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To be completed when report is finalised

Executive Summary

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1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2010, Groundwork Luton and Bedfordshire were commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council's Countryside Access Service to produce a vision plan for the network of hills, knolls, lanes and green spaces around the village of Totternhoe.

1.2 The vision plan encompasses the majority of countryside contained within the boundary of the parish of Totternhoe along with a small area of countryside contained within the boundary of the town of Houghton Regis. It contains a unique collection of nationally and locally important historical features and wildlife sites and a network of linear and open access sites providing an important resource for residents and visitors. The area, which sits next to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is a key component of the local Green Infrastructure network with links to a number of sites circling the Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis conurbation. The site location can be seen in Figure 1.

1.3 The aim of the project, as defined by Central Bedfordshire Council in the project brief, is to 'produce a co-ordinated and integrated vision which will inform and enable delivery of a plan to restore, enhance and produce long term management proposals for the heritage, landscape and public access in the area, enable appropriate community engagement with and

manage accessibility to, the landscape of the Totternhoe area which will enable everyone to access, appreciate and enjoy this valuable and unique landscape'

1.4 The project has been guided by a steering group made up of representatives from the following organisations:

- Central Bedfordshire Council – Countryside Access Service, Rights of Way, Landscape, Heritage
- The National Trust
- The Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust
- Totternhoe Parish Council
- Bedfordshire Police

2 The Project Area

2.1 Location

2.1.1 The Totternhoe project area, which is approximately 1051 hectares in size, encompasses the majority of countryside contained within the boundary of the parish of Totternhoe along with a small area of countryside contained within the boundary of the town of Houghton Regis. The project area is bordered by the Dunstable/Houghton Regis conurbation to the east and by open countryside on all other sides.

2.1.2 The project area borders the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and sits within the Chalk Arc corridor which forms a broad arc around the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation encompassing a number of valuable countryside and urban fringe sites including Dunstable Downs.

2.2 Site Ownership and Management

2.2.1 There are a large number of landowners across the area including owner/occupier farmers, quarrying companies, the Wildlife Trust and Central Bedfordshire Council. Large sections of the area are under arable cultivation with further parts used for horse paddocks.

2.2.2 Between them Central Bedfordshire Council, The National Trust and the Wildlife Trust own and/or manage the majority of the publicly accessible parts of the project area, not including the rights of way network, see Figure 2. These parts of the site are managed for the benefit of biodiversity, heritage and visitors and to address the conflicts which inevitable arise between the three.

2.2.3 Approximately 40% of land within the project area is entered into agri-environment schemes as shown in Figure 3. The majority being in entry level with some parts entered into the higher level scheme. The Wildlife Trust have provided advice on agri-environment schemes to some land owners in the area, including producing Farm Environment Plans but there is currently no overall co-ordination in the area.

2.3 Geology

2.3.1 The project area sits on Chalk, the underlying rock of much of Southern Bedfordshire. It is this underlying geology which has ultimately shaped the area's landscape, wildlife, settlement and industry. The area includes one geological Site of Special Scientific Interest – Totternhoe Stone Pit, which was notified in 1996. The citation for this can be found in appendix 1.

2.3.2 The project area includes a subdivision of Chalk unique to the area known as Totternhoe Stone. Totternhoe Stone, also known as 'Clunch' is a particularly hard form of Chalk with properties which make it very suitable for decorative carving. It has been found in the remains of a Roman Road and Villa, has been used in a number of local churches, at Woburn Abbey and most notably at Westminster Abbey.

2.3.3 The Bedfordshire and Luton Geology Group are active in the project area and have a particular interest in the numerous chalk exposures including the cliffs and Totternhoe Stone Pit. More information about the Geology Group including leaflets they have produced focusing on 'Totternhoe Stone' and 'Lime and Cement Production' can be found at www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk.

2.4 Biodiversity

2.4.1 The underlying chalk has resulted in the development of a network of highly valuable communities of chalk grassland plants and associated wildlife across the project area. Amongst the variety of significant species at the site are a number of scarce orchids and important chalk butterflies such as the Duke of Burgundy and Chalk Hill Blue. There are a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, County Wildlife Sites and nature reserves established within the area which

are managed to maintain and enhance this biodiversity, the extent of these areas can be seen in Figure 4.

2.4.2 The extensive network of farmland habitats including field margins and hedgerows also bring significant biodiversity interest to the area supporting a diverse range of arable weeds and farmland bird species.

2.4.3 The Wildlife Trust is active in the area through site management and land purchase with the aim of creating linkages and buffering important habitats to support and enhance the populations of key species.

2.4.4 The project area includes three biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Houghton Regis Marl Lakes (notified in 1988), Totternhoe Knolls (notified in 1951) and Totternhoe Chalk Quarry (notified in 1990). The citation for each of these can be found in appendix 1.

2.4.5 The three biological SSSI's are in varying conditions. In August 2009 one part of the Houghton Regis Marl Lakes area was assessed as being 'unfavourable, no change' and in August 2010 the second part of the Houghton Regis Marl Lakes area was assessed as being 'unfavourable, declining'. In August 2009 Totternhoe Chalk Quarry was assessed as

being in a 'favourable' condition and Totternhoe Knolls was assessed as being 'unfavourable, recovering'.

2.5 Heritage and Landscape

2.5.1 The Totternhoe area has a rich heritage, the impact of which is clearly visible on the landscape to this day. The Historic Environment Record shows evidence of numerous Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman finds and features across the area indicating a long history of human activity and occupation.

2.5.2 Quarrying has been a major feature of the area for almost 2000 years and continues today with the active lime works. The landscape of the area has been greatly influenced by this activity, from the small scale historic quarries around Totternhoe Knolls to the larger Totternhoe Stone Pit and the striking exposed chalk cuttings and flat arable fields in the quarry bases, which are the product of more recent large scale mineral extraction in the area.

2.5.3 The area contains three Scheduled Monuments:

- Maiden Bower – Iron Age Hill Fort which is believed may overlie a Neolithic causewayed enclosure.

- Totternhoe Castle – an 11th Century Norman motte and triple bailey castle, medieval quarries and strip lynchets. Only earthworks remain
- Totternhoe Roman Villa at Church Farm – occupied in the 4th century. Partially excavated in the 1950's, nothing is visible above ground.

2.5.4 The area also contains two Conservation Areas – one encompassing the hamlet of Sewell and another covering the Church End area of the village of Totternhoe. The extent of these Conservation Areas along with the area's three Scheduled monuments can be seen in Figure 5.

2.5.5 The District Landscape Character Assessment for the area identifies the presence of numerous springs which are likely to be of archaeological interest due to their potential as sites of ritual importance. See section 3.6 for further information on Landscape Character Assessments for the area.

2.6 Access Routes

2.6.1 The project area contains an extensive network of ancient green lanes and public rights of way including footpaths, bridleways and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs), see Figure 7. A number of the BOAT's have traffic regulation orders dating from 1974 and 1984 to restrict the use of

vehicles, not including street legal motorbikes. In 1999 gates were installed at the entrances to the green lanes to address issues of illegal access, fly tipping, joy riding and abandoned vehicles.

2.6.2 The area also includes the Sewell Greenway cycleway. The cycleway follows the route of an old railway line and forms part of National Route 6 of the National Cycle Network. The route has been used informally for years and was recently surfaced, in a project led by Sustrans, to provide a hard surface for bikes, wheelchairs and pushchairs and a soft surface for horses. A surfaced 'off shoot' of the Sewell Greenway links the cycleway with a surfaced multi-user route at near by Dunstable Downs.

2.6.3 The extensive rights of way network in the area offers users a variety of unofficial circular routes of varying lengths, suitable for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. In the past a number of promoted circular routes have been established in the area with associated leaflets and/or way marking on the ground. Information on two circular routes is currently available on the 'Let's Go!' website, one for walkers and one for horse riders. Work is currently underway to develop a circular cycle route in the area linking with adjacent Dunstable Downs.

2.6.4 Two long distance routes pass through the area. The Icknield Way Trail, a multi-user route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders based on the Icknield Way Path and the Chiltern Way, a 125 mile circular walking route set up and maintained by volunteers from the Chiltern Society.

2.7 Visitor Facilities

2.7.1 Designated car parking for visitors to the area is provided at Totternhoe Knolls and is accessed and signposted from Totternhoe village. The car park is under the management of the National Trust. A small amount of unregulated car parking in the hamlet of Sewell and at the base of Dunstable Downs is also used by visitors to the area.

2.7.2 Picnic benches are provided at Totternhoe Knolls car park, these are also under the management of the National Trust. Little, if any, other seating is provided in area. There are no public toilets in the area. The nearest larger scale visitor facilities to the site are available at Dunstable Downs where there are toilets, a café, shop and organised activities.

2.7.3 Plans are in place to offer a cycle hire service at Dunstable Downs. Whilst not in the project area, the surfaced links and

development of a promoted cycle route are likely to result in a number of new cyclists coming to the Totternhoe area.

2.8 Site Users and Non-Users

Totternhoe Knolls User and Non – User Survey

2.8.1 In 2009 Michael Baldwin Associates, commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council, undertook a user and non-user survey for Totternhoe Knolls. The work involved on site interviews with visitors to the Knolls and interviews in the villages surrounding the site. In total 98 people were interviewed, 56 site users and 42 non-users. Full details of the survey work can be found in appendix 2.

2.8.2 The key findings of the on site interviews with 50 individuals were as follows:

- More of those interviewed were male (60%) than female (40%)
- The vast majority classified their ethnicity as White (98%)
- 4% had a physical disability
- 87% of those interviewed visited the site once a week or more
- Most visitors lived fairly close to the site - 30% travelled less than half a mile, 18% about a mile, 14% 1-2 miles, 24% 2-5 miles and 12% 5 or more.

- Car was the most used mode of transport to the site (45.1%), followed by walking (35.3%), horseback/pony trap (13.7%) and cycling (5.9%). None of those interviewed used public transport.

2.8.3 The key findings of the interviews with non-users were as follows:

- More non-users were female (59.5%) than male (40.5%)
- The most popular actions which would change non-users views or increase their use of the site were information on facilities available (37.5%), better promotion of site (25%), articles in local newspaper (12.5%), promotional days/events for targeted groups (12.5%) and remove motorcyclists (12.5%).

Wider Totternhoe Area User Consultation

2.8.4 As part of the production of this report a public consultation was carried out over a three week period in February and /March 2011. The main purpose of the consultation was to gather public opinion and comments on the proposals for the area; however the feedback questionnaire also included a number of questions relating to current use of the site.

2.8.5 Feedback questionnaires were either completed online (via the Groundwork Luton and Bedfordshire website) or at an

event held in Totternhoe village. Exactly 100 people in total completed the questionnaires, the full results can be found in appendix 2, the key findings were as follows:

- 82% of those who completed a questionnaire visit the area once a week or more with 54% visiting daily.
- On average, 80% of people who completed the questionnaire visit the area for between 30 minutes and 2 hours. Only 5% visit for 30 minutes or less.
- The most commonly used mode of transport to the area is walking (84%), followed by car (21%) then horse and bicycle (both 13%).
- The majority of people who completed the questionnaire travel less than a 1 mile to use the area (72%), only 17% travel 2 miles or more.
- The five most popular reasons given for visiting the area were 'walking' (82% of respondents), 'enjoy the beauty of the surroundings' (69%), 'to enjoy wildlife' (68%), 'get some fresh air' (64%) and 'for peace and quiet' (57%). 45% of those responding visit the area to walk their dog, 29% to cycle and 17% for horse riding.

2.8.6 Respondents to the public consultation were also asked how frequently they visited different parts of the project area (which was divided into 8 parts for the purpose of the consultation). A map showing the areas along with the full

results can be found in appendix 2, the key findings were as follows:

- The most frequently visited areas were Totternhoe Knolls, the green lanes and quarries and the area around Maiden Bower, each of these areas is visited once a week or more by over 50% of respondents.
- The least frequently visited area was Houghton Regis quarry with only 6% of respondents visiting once a week or more and 70% visiting seldom or never.

2.8.7 The key reasons given for not visiting Houghton Regis Quarry specifically were motorbikes and a lack of bridleway links. The three most frequently given reasons for not visiting other parts of the site were distance from home, muddy/damaged paths and lack of accessibility (e.g. no paths, no cycle paths, no bridleways).

2.9 Development

2.9.1 Proposals for two separate housing developments within the Totternhoe project area are currently going through the planning system. Figure 8 shows the location of each of these.

Houghton Quarry Development

2.9.2 The first and furthest progressed of the proposals is for 140 dwellings on the eastern boundary of the Houghton Regis quarry area, subject to planning consent, construction on these could begin in summer 2011.

2.9.3 The Wildlife Trust are in advanced discussions regarding developer contributions to the support the management of the adjacent SSSI and County Wildlife Site and the developers are currently producing a management plan for both of these areas. This management plan will be viewed in conjunction with a water level management plan for the Marl Lakes area which is currently being produced by the Environment Agency, in order to determine the habitat management requirements of the area as a whole. Both the management plan and water level management plan are due for completion by April 2011.

2.9.4 Initial discussions with developers regarding contributions from larger scale development to the north of Houghton Regis Quarry, in line with the core strategy, have also taken place. The main proposal at this point is the financing of a 'management hub' on the northern edge of the quarry to act as a base for staff managing the area as well as providing some visitor facilities such as a café and information centre.

North West Dunstable Development

2.9.5 The second housing proposal currently within the planning system is for up to 650 dwellings on the western edge of Dunstable on land between the Beecroft area of Dunstable and Maiden Bower Scheduled Monument.

2.9.6 The developers have identified a number of green infrastructure benefits as a result of the development including appropriate management and public access to Maiden Bower Scheduled Monument, provision of new chalk grassland, hedge planting and management, access routes and interpretation. The proposals also include the provision of a base within the development for Wildlife Trust staff working in the Totternhoe area.

2.9.7 The North West Dunstable planning application was submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council over a year ago and is due to be examined alongside the Core Strategy (see section 3.1).

3 Policy Context

3.1 Local Development Framework – Core Strategy

3.1.1 The Core Strategy identifies how and where new home, jobs and supporting infrastructure will be provide across Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire over the coming years. The pre-submission Core Strategy was published for comment between 29 November and 2010 and 17 January 2011 and it is currently anticipated that it, along with other relevant documentation, will be submitted to the Secretary of State in early March 2011. Further information can be found at www.shapeyourfuture.org.uk.

3.1.2 The pre-submission Core Strategy outlines the provision of 23,000 dwellings and 28,000 jobs in the area between 2011 and 2026. In order to meet these targets, three new urban extensions are allocated in Central Bedfordshire including one ‘North of Houghton Regis’ sitting between the M1 and A5. This area Strategic Site Specific Allocations (SSSA’s), which encompasses part of the Totternhoe project area, is identified as a suitable location for the provision of 5,150 new homes, 30 hectares of new employment opportunities and associated infrastructure. The extent of the SSSA in the project area can be seen in Figure 8.

3.1.3 The ‘North of Houghton Regis’ SSSA is further divided into two sites. Site 1 comprises the area between the A5120 and the M1; it is proposed that this area receives a large proportion of the development. Site 2 comprises the area between the A5120 and A5 and encompasses part of the Totternhoe project area. The pre-submission Core Strategy proposes that this area receive a much smaller proportion of development, approximately 750 houses, 5 hectares of new employment land and supporting community and green infrastructure. Site 2 also provides a contingency of an additional 750 homes.

3.1.4 With regard to Green Infrastructure (GI), the pre-submission Core Strategy reflects the content of the strategic and district level GI Plans (outlined in section 3.2) in identifying four priority areas for GI in Luton and Southern Bedfordshire, two of which include parts of the Totternhoe project area. The document also sets out the following Core Policy for green infrastructure:

- ‘A net gain in green infrastructure will be sought, particularly in the urban extensions, through the protection and enhancement of the area’s green infrastructure assets...and the creation of connected, multi-functional areas of green space

- Development will contribute to the establishment, enhancement or ongoing management of local green infrastructure linking with the strategic green infrastructure network inline with the strategic green infrastructure networks identified in the GI Plans
- Where on-site provision of green infrastructure is not possible, contributions will be sought and used to enhance the strategic green infrastructure network as identified in the GI plans.

3.2 Green Infrastructure (GI)

3.2.1 The Bedfordshire and Luton GI Consortium is an informal partnership of local authorities, government agencies and voluntary and community sector groups whose role is to promote and advise on GI, co-ordinate GI planning and support the funding and delivery of GI projects.

3.2.2 The Bedfordshire and Luton GI Consortium has defined GI as ‘a strategically planned and managed network of accessible greenspace and access routes, landscapes, biodiversity and heritage which will meet the needs of existing and new communities by providing:

- an essential environmental foundation and support system;
- a healthy and rich environment;

- attractive places to live and visit and a good quality of life;
- a sustainable future’

3.2.3 The GI Consortium has developed a series of GI plans for Bedfordshire, these include the strategic, ‘Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Plan’ (2007) which identifies broad priorities across Bedfordshire and the more detailed ‘Luton and Southern Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan’ (2009) which provides more detailed information on the opportunities and priorities for GI.

3.2.4 Both the GI Plans outlined above identify the countryside around Totternhoe as an area of opportunity in relation to landscape, the historic environment, biodiversity and access.

3.2.5 The project area makes up part of two of the eleven corridors, identified in the Luton and Bedfordshire GI Plan as areas where investment and project delivery can make the most impact in securing multi-functional Green Infrastructure. These corridors are ‘The Chalk Arc’ and ‘Leighton Linlade to Dunstable’ and are latterly known as ‘network areas’ in the Luton and Southern Bedfordshire GI Plan.

3.2.6 The Luton and Southern Bedfordshire GI Plan identifies priority projects for each network area, two of these projects include works relating to the Totternhoe project area - Chalk Living Landscape and Totternhoe Heritage Park. Further information on these can be found in appendix 3.

3.3 The Chalk Arc

3.3.1 The Chalk Arc corridor extends in a broad arc around the north of the Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis conurbation, extending south to incorporate the Whipsnade area and towards the north of Caddington; it includes the whole of the Totternhoe area. The area is expected to receive major housing growth.

3.3.2 The Chalk Arc Initiative was established with funding from the then Department for Communities and Local Government to focus on securing GI in and around the Chalk Arc area in order to contribute to the quality of life of existing and new communities.

3.3.3 The Chalk Arc Initiative has funded a number of projects in the Totternhoe project area which have enhanced and secured GI assets including land purchases by the Wildlife Trust, a surfaced cycle link and enhancements to the Totternhoe Knolls car park. Further information on the Chalk

Arc and funded projects can be found on the Chalk Arc website www.chalkarc.org.uk.

3.4 Multi Functional Green Space (MFGS) Scoping Report

3.4.1 In 2009 the Chalk Arc Initiative commissioned the production of a scoping report to identify options for the delivery and financing of at least 60 hectares of new, strategic, multi-functional green space in the Luton and southern Bedfordshire area.

3.4.2 The report 'Strategic Multi Strategic Multi-functional Greenspace in Luton and Southern Bedfordshire' (2009) produced by Kit Campbell Associates, identifies 11 sites in the area which could potentially delivery strategic multi-functional greenspace. Two of the identified sites fall within the Totternhoe project area – 'Houghton Regis Quarry' and 'Totternhoe Area from Maiden Bower to Totternhoe Castle'.

3.4.3 Each of the 11 identified sites was reviewed against a range of objective criteria in order to evaluate the potential benefits to existing and new communities. 'Houghton Quarry' was found to score highly against 6 out of the 8 criteria whilst the 'Totternhoe Area' scored highly against 2 out of the 8.

3.4.4 The report recommends that Houghton Regis Quarry should be the Chalk Arc Initiative's second priority for the development of a strategic multi-functional green space project as it appears to offer the greatest potential public benefit. It is recommended that the Totternhoe Area should be the Chalk Arc Initiative's third priority area. A summary of the findings for 'Houghton Regis Quarry' and 'Totternhoe Area from Maiden Bower to Totternhoe Castle' can be found in appendix 4.

3.5 Totternhoe Living Network

3.5.1 The Chalk Arc Initiative has previously funded the development of a series of GI Plans for parishes in the Chalk Arc area, known as Living Networks. In 2007 the Totternhoe Parish GI Plan or 'Totternhoe Living Network' was produced through consultation with local residents, led by the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity.

3.5.2 The 'Totternhoe Living Network' was developed through a two-stage process of reviewing existing Green Infrastructure mapping for the area followed by the identification of aspirational enhancements to existing Green Infrastructure and aspirational new Green Infrastructure. The process resulted in an agreed action plan for the parish of Totternhoe, to be taken forward by the Parish Council and

local residents. Further details of the action plan can be found in appendix 5.

3.6 Landscape Character Assessment

South Bedfordshire District Landscape Character Assessment

3.6.1 In 2006 a district-wide Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken of southern Bedfordshire at a scale of 1:25,000. The report explains that Landscape Character Assessment is a method for understanding what the landscape is like today, how it came to be like that, and how it might change in the future. The Totternhoe project area falls within three character areas, 5A – Eaton Bray Clay Vale, 9B – Totternhoe Chalk Escarpment and 10A – Totternhoe – Dunstable Downs Rolling Chalk Farmland.

3.6.2 The overall strategy for landscape character area 5A – Eaton Bray Clay Vale, is to enhance/renew the landscape by restoring and repairing elements that have been lost or degraded. In particular the assessment identifies the opportunity to promote the restoration and management of the plum/damson orchards which were previously common in the Totternhoe and Eaton Bray area.

3.6.3 The overall strategy for landscape character area 9B – Totternhoe Chalk Escarpment is to enhance the Totternhoe

escarpment which despite development pressures retains a strong sense of place. In particular the assessment identifies opportunities to restore chalk grassland, improve the management of recreational use and conserve the unique views from the area.

3.6.4 The overall strategy for landscape area 10A – Totternhoe – Dunstable Downs Rolling Chalk Farmland is to enhance the landscape and its key features with the aim of improving the condition of the landscape. In particular the assessment identifies opportunities for landscape renewal through the restoration of grassland, conservation of woodland areas and enhancement of existing and historic hedgerows, particularly those which border the green lanes. Further information on all three landscape character areas can be found in appendix 6.

Chalk Arc Landscape Character Assessment

3.6.5 In 2007 a ‘finer grain’ Landscape Character Assessment of the Chalk Arc area was produced, informed by the Southern Bedfordshire District Landscape Character Assessment. The study focused on the urban fringe areas on the northern edge of the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation and includes much of the Totternhoe project area.

3.6.6 For rural areas the study identified subdivisions of the landscape character areas outlined in the Southern Bedfordshire District Landscape Character Assessment at a scale of 1:10,000. Urban areas not included in the district level plan were also identified. Each area is evaluated with reference to quality/condition, sensitivity, landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity.

3.6.7 The Totternhoe Project area includes all or part of fourteen of the landscape character areas identified in the Chalk Arc Landscape Character Assessment:

- Totternhoe Clay Vale Village
- Church End Farmland Slopes
- Harvey Road/The Avenue Post War Suburb
- Totternhoe/Sewell Chalk Quarries
- Badger Gate Contemporary Development
- Maiden Bower Plateau Farmland
- Hillcroft Post War Suburb
- Barley Brow/Suncote Pit Rough Grassland & Scrub
- Salters Way Post War Suburb
- High Street North Industrial Estate
- Chalk Hill Escarpment
- Houghton Regis Chalk Quarry

- Millers Way Contemporary Development

3.6.8 Details of the evaluation of each of the areas listed above can be found in appendix 6.

3.7 Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan

3.7.1 Published in 2006, the Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan is a 10 year programme of activity to improve access to the countryside to meet the current and future needs of the residents of Bedfordshire and visitors to the county. The plan incorporates and expands upon the legal requirements of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

3.7.2 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan includes an action plan structured into seven themes, each of which has relevance to the Totternhoe area project. The 10 year outcome statement for each of the seven themes can be found in appendix 7.

- Getting involved – increasing community involvement
- Getting out and feeling great – promoting exercise and healthy living
- Open for access – access to facilities for the whole community

- Looking after your outdoors – enhancing the management of green space and linear routes
- Completing the jigsaw – addressing fragmentation and severance
- Knowing the way – Improving communication with the public
- Countryside and the economy – ensuring rural businesses benefit from our work

3.7.3 Although the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan is a 10 year programme of activity, the action plan only covers a 5 year period and is currently under review with a second plan expected to be published in 2011.

3.8 Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy

3.8.1 Central Bedfordshire Council published its first Sustainable Community Strategy in 2010. Developed by Central Bedfordshire Together (the name for the Local Strategic Partnership), the strategy sets out the higher level actions the authority will take to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and the people who live there.

3.8.2 The strategy sets out eight priorities and associated actions, of which the following have direct relevance to the aims of this project.

Priority - Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging

- Enrich people's lives by encouraging participation in regular volunteering, sport and physical activity, and in the arts and cultural activities.
- Promote active community engagement by providing opportunities for everyone to take part in community life, and developing and supporting a thriving voluntary and community sector.
- Build a sense of identity and belonging by enabling more people to influence decisions in their locality if they wish, and empowering and supporting people to manage their local facilities

Priority - Getting around and caring for a green and clean environment

- Continue to tackle fly tipping and reduce environmental crime
- Improve and increase access to our countryside and recreation activities and extend green space alongside our sites of housing growth.

- Find new viable uses for our listed buildings and sites of historical interest to keep our heritage and culture alive.
- Support our residents to reduce their energy costs and live more sustainable and active lives
- Protect, enhance and raise awareness of our biodiversity, landscape, historical environment, green spaces and paths

Priority - Promoting health and reducing health inequalities

- Support more people to be more active and eat healthily

3.9 More People Cycling: A Strategy for Central Bedfordshire

3.9.1 'More People Cycling' forms the Cycle Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and sits within a framework of documents which comprise the third Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the area covered by the new unitary Central Bedfordshire Council.

3.9.2 The vision of the Strategy reflects that of Cycling England, the national champions for cycling across the country by "Encouraging people to cycle, to cycle safely, and to cycle more often"

3.9.3 'More People Cycling' sets out a series of objectives devised to represent the range of areas through which it will be achieve its overall vision:

- Headline Objective: Increase the number of people cycling
- Improve the quality of the cycling environment
- Improve the safety and perceived safety of cycling
- Increase awareness of the benefits of cycling
- Increase access to a bicycle

3.9.4 The strategy highlights the importance of having infrastructure in place which provides a dedicated, comprehensive and coherent cycle network in order to encourage more people to cycle, safely and more often.

4 Issues and Opportunities

4.1 Method

4.1.1 The following section outlines a comprehensive list of the issues and opportunities identified in the Totternhoe project area. Due to the extensive amount of research and survey work carried out previously in the area (as outlined in sections 2 and 3) much of the list was compiled from existing sources for example the Totternhoe Living Network (GI Plan) and the Landscape Character Assessments.

4.1.2 In order to ensure up to date information and the inclusion of partners and stakeholders some additional research was also carried out. A SWOT analysis was carried out with the key project partners – Central Bedfordshire Council, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trust – the results of which can be found in appendix 8. Key stakeholders were met either individually or as part of the project steering group. Other stakeholders were written to and invited to input either via a stakeholder event held in Totternhoe Village or by contacting Groundwork directly. A full list of partners and stakeholders can be found in appendix 9.

4.1.3 Many of the issues and opportunities identified through the research are of relevance across the project area however

some are only applicable to specific parts of the site. For this reason, and due to the number and diversity of the issues and opportunities identified, for the purposes of this report the issues and opportunities have been grouped into the following specific themes:

- **Biodiversity**
- **Access**
- **Public use and engagement**
- **Geology, landscape and heritage**

There are of course areas of cross over, with some issues and opportunities linking to two or more themes.

4.2 Biodiversity issues and opportunities

- **Fragility of habitats** – the area's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), County Wildlife Sites and other valuable habitats are vulnerable to damage and degradation for example through public use (both legitimate and illegal) and insufficient or inappropriate management. The area's biological SSSI's are in varying conditions and require appropriate, ongoing management in order to reach and maintain 'favorable' classification.
- **Fragmentation of habitats** – some of the area's most valuable habitats are small in size and isolated from

other important habitats both within the project area and beyond making them and the species they support vulnerable to even small amounts of damage or degradation.

- **Exposed cliff faces** – the striking, exposed cliff faces are an important feature of the area in terms of geology, landscape, heritage and biodiversity. Appropriate management is required to protect the valuable habitat, prevent erosion and ensure the safety of visitors using both the top and base of the cliffs.
- **Nationally important sites and species** – there are opportunities to conserve and enhance this aspect of the project area and to use it to engage visitors
- **Agri-environment schemes** – a large proportion of the land within the area is under agri-environment schemes however there are significant sections which are not currently under a scheme and there is little co-ordination to ensure a consistent focus or common priorities across the area.
- **Habitat corridors** – the project area contains a number of features such as the green lanes and cycle way which form habitat corridors. In some cases these features require management to conserve and enhance their value. There are also other areas of land which could play an important role as habitat corridors both within the

area and to sites beyond (such as Dunstable Downs) but which are not managed with their role as a wildlife link in mind.

4.3 Access issues and opportunities

- **Access into and out of site** – the area has good walking and cycling links to local communities including Totternhoe, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard through the Sewell cycle way, National Cycle Network and rights of way network. These links provide an opportunity to encourage visitors to access the site by foot, cycle or horse rather than by car.
- **Links to other sites** – the area has good access links to other countryside sites, particularly Dunstable Downs, which offers a range of visitor facilities and in turn links to other sites moving south through the Chilterns such as Ivinghoe Beacon and Ashridge.
- **Rights of Way network** – the area's extensive rights of way network is highly valued. The large number of byways and bridleways available for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders does result in some conflicts between different user groups, for example horse riders reporting that cyclists pass inconsiderately or at high speed and walkers reporting that horse riders create muddy, impassable routes. There are also many reports

of user groups using the wrong routes for example horse riders using footpaths. Although the rights of way network is extensive there are some gaps which if addressed would significantly increase the opportunity for circular walks and rides in the area.

- **Promoted routes** – over the years a number of promoted circular routes which make use of the project area have been developed, however many of the leaflets have gone out of print and/or there is inconsistent way marking of routes on the ground.
- **Site entrances** – there are numerous entrances to the project area, none of which, with the exception of Totterhoe car park, give any information about the area, its key features or access routes. In addition, some of the entrances are unattractive and unwelcoming and as a result do not encourage responsible use of the area.
- **A5** – the A5 runs through the project area creating a barrier between the Houghton Regis quarry and the rest of the project area. A pedestrian crossing point is provided in Dunstable, close to French's Avenue, but this requires users to enter the urban area and does not link the bridleways either side of the A5.
- **Surfacing and the condition of rights of way surfaces** – The Sewell cycle way and the route linking this to Dunstable Downs are currently the only surfaced

routes in the project area. There have been concerns raised that the softer half of the Sewell surfacing, designed for use by horse riders, is not properly maintained and as a result horse riders are being forced onto the harder surface which was designed for use by walkers and cyclists. There have also been concerns raised about damage to the surfaces of some of the green lanes in the area, in particular about rutting resulting from vehicles access.

4.4 Public use and engagement issues and opportunities

- **Lack of visitor facilities** – the project area does not include any dedicated visitor facilities baring the car park and picnic area at Totterhoe Knolls. There are few benches, litter bins or dog bins in the area and no public toilets or a visitor centre. Although in some ways a weakness, this lack of facilities does help to maintain the undeveloped, rural feel of the area and offers a contrasting visitor experience to near by Dunstable Downs.
- **Lack of public participation in site** – there is currently little public involvement in the area however there are significant opportunities to increase this for example through practical volunteering, community consultation,

the development of a 'friends of' type group and organised events.

- **Lack of education and interpretation** – there is little interpretation relating to the project area either on or off site. The area's unique combination of heritage, geology, biodiversity, landscape and access provides huge opportunities for formal and informal education and interpretation.
- **Illegal vehicle access** - the site has suffered and continues to suffer from illegal vehicle use, particularly by motor bikes and to some extent cars and 4x4's. The issue is of particular concern to the local community and has resulted in damage to valuable habitats and heritage features in the area. Anecdotal evidence suggests the level of illegal use had recently reduced; this is probably in part due to going operations by the Police in partnership with other stakeholders and the community. The Police report that an issue they face in addressing the problem is the extensive number of exit points from the area, particularly leading to the Beecroft area of west Dunstable.
- **Anti – social behaviour and misuse** – As well as illegal vehicle use, the project area has also suffered with other forms of misuse and anti-social behaviour. Problems include vandalism to gates and fencing (often associated

with this illegal vehicle use), vandalism and vehicle crime in Totternhoe Knolls car park (although this has reduced following interventions by the Police and National Trust) and metal detecting which can irreversibly damage the site's heritage features through the removal of items and associated excavations.

- **On site staff presence** – both the National Trust and Wildlife Trust have a presence in the area with staff carrying out site ranger type duties and running occasional volunteer tasks. The Police also make some visits to the area. Previously the three organisations coordinated their work at the site to ensure a staff presence on as many days as possible however this system is no longer in place and there is no guaranteed staff presence in the area on any given day.
- **Dog use** – as with many countryside sites there are issues with uncontrolled dogs in the area which can affect the viability of grazing, impact on nesting birds and deter other visitors from using the area. There is also an issue with high levels of dog mess, particularly at Totternhoe Knolls and the green lane adjacent to West Dunstable.
- **Visitor levels and impact** – there is no information regarding visitor numbers for the area however, research suggests that some parts of the area, particularly

Totternhoe Knolls and surrounds, the green lanes and Maiden Bower, receive a higher numbers than others. Any increased promotion of the area and the proposed housing development to the north of Houghton Regis is likely to result in an increase in the number of visitors; this impact will need to be managed, particularly for more sensitive areas and those which currently receive the highest visitor numbers.

- **Houghton Regis Quarry** – currently the Houghton Regis Quarry area has little public access opportunities and no visitor facilities. It has an historic problem with illegal motorbike access; a problem has been given as a reason for not visiting the area. Houghton Regis Quarry also offers a variety of opportunities for green infrastructure provision including improved habitat management of the SSSI and county wildlife site for biodiversity, interpretation of the area's industrial heritage and increased public access and use.

4.5 Geology, heritage and landscape issues and opportunities

- **Operational quarry on site** – there is still a small amount of active quarrying on site producing Totternhoe Stone, a unique product used in nationally significant buildings such as Westminster Abbey, which offers strong opportunities for education and interpretation.

- **Visible and accessible geology** – the area offers excellent opportunities education and interpretation making use of the geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, cliffs and exposed chalk.
- **Rich heritage** – the area has long history of human use and settlement reflected in the landscape and the wealth of heritage features including three scheduled monuments, all of which offers opportunities for public involvement, education and interpretation.
- **Fragility of heritage features** – the area's heritage features, including the Scheduled Monuments, are vulnerable to damage and degradation for example through inappropriate management, misuse by the public (particularly motorised vehicles and digging for metal detecting) and development.
- **Totternhoe plum/damson orchards** – some initial work, led by Central Bedfordshire Council, has been undertaken to develop a project linked to the restoration of the plum/damson orchards located between Totternhoe and Eaton Bray. Although there has been little recent progress, there is interest and support from the community and the project provides an opportunity to actively engage local people of all ages in the heritage of area.

- **Agriculture** – the high levels of agricultural activity in the project area offer opportunities to engage and inform the public about farming and issues such as food production, farming and the environment and locally produced food.
- **Views into and out of site** – the project area includes a number of sites which form significant features in the landscape such as Totternhoe Castle, Maiden Bower and the chalk escarpment. Views out of the site link it to other landmarks in the area including Five Knolls and Ivinghoe Beacon. Views into and out of the site need to be identified and maintained through management.
- **Rural feeling area close to urban communities** – the area has a definite rural character with significant parts used for agriculture and little development, but at the same time it is easily accessible from the Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation.
- **Peace and quiet** – the project area offers peace and quiet to visitors despite its proximity to the Dunstable, and Houghton Regis conurbation. This feature is important to visitors and needs to be conserved.
- **Lack of identify of area as a whole** – the project area is made up of a number of different sites and features and does not have an overall identity. Creating an identity could provide opportunities for improved promotion and encourage use of different parts of the area, where by reducing pressure on some of the more frequently visited and fragile habitats.
- **Future development** – the proposed future development within the project area will have a range of impacts but can also offer an opportunity through developer contributions towards green infrastructure enhancements and management.
- **Green Lane network** – the project area's unique network of green lanes need careful management to balance their many roles as access routes, important parts of the area's heritage, habitat corridors and valuable habitats in their own right.
- **Unattractive urban-rural interfaces** – much of the western edge of the western boundary of the area is bordered by housing or other development. In places this interface is screened with planting however there are significant stretches where there is little or no screening, an issue identified in both the district level and Chalk Arc Landscape Character Assessments.
- **Hedgerows and tree lines** – a number of the hedgerows and tree lines in the area are identified as important features of the landscape requiring protection and in some case enhancement through planting and improved management. Hedgerows are particularly

important in maintaining the character of the areas green lanes and providing habitat links.

5 Aims and objectives

The following aims and objectives have been compiled in consultation with the project steering group. They are intended to provide an overarching framework for future work in the Totternhoe area and a set of targets against which the impact of this work can be assessed.

5.1 Overall Vision

To enhance the Totternhoe area by improving access to it and within it whilst conserving its multi-faceted heritage, not only for the enjoyment and education of visitors, but for the intrinsic value of conserving what is unique and important about the area.

5.2 Key Aims for the Totternhoe area

- To maintain the rural, undeveloped, natural character of the area
- To preserve, enhance and promote the area's unique geodiversity, biodiversity, landscape and heritage
- To ensure the area is welcoming and accessible to all visitors and promotes understanding and a sense of ownership
- To maximise the health, cultural and educational benefits of the area to meet the needs of local communities

5.3 Objectives for the Totternhoe area

5.3.1 Geodiversity objectives

- Promote the importance of the areas geodiversity and demonstrate the influence it has on all other aspects of the site including biodiversity, landscape and heritage
- Showcase the Totternhoe Stone Pit, a nationally important SSSI
- Provide opportunities for the public to better understand the role of the underlying Chalk in the area and the unique scenery it create in Bedfordshire

5.3.2 Biodiversity objectives (information still to be provided by John Comont)

- Maintain and enhance the extent and biodiversity value of existing, designated sites within the area
- Improve connectivity between habitats within the project area
- Maintain and enhance corridors to sites outside the project area

5.3.3 Access objectives

- Provide a well maintained, easy to use, coherent network of access routes for walkers, riders and horse riders throughout the project area which link to the wider rights of way network

- Provide ‘access for all’ opportunities where possible and appropriate
- Improve the main entrance points to the project area
- Improve ease of access from adjacent urban areas and reduce illegal, anti-social access

5.3.4 **Public use and engagement objectives**

- Enhance the range, quality and availability of information relating to the area
- Provide opportunities for visitors to understand, influence and be actively involved in the management of the area
- Provide well maintained facilities for visitors, sensitive to the rural, undeveloped nature of the area

5.3.5 **Landscape and heritage objectives**

- Preserve and protect the area’s three Scheduled Monuments and other heritage features
- Increase visitor’s understanding on the area’s heritage, it’s value and significance
- Establish an identity for the project area
- Maintain views into and out of the area
- Enhance integration between the edges of the project area and the surrounding urban areas

- Conserve and reinforce the areas key landscape features

5.4 Visitor standards

5.4.1 There are a number of nationally recognised quality standards for green space and countryside sites which can provide site managers with a framework against which to monitor the visitor experience. The Totternhoe project area as a whole would not be suitable for submission to such awards as it is not one site but rather a large network of areas with a variety of landowners and managers, however, such schemes can provide an indication of the standards which site owners and managers in the Totternhoe area should be aiming to achieve.

5.4.2 The following recommended visitor standards for the Totternhoe area are based on two national standards - Green Flag Award and the Country Parks Accreditation Scheme – and are also developed with the aim of addressing the issues and fulfilling the opportunities which the project area offers, as set out above. These standards could usefully be used in the future to assess the Totternhoe visitor experience.

5.4.3 All visitors using the project area, regardless of gender, age, background or ability should:

- Feel welcome, be safe and feel safe
- Feel a sense of ownership
- Have the opportunity to influence and/or be actively involved in it's management
- Be consulted on works which will impact on their use or enjoyment.
- Be clear about where and how to access it
- Be clear about where they can go in the project area and what is required of them
- Find well maintained facilities appropriate to both their needs and the character of the area
- Have the opportunity to access information about the site, its management, biodiversity, heritage, landscape and geology
- Be able to take part in a range of activities, appropriate to the character of the area, to benefit their health and well being

6 Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The following recommendations have been developed to work towards the aims, objectives and visitor standards for the Totternhoe project area as set out above. In doing so the recommendations seek to address the issues and fulfil the opportunities which the project area offers.

6.1.2 These recommendations have been developed through a process of consultation with partners, stakeholders and site users. Draft proposals for the project area were developed in agreement with the project steering group. These proposals were presented to the public for consultation over a 3 week period in February and March 2011. The consultation was widely publicised through local media, on site information, flyers to all Totternhoe households and letters/emails to all stakeholders. Responses to the consultation could be made via an online questionnaire (hosted on the Groundwork Luton and Bedfordshire website) or at a public event in Totternhoe Memorial Hall; in total 100 responses were received. Further detail on the consultation can be found in appendix x including a copy of the proposals and feedback questionnaire and a summary of the consultation results and feedback.

6.2 Geodiversity recommendations

6.2.1 Preserve the statutory SSSI designation of Totternhoe Stone Pit by ensuring that sufficient representative Totternhoe Stone is retained *in situ* when the quarrying of restoration stone nears its end.

6.2.2 Provide an opportunity for visitors to explore and handle Chalk and look for fossils by creating a sacrifice area of dumped Chalk blocks. The area should provide guidance for visitors such as an interpretation board with illustrations of expected finds.

6.2.3 Ensure interpretation materials highlight the influence of the underlying geology on other site themes. For example the influence of Chalk on the areas biodiversity.

6.2.4 Consider using Totternhoe Stone for work and features in the area for example to demarcate paths or parking areas, or to create interpretive features.

6.3 Biodiversity recommendations

6.3.1 Consult users of Totternhoe Knolls and the adjacent nature reserves to identify how best to balance public use with the sensitive nature of the sites and habitats. This consultation

should include both the National Trust and Wildlife Trust owned/managed areas

6.3.2 Work to put in place management plans for all designated sites in the area – SSSI's, County Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves. This will require an assessment of existing management plans and the development of new plans as required.

6.3.3 Work with landowners to the land along identified habitat links into appropriate management to enhance biodiversity value and create habitat corridors between designated sites. The location of habitat corridors can be seen in Figure 9.

6.3.4 Reinforce the barriers along cliff edges, particularly the barrier on 'half mile hill', overlooking Totternhoe Quarry to protect the cliff habitat from erosion and ensure the safety of site users. The nature of the barrier should take into account potential impact on existing chalk grassland vegetation.

6.3.5 Support landowners to increase the total amount of land within the area which is covered by agri-environment schemes and increase the amount of land entered into higher level scheme. Where possible there should be

coordination between submissions in the area to work towards identified priorities and targets.

6.3.6 Implement the findings of the reports currently in development for Houghton Regis Marl Lakes/Quarry with the aim of enabling increased public access whilst also protecting the sensitive nature of the area.

6.4 Access recommendations

Rights of way network

6.4.1 Provide a safe crossing point on the A5 for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders; this should be located so as to provide a link between the rights of way on either side of the A5. The crossing should encourage and enable visitors and the local community to move between the countryside to the west of the A5 and the Houghton Regis quarry area.

6.4.2 Upgrade the sections of footpath which run south from either end of the Sewell cycle to bridleway to create a more coherent network of circular routes for a broader range of users. The location of these can be seen in Figure 9.

6.4.3 Work with landowners to provide additional permissive access routes. Ideally these should provide access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders although permissive

footpaths would be preferable to no permissive route. The new permissive routes will provide links between existing rights of way creating additional options for circular routes and reducing the need for visitors to use roadside footpaths. The location of the proposed permissive routes can be seen in Figure 9.

6.4.4 Install signage at the points where visitors join each right of way indicating which users are permitted to use the route. Signs should be made of timber to fit with the rural nature of the area and clearly indicate each permitted user group e.g. a bridleway should have a sign showing a walker, a cyclist and a horse rider.

6.4.5 Any proposals to upgrade the surface treatments on routes in the area should be subject to consultation with stakeholders, partners and the community. Whilst there are arguments for surfacing some routes, there is also a strong feeling against surfacing from the public, stakeholders and the project steering group. Arguments against include the potential impact on biodiversity, character of the area and buried archaeological remains and the conflicts between different user groups. Any proposed surfacing should be subject to additional consultation and must consider and address these and any other issues if work is to go ahead.

6.4.6 Work to increase rights of way links from surrounding areas to the project area by continuing to monitor opportunities for upgrades, permissive routes and new designated rights of way. Ideally, where suitable, these links should be bridleways to provide access for a variety of user groups although footpaths would be preferable to no additional links at all.

Entrance points

6.4.7 The key entrance points to the area should be considered to be as follows:

- Start of the Sewell cycle way from Stanbridge
- The end of Knolls View (at the north end of Totternhoe village)
- Totternhoe Knolls car park
- Entrance onto the green lane from West Street
- Main gated access point from Weatherby
- French's Avenue (the start of the Sewell cycle way)
- Footpath from Houghton Road into Houghton Regis Quarry

6.4.8 Additional key entrance points should be added from any future housing development in or around the area and be subject to the requirements outlined below.

6.4.9 Key entrance points should be assessed and work undertaken to ensure they meet the following criteria:

- Clear of overgrown vegetation and other obstructions
- Clear of redundant signage, fencing or other features
- Provide 'access for all' whilst restricting illegal vehicle access
- Include an information board with a map of the whole area, basic guidelines on how to use the area and information on how to report any issues

6.4.10 Formalise access points onto the green lane from Spinney Crescent, Beechwood Court, Weatherby and Lancot Drive with the aim of providing improved access and encouraging reduced use of informal access points which can encourage illegal use and habitat damage. Formalised entrances should be surfaced, have shared use (to allow cycle access), have a dog bin located close by and include some signage to encourage appropriate use and behaviour.

6.4.11 Limit the number of informal access points onto the green lane from Beechwood Court, Spinney Crescent and Weatherby with the aim of reducing illegal vehicle access and reducing habitat damage. This could be achieved through a variety of methods including hedging, fencing or

the creation of ditch. This work should be carried out in tandem with the recommendation to formalise a small number of access points and must consult and involve local residents who will be impacted on most by the work.

6.5 Public use and engagement recommendations

Facilities

6.5.1 Provide dog bins at entrance points close to urban areas, particularly at entrances onto the green lane from west Dunstable.

6.5.2 Install a small amount of seating at the main view points and resting points. The style of seating should be consistent across the area and be low key in order to fit with its undeveloped, rural nature.

6.5.3 Continue to maintain the facilities at Totternhoe Knolls car park by ensuring picnic benches are available and in good condition, vandalised features are replaced promptly and vegetation around the area is maintained at a low level to maintain views and minimise hiding places.

6.5.4 Carry out a feasibility study into the establishment of a designated area for off road biking with the aim of discouraging such activity on more sensitive parts of the

area. The study should consider potential sites within the project area and also sites in the surrounding area. A key aspect of the feasibility study should be consultation with those already using the area for off road biking and the local community (particularly young people) to ensure any facility meets their needs and will be used.

6.5.5 Ensure a daily staff presence in the area This could be achieved through co-ordination between partners active in the area and increase in staff by individual organisations. As well as practical site management, staff can also engage with visitors and encourage appropriate use of the area.

6.5.6 Provide a facility for site management staff and visitor engagement within one of the proposed areas of housing development. The provision of such a facility will support the delivery of a number of the objectives for the area particularly regarding management and community engagement.

Information and interpretation

6.5.7 Provide interpretation information at key entrances and points of interest throughout the area. Information should be presented in a consistent style across the area and using

low key materials and designs in keeping with the undeveloped, rural character of the area.

6.5.8 Provide information and interpretation using electronic formats. All information and interpretation located in the area should also be available to access via the internet. Where possible this information should be suitable for use on portable devices such as smart phones.

6.5.9 Develop a self guided audio tour of the area and its key features available to download from the internet to be used on portable devices such as smart phones or mp3 players.

Circular and promoted routes

6.5.10 Develop a series of circular routes in the area for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The walking route(s) should include a shorter beginners routes and a longer option. Route maps should be available for downloading online and, funding permitting, should be available as printed leaflets in local outlets such as libraries and council offices.

6.5.11 Work with the Chiltern Society to ensure the route and signage of the Chiltern Way is maintained where it passes through the Totternhoe area.

6.5.12 Develop a circular cycle route, starting from Dunstable Downs, which passes through the project area. Printed information on the route should be offered to visitors using the cycle hire scheme at Dunstable Downs and should include information on appropriate behaviour in the area, including approaching other users such as horse riders.

Engaging with the local community

6.5.13 Encourage and enable the establishment of a 'friends of' type group for the area. Although some support to establish the group is likely to be required, there should be an aspiration to have a self-sustaining group within a year of establishment. If agreeable by members, the group should become constituted to enable access to funding.

6.5.14 Promote the existing conservation volunteer opportunities and offer additional opportunities for the local community to be involved in the practical management of the area.

6.5.15 Develop and coordinate a programme of public events for the area which include a variety of activities and themes to appeal to a broad range of visitors. Events and activities should link to the main themes of the site including heritage, biodiversity and geodiversity and should where possible

encourage exploration of less heavily used areas and routes.

6.5.16 Misuse and anti social behaviour should be addressed through a combination of continuing existing initiatives, physical measures (outlined as part of other recommendations) and work with site users and the local community. Site users and the local community should be made aware of anti social behaviour issues and encouraged to report them through on site information and communication with staff at the site.

6.6 Landscape and Heritage recommendations

Scheduled Monuments

6.6.1 Develop and implement a Conservation Management Plan for Maiden Bower. This could be achieved through working with the landowner to submit the area into an agri-environment scheme.

6.6.2 Continue the implementation of the current agreed management plan for Totternhoe Knolls Scheduled Monument.

Community involvement and education

6.6.3 Provide interpretation on the areas heritage and landscape features. Interpretation should cover the historic landscape, industrial heritage, conservation areas and historic use as well as the three Scheduled Monuments.

6.6.4 Provide opportunities for members of the community to be involved in surveying, recording and protecting the areas key heritage features.

6.6.5 Totternhoe plum/damson orchards. Work with the community to identify opportunities to restock the Totternhoe plum/damson orchards and implement a programme of replanting. Develop other community and/or education initiatives linked to the surveying and restocking work for example a cookery book or oral history project.

Landscape features

6.6.6 Maintain and enhance the hedgerows and tree lines in the area particularly along the green lanes. Work with landowners and site managers to produce management guidelines for existing hedgerows and identify opportunities for restocking or establishment of new hedgerows.

6.6.7 Carry out a view analysis for the area, engaging the local community in the process where possible. Use the resulting

information to identify and implement work to maintain and/or enhance key and valued views.

6.6.8 Plan and implement a programme of screen planting along the urban edges of the area to screen houses and other buildings. Scale and species should be agreed with landscape and biodiversity officers to ensure appropriateness.

7 Action Plan

| Proposal | Lead Organisation(s) | Priority | Timescale | Cost |
|--|----------------------|----------|-----------|------|
| Retain Totternhoe Stone <i>in situ</i> when the quarrying of restoration stone nears its end | | | | |
| Create a sacrifice area of dumped Chalk blocks with supporting interpretation | | | | |
| Consult users of Totternhoe Knolls and the adjacent nature reserves | | | | |
| Work to put in place management plans for all designated sites in the area | | | | |
| Work with landowners to the land along identified habitat links into appropriate management | | | | |
| Reinforce the barriers along cliff edges | | | | |
| Support landowners to increase the total amount of land within the area which is covered by agri-environment schemes | | | | |
| Implement the findings of the reports currently in development for Houghton Regis Marl Lakes/Quarry | | | | |
| Provide safe crossing point on A5 | | | | |
| Upgrade footpath at either end of Sewell cycle way to bridleway | | | | |
| Work with landowners to provide permissive access to south of Knolls car park | | | | |
| Signage on RoW indicating legal user groups | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
| Consult on any future surfacing proposals | | | | |
| Increase RoW links to surrounding areas | | | | |
| Audit key entrance points | | | | |
| Implement work at key entrance points as required | | | | |
| Add key entrance points from new developments | | | | |
| Formalise access points onto the green lane from Spinney Crescent, Beechwood Court, Weatherby and Lancot Drive | | | | |
| Limit the number of informal access points onto the green lane from Beechwood Court, Spinney Crescent and Weatherby | | | | |
| Provide dog bins at entrance points close to urban areas | | | | |
| Install a small amount of seating at the main view points | | | | |
| Continue to maintain the facilities at Totternhoe Knolls car park | | | | |
| Carry out a feasibility study into the establishment of a designated area for off road biking | | | | |
| Ensure a daily staff presence in the area | | | | |
| Provide a facility for site management staff and visitor engagement within one of the proposed areas of housing development | | | | |
| Provide interpretation information at key entrances and points of interest throughout the area | | | | |
| Provide information and interpretation using electronic formats. | | | | |
| Develop a self guided audio tour of the area and it's key features | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
| Develop a series of circular routes in the area for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. | | | | |
| Ensure the route and signage of the Chiltern Way is maintained | | | | |
| Develop a circular cycle route, starting from Dunstable Downs, which passes through the project area. | | | | |
| Encourage and enable the establishment of a 'friends of' type group for the area | | | | |
| Promote the existing conservation volunteer opportunities and offer additional opportunities | | | | |
| Develop and co ordinate a programme of public events for the area | | | | |
| Develop and implement a Conservation Management Plan for Maiden Bower | | | | |
| Continue the implementation of the current agreed management plan for Totternhoe Knolls Scheduled Monument | | | | |
| Provide interpretation on the areas heritage and landscape features | | | | |
| Provide opportunities for members of the community to be involved in surveying, recording and protecting the areas key heritage features. | | | | |
| Totternhoe plum/damson orchards | | | | |
| Maintain and enhance the hedgerows and tree lines in the area | | | | |
| Carry out a view analysis for the area | | | | |
| Implement a programme of screen planting along the urban edges of the area | | | | |

8 Progressing the plan

8.1 Funding

The following section outlines a selection of potential sources of funding which could support the delivery of some of the recommendations for the Totternhoe area. Funding opportunities and criteria are constantly changing and so these suggestions are intended as guide and are in no way an exhaustive list of opportunities.

8.1.1 Heritage Lottery Fund – Heritage Grant (grants of more than £50,000)

Heritage Grants is the Heritage Lottery Funds main grants programme offering grants of more than £50,000 for projects that relate to the national, regional or local heritage of the UK. Projects must:

- Help people learn about their own and other people's heritage

And do either or both of the following:

- Conserve the UK's diverse heritage for the present and future generations to experience and enjoy
- Help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

Heritage Grants is a rolling programme, there are no deadlines for applications under £5million. It takes three months from the date an application is received to get a decision.

There are a number of aspects of the Totternhoe proposals which would fit well with the Heritage Grant criteria however a key point to bear in mind, given the complex nature of the project area, is that an applicant must own, and be the only organisation entitled to use any property (land, buildings and heritage items) on which you spend the grant.

More information can be found at www.hlf.org.uk.

8.1.2 Heritage Lottery Fund – Your Heritage

Similar in requirements and aims to the Heritage Grants programme, Your Heritage offers grants between £3000 and £50,000 for projects that relate to the national, regional or local heritage of the UK.

Your Heritage is a rolling programme, there are no deadlines for applications and it takes 10 weeks from the date an application is received to get a decision.

8.1.3 **Waste Recycling Environmental Limited (WREN)**

WREN is a not for profit business registered to fund projects which are eligible under the Landfill Communities Fund. WREN have a number of programmes offering funding for a variety of projects:

- Main Grant Scheme - £15,011 - £50,000 for 'the provision, maintenance or improvement of a public park or other public amenity in the vicinity of a landfill site. Projects must be within a WREN operating area (Bedfordshire is) and available to the general public. There are currently no match funding requirements.
- Biodiversity Action Fund - £75,000 - £250,000 for biodiversity enhancements by 'supporting the expansion, recovery and conservation of habitats that achieve Habitat Action Plan/Species Action Plan targets through specific improvements'. Projects must be within 10 miles of a licensed landfill site and in a WREN operating area, initial research suggests a project in the Totternhoe area would meet these criteria.

More information can be found at www.wren.org.uk.

8.1.4 **The Chiltern's LEADER Fund**

Funding for projects within the Chiltern LEADER area (Totternhoe is within the area) for farmers, foresters, other small rural businesses

and community groups to enable them to strengthen the local economy or support the local community.

Projects must support at least one of the LEADER themes, the proposals for the Totternhoe area would seem to fit most accurately with the 'Conserving Environmental and Cultural Heritage' theme which includes 'enhancing awareness of the need to conserve environmental and cultural heritage and engaging more public support for stewardship of the area's heritage'.

Applications are currently being sought for the Bedfordshire area and although there are no deadlines there is a limited amount of funding available so it is recommended that applications be submitted as soon as applicants are able.

Further information can be found at www.chilternsleader.org.uk/

8.1.5 **Developer contributions/Section 106**

Given the expected development in the area surrounding the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation, developer contributions are likely to be a potential source of funding for the implementation of proposals in the Totternhoe area. Discussions are already underway with planners and developers regarding this matter.

8.2 Adopting the plan

8.2.1 It is recommended that one organisation, most probably Central Bedfordshire Council as the commissioners of the vision plan, take the lead on progressing the aims, objectives and proposals outlined in this document. This organisation should communicate with partners and stakeholders to ensure all organisations working in the Totternhoe area are familiar with and buy into the vision plan and to coordinate any significant activity such as funding applications, implementation of works, community consultation etc.

8.2.2 It is suggested that within the lead organisation (Central Bedfordshire Council) one officer is identified as the project 'champion' for the vision plan. This person should be the key contact for other organisations or local authority departments operating in the area to ensure one person has an overview of all developments in the area and can advise on linkages and potential conflicts.

8.3 Use of the vision plan

8.3.1 This vision plan provides a comprehensive summary of the issues and opportunities facing the Totternhoe countryside area. The vision plan should act as a framework for all

organisations working in the area and support the securing of funding to take forward the outlined proposals.

8.4 Monitoring and updating the vision plan

8.4.1 It is recommended that the steering group established during the development of the vision plan continue, both as a way to continue to the information sharing encouraged by the project and as a way to coordinate the progression of the proposals outlined in the plan. Regularity of meetings will depend on the timescale in which the proposals are taken forward but as a minimum it is suggested that the group meet once a year to share information on work programmes and priorities for the year ahead.

8.4.2 It is recommended that the continuing steering group meetings review work and development in the Totternhoe area against the aims, objectives and proposals outlined in the vision plan. This will also give the group the opportunity to amend the aims, objectives or action plans should the situation in the project area change over time.

8.4.3 A more thorough five year review of the vision plan should also be planned to ensure that it is as appropriate as possible.

Figures

1. Location map
2. Site ownership/management - CBC/National Trust/Wildlife Trust
3. Land in agri environment schemes
4. SSSI, CWS and LNR's
5. Heritage – Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas
6. Landscape Character information
7. Access – rights of way and cycle way
8. Development – Core strategy SSSA and two developments in the planning system
9. Proposals Plan

Appendix

1. SSSI citations
2. Visitor surveys
 - Totternhoe Knolls User and Non-User Survey – Mike Baldwin Associates
 - 2011 public consultation results
3. Information on 'Chalk Arc' and 'Leighton Linlade to Dunstable corridors' from Luton and southern Bedfordshire GI plan
4. Extracts from 'Strategic Multi Strategic Multi-functional Greenspace in Luton and Southern Bedfordshire' (2009) by Kit Campbell Associates
5. 'Totternhoe Living Network' action plan
6. Landscape Character Assessment - Extracts from the Southern Bedfordshire District Landscape Character Assessment and Chalk Arc Landscape Character Assessment
7. Outdoor Access Improvement Plan – theme outcome statements
8. SWOT analysis
9. List of partners and stakeholders
10. Proposals for consultation, feedback questionnaire and summary of results