and at edges of open areas.
 - Enhance existing hedges and restore biodiversity, particularly in Area 5, to south of village.
- Meadows, hedges, trees, wildlife corridors all have benefits for carbon capture, biodiversity and general nature recovery.
- Explore grassland opportunities in alluvial lowlands and FP19.
- Explore reduced mowing of existing grassland including verges
- Opportunities in Green Corridor - a more varied landscape.
- Important to find approaches that complement food production.