



# **LEA VALLEY LINE**

## **GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN**

2024 – 2029



## OVERVIEW

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### Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

### Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for four weeks in November/December 2023, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement will be completed in July to enable stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published online as an appendix to this plan, will summarise comments received and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

### Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
V0	Feb 2024	Draft	MP	AT	

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

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### 1.1 Site Summary

Site Name: Lea Valley Line

Site Address: Westfield Road, St Albans, AL5 4LT

Grid Reference: TL 13731 16063 extending to TL 15495 14594

Access points:

Westfield Road - TL 13882 15866

Ox Lane - TL14120 15485

Waveney Road - TL 14252 15294

Hickling Way - TL 14466 14992

Station Road - TL 514510 14950

Crabtree Lane - TL 14797 4751

Harpenden Sewage Works Waste ground - TL 14871 14693

Entrance from Marquis Lane - TL 15080 14614

Riverford Close - TL 13783 15991

Size: Harpenden section 2.4 km long, covering an area of 3.9 ha

Designations: Leasey Bridge Dismantled Railway Wildlife Site (56/046) (Part)

Owner: St Albans City and District Council



## **1.2 Vision Statement**

The Lea Valley Line will be a functional, safe and attractive multi-use route for active travel and recreation, and will provide high quality habitat for wildlife, achieved by:

- improving the user experience, awareness and understanding of the site.
- providing and maintaining clear and safe public access onto and along the multi-user route.
- protecting and enhancing the route as a green corridor.
- developing a stronger recognition of the heritage of the site and promoting respectful and appropriate use.
- ensuring engagement and involvement of local communities along the route.
- all management activities being both environmentally and financially sustainable.

## **2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

This GAP covers a 2.4 km stretch of the Lea Valley Line, a popular multi-user route which extends along the outskirts of Harpenden, following the course of the former Hatfield, Luton and Dunstable railway line. This section of the route is owned by St Albans District Council (SADC) and managed by the Council in partnership with the Countryside Management Service. Much of the Lea Valley Line also forms part of the Lea Valley Walk, an 80.5 km route following the River Lea from Luton to London. The site extends through residential and light industrial areas, providing a safe, off-road route for accessing the surrounding countryside and for commuting through Harpenden.

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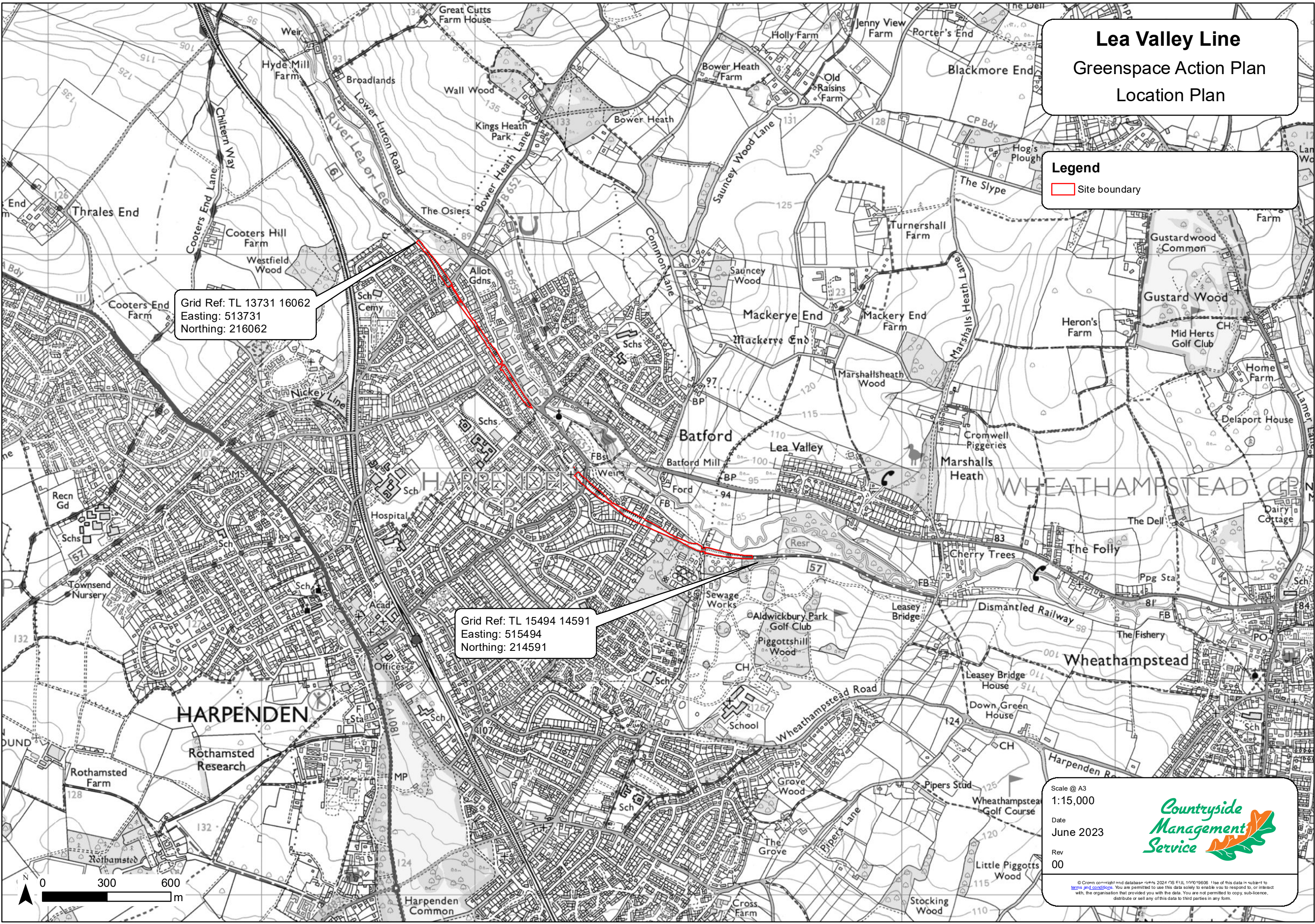
**Lea Valley Line**  
**Greenspace Action Plan**  
**Location Plan**

**Legend**

 Site boundary

Grid Ref: TL 13731 16062  
Easting: 513731  
Northing: 216062


Grid Ref: TL 15494 14591  
Easting: 515494  
Northing: 214591



Scale @ A3  
1:15,000

Date  
June 2023

Rev  
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# Lea Valley Line

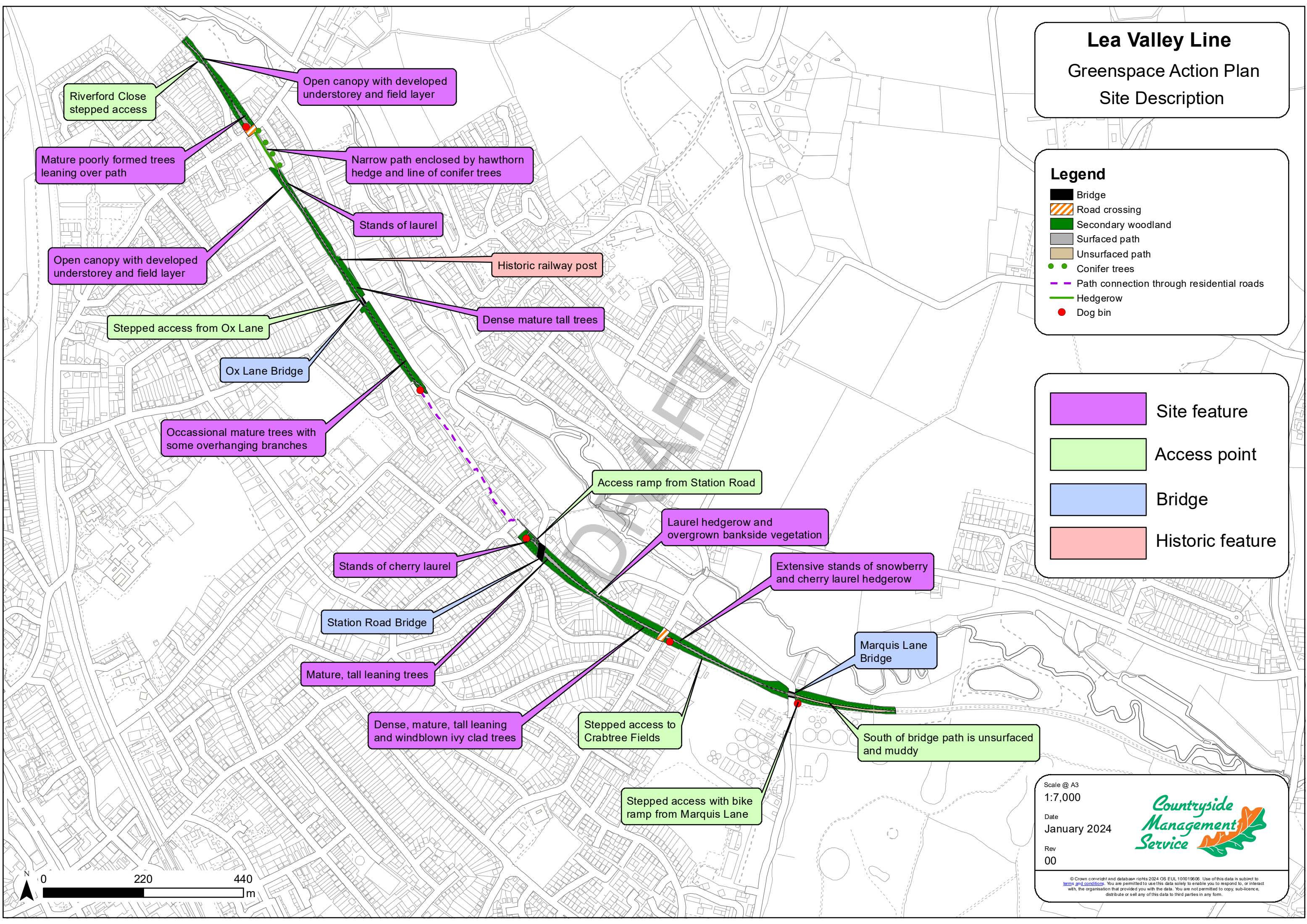
## Greenspace Action Plan

### Site Description

#### Legend

- Bridge
- Road crossing
- Secondary woodland
- Surfaced path
- Unsurfaced path
- Conifer trees
- Path connection through residential roads
- Hedgerow
- Dog bin

- Site feature
- Access point
- Bridge
- Historic feature



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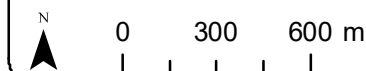
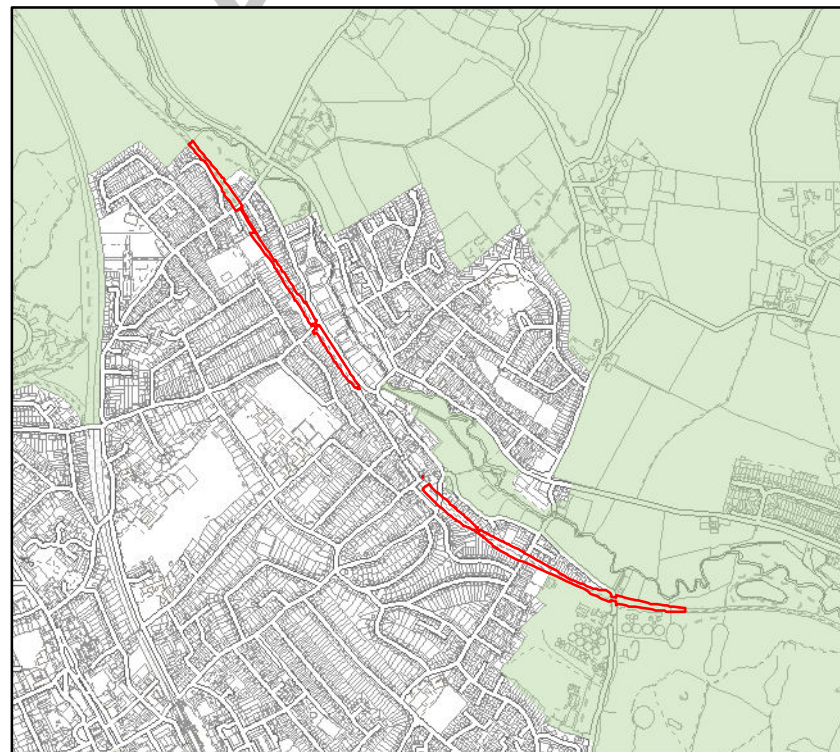
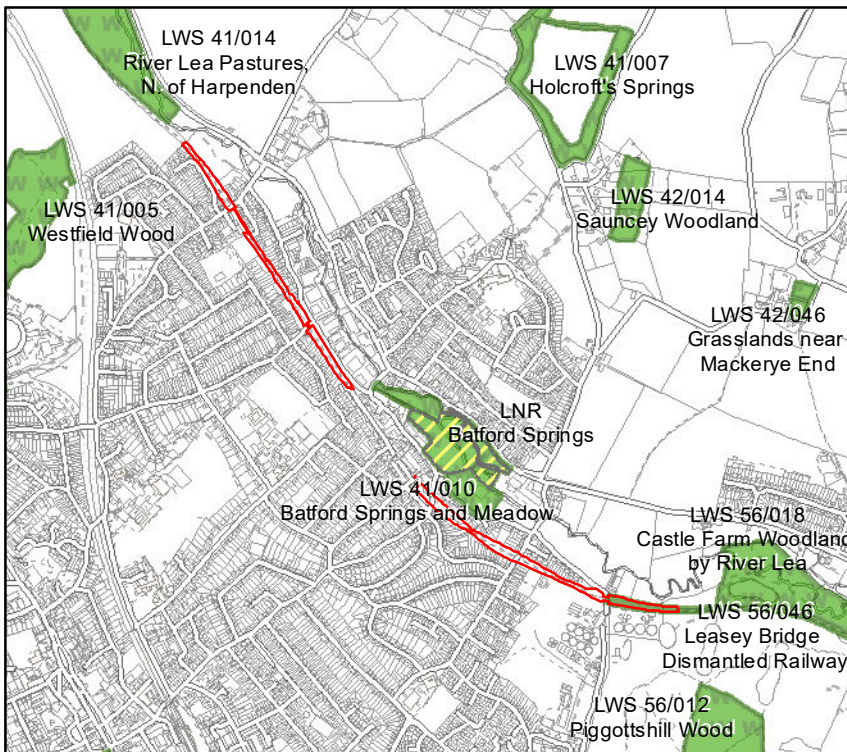
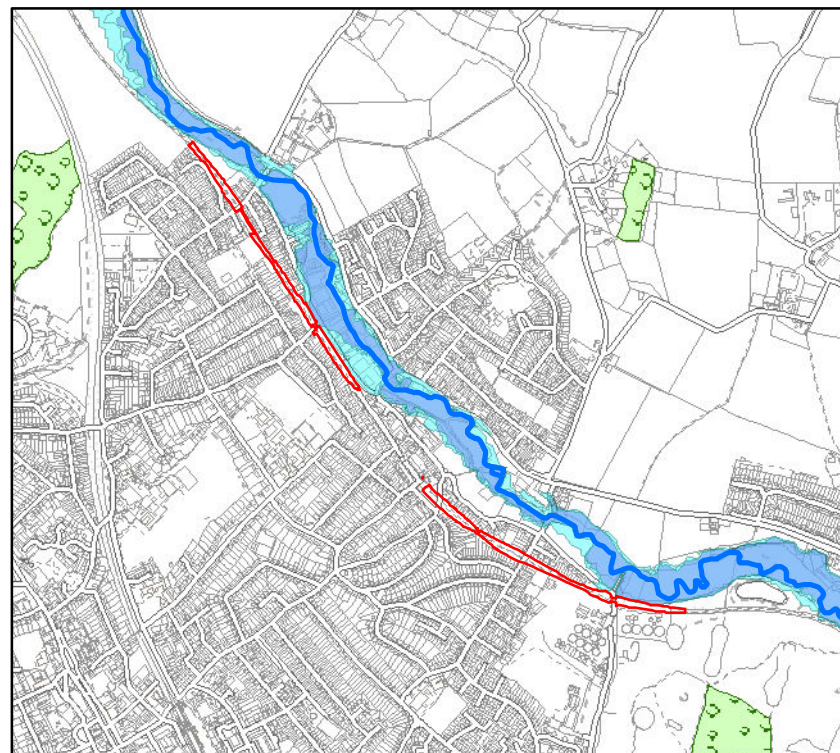
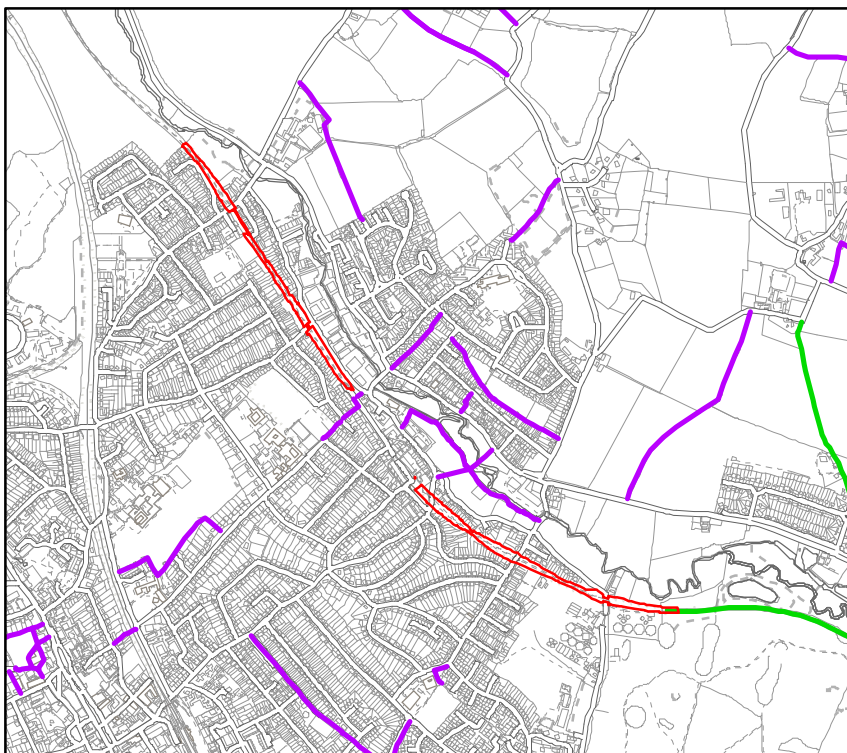


# Lea Valley Line

GAP 2024-29  
Constraints Map

## Legend

-  Site boundary
-  Bridleway
-  Footpath
-  Main River
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Flood Zone 2
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
-  Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
-  LNR
-  Wildlife Site
-  Greenbelt



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## **2.2 Policy context**

### **2.2.1 HCC Strategies**

#### *2.2.1.1 Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy*

Hertfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and have since committed to make Hertfordshire cleaner, greener and more sustainable.

HCC want to:

1. Lead in their own operations.
2. Enable sustainability with their programmes, policies and decisions.
3. Inspire businesses and residents to take action.

### **2.2.2 SADC Strategies**

#### *2.2.2.1 Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy*

The SADC [Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy](#) sets out all the actions the council plan to take over the next 3 years, to reduce the environmental impacts, improve the environmental sustainability of operations and services, ensure resilience to changing environmental conditions and act as a strong community leader to ensure action continues to be taken across all parts of the community.

The document sets out how the council plans to begin reducing its emissions to Net Zero by 2030.

The document focuses on the following core themes:

- Governance and Leadership
- Energy Use
- Transport and Air Quality
- Waste
- Nature and Sustainable Food
- Climate Change Adaptation and Water

## **2.3 Site Designations**

Approximately 400 m of the southern section of the route falls within the Leasey Bridge Dismantled Railway Wildlife Site (56/046), designated due to the range of neutral grassland indicator species supported. Three other wildlife sites are located within close proximity to the route and include River Lea Pastures (41/014), Castle Farm Woodland (56/018) and Batford Springs and Meadow (41/010). There are a further 10 County Wildlife Sites located within 1 km of the route.

## **2.4 Geology and Hydrology**

The constraints map indicates that the route lies outside the identified flood zones for the nearby River Lea, however, the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water map for the site shows that sections of the route are in areas at risk from 1 in 30-year surface flooding events. As may be expected, the areas most susceptible are those sections within former railway cuttings, although this has not been identified as a regular problem for users of the route.

## **2.5 Landscape Character**

Surrounding land use is varied and is dominated by residential dwellings and gardens, along with several open spaces. There are also light industrial areas including a sewage treatment plant, with the Lea Valley Line acting as an important visual buffer zone and green linking corridor.

## **2.6 History and Archaeology**

The former railway line, which opened in 1860, served as a valuable transport link for the local community. Operated by the Great Northern Railway Company, the railway connected Leighton Buzzard to Welwyn Garden City. Harpenden East train station provided the town with access to London, via Hatfield. The railway was primarily used to transport watercress from the River Lea to London, and for straw plait workers to commute to and from the hat factories of Luton and St Albans. Passenger services along the line were withdrawn in 1965, following which the station was demolished and housing built along 400 m of the line. At this point the present Lea Valley Line joins and extends along Hickling Way and Waveney Road, before re-joining the route of the old railway line.

## **2.7 Habitats and wildlife**

The route provides a continuous linear habitat corridor through the surrounding residential landscape, connecting urban greenspaces with open countryside. This habitat corridor has the potential not only to provide a refuge for wildlife, but also to facilitate movement between valuable habitats. Although the site itself is bordered, for the most part, by residential properties, there are several important greenspaces within the surrounding landscape.

### **2.7.1 Woodland**

While the railway was operational, the embankments and surrounding areas would have been composed of more open habitats. Closure of the railway and subsequent end of regular habitat management along the route has allowed the colonisation of secondary woodland and scrub. This linear strip of secondary woodland is dominated by mature ash and oak, which has formed a tall and densely shaded canopy. In particular, ash is common throughout the route and has been affected by Chalara dieback. The mature trees have all developed since the closure of the railways and as such are similar in age. Other tree species along the embankments and cuttings include sycamore, hornbeam, willow spp., hawthorn, hazel and field maple. In many places, the dense semi-mature woodland on the embankments and cuttings prevents light from reaching the floor, and results in a poor, shade tolerant ground flora dominated by ivy and rank grass. In many areas along the route there are also a large number of trees covered in an extensive amount of ivy. Ivy does not pose a risk to healthy trees and is important for wildlife through the key provision of shelter and nectar. However, the substantial growth of ivy, particularly associated with low, overhanging branches, has enclosed the route in some areas and contributes towards the low light levels.





*Tall, dark vegetation in cuttings*



*Vegetation overshadowing top of embankment*

Management of the woodland along the Lea Valley Line has in recent years been limited to reactive tree safety work, particularly around managing ash dieback.

### **2.7.2 Scrub**

Pockets of scrub are found beneath mature trees and in small open areas, providing an important habitat for small mammals and nesting birds, as well as a nectar source for pollinating invertebrates. The scrub is dominated by hazel, bramble, and holly, with dog rose and blackthorn also present. There are also a number of stands of young trees, predominately ash with occasional pedunculate oak. One such area is found where the route runs at the back of properties along Wroxham Way, characterised by sparse mature trees and a relatively open field layer dominated by young trees, mostly ash regeneration. Many of these ash saplings are showing signs of ash dieback and are likely to be lost over the coming years.



*Bramble scrub*

### **2.7.3 Grassland**

Common nettle is prevalent in the field layer and encroaches over some parts of the surfaced path. There are also significant patches of dead-nettles, providing an important early source of nectar for invertebrates such as emerging bees. Within areas of dappled shade the ground flora comprises narrow strips of neutral grassland. A number of neutral grassland species have been recorded along the southern section of the route, and include common knapweed, bird's foot trefoil, oxeye daisy and field scabious.



*Strip of grassland adjacent to route surface*

### **2.7.4 Hedgerow**

There are a small number of hedgerows delineating the boundary of the site. In particular, heading south from the entrance at Westfield Road the route is very



narrow and is enclosed by a hawthorn hedge with holly stands, and a line of conifer trees.



*Line of conifer trees*

## **2.7.5 Species**

### *2.7.5.1 Wildlife records*

Records from the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) indicate that a small number of protected species have been recorded close to the Harpenden Section of the Lea Valley Line. Roman snails are found within the scrubby banks of the Lea Valley Line adjacent to the Westfield Allotments. This area (including 400m of the bordering banks of the Lea Valley Line) was historically identified as a wildlife site due to the presence of Roman snail colonies.

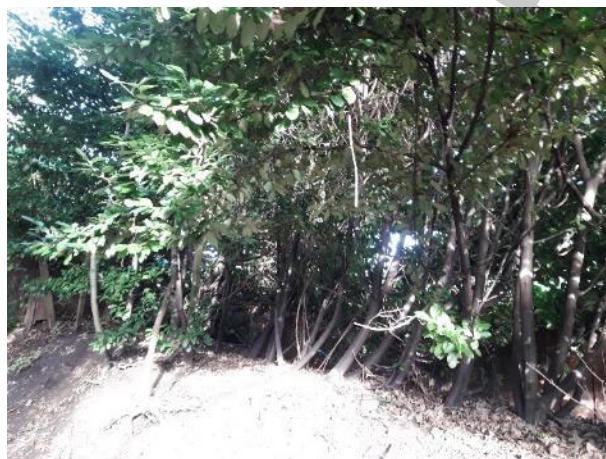
Two species of bat (pipistrelle spp. and noctule) have been recorded within the Westfield allotment area, and along the route itself. Common lizards have also been recorded along this section of the route. Records for common butterfly species include speckled wood, small white and orange tip, associated with the north-western section of the route. The eastern section of the walk was also notable for several sightings of the wall butterfly in the 1990s, while there are nearby records for

white admiral, a UK BAP species, and small heath, a UK near threatened species. Toothwort, a rare plant in Hertfordshire, has historically been recorded along the banks of the southeastern section of the route. Observations of glow worms have also been informally reported within the Central Bedfordshire section of the wider route, and adjacent to the SADC boundary to the north-west.

Although there are a limited number of wildlife records for the Harpenden Section of the Lea Valley Line, the site is considered to have high suitability for providing habitat for, and supporting the movement of, a range of wildlife. This is due to the characteristic of the site as a linear habitat which connects a number of greenspaces and wildlife sites within the immediate area. A variety of bat species are expected to use the Lea Valley Line as a corridor to feed and mature trees have the potential to support bat roosts. A variety of common birds can also be expected to nest in the trees and scrub along the route.

#### 2.7.5.2 *Invasive species*

There are a number of horticultural species present along the route, including leatherleaf viburnum which has likely spread from neighbouring gardens. There are also stands of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) including snowberry and cherry laurel.



*Cherry laurel*



*Leatherleaf viburnum*

#### *2.7.5.3 Oak Processionary Moth*

The Lea Valley Line sits within the Forestry Commission's Established Zone for oak processionary moth (OPM), making OPM control the responsibility of the landowner.

## **2.8 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

### **2.8.1 Links to green infrastructure**

#### *2.8.1.1 Public Rights of Way*

Footpath 025 adjoins the site at Waveney Road and forms part of the route of the Lea Valley Walk which extends through Batford Springs LNR, following the route of Footpath 035. Approximately 200m of the southern section of the route is designated as a Bridleway (097), permitting use by horse riders. Bridleway 097 continues to extend beyond the site boundary to the south following the route of the Lea Valley Line to Leasey Bridge. Although the rest of the route is not a Public Right of Way (PRoW), it provides a valuable connection to the wider PRoW network, with several formal and informal entrances from the neighbouring residential areas.

#### *2.8.1.2 Promoted routes*

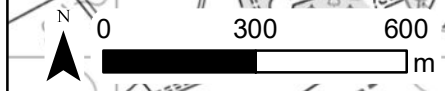
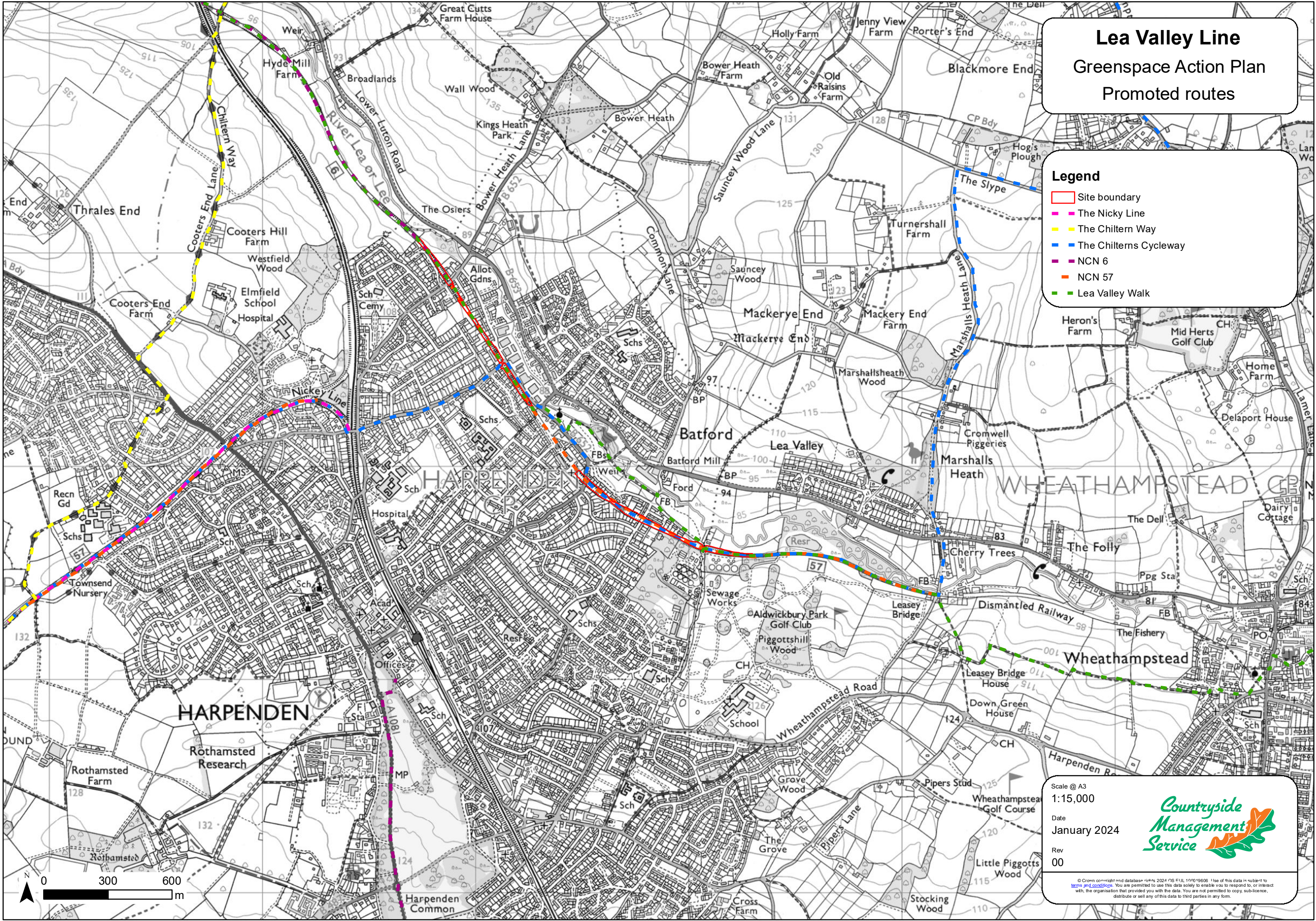
The Harpenden section of the Lea Valley Line is an important link in the local sustainable transport network, and forms part of Route 6 and Route 57 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network. As well as the Lea Valley Walk, the route forms part of the Chilterns Cycleway Network which is a 170-mile circular route around the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and also links to The Chiltern Way to the north.



# Lea Valley Line Greenspace Action Plan Promoted routes

**Legend**

- Site boundary
- The Nicky Line
- The Chiltern Way
- The Chilterns Cycleway
- NCN 6
- NCN 57
- Lea Valley Walk



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### 2.8.1.3 Missing connection

When considering the links between the Lea Valley Line and the wider green infrastructure network, the key missing link is the lack of a safe cycle route between Leasey Bridge and Wheathampstead, where it is possible to connect back onto the former railway line along the Ayot Greenway. This gap in the network is a significant check on the value of the Lea Valley Line, as it is not easy to continue beyond Leasey Bridge. While this is beyond the scope of this plan, it is a priority for Hertfordshire County Council, and is noted as part of both Package 16 within the current consultation on a [South Central Growth and Transport Plan](#), and the [St. Albans Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#).

### 2.8.2 Access points

The main entrance points to the Lea Valley Line are:

Riverford Close – Stepped access from Riverford Close was formalised during the last five years, however the handrail is in poor condition.



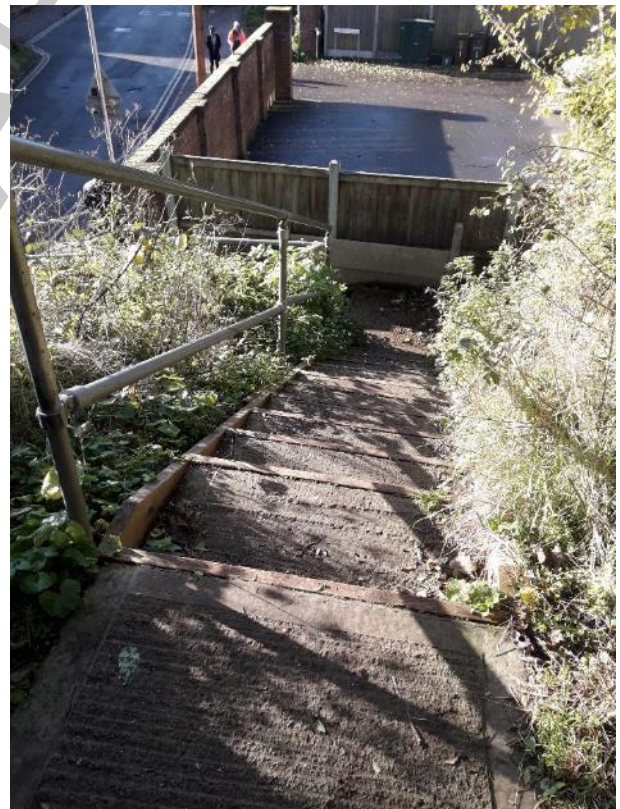
*Stepped access from Riverford Close*

Westfield Road – Open access to pedestrians and cyclists with bollards to prevent vehicular access.



*Westfield Road road crossing*

Ox Lane – The route passes over Ox Lane via a bridge, with steps providing access to, and from, the route. The steps were renovated during the last five years, with new timber risers and step surfaces installed. The fencing adjacent to the bridge was also replaced.



*Stepped access from Ox Lane*



Waveney Road – The off-road path meets with the end of Waveney Road, with bollards to prevent vehicle access.



*Access from end of Waveney Road*

To return to the Lea Valley Lines, site users must travel along Waveney Road and Hickling Way, residential streets with footways for walkers. A short off-road section of path links the two roads. Footpath 025 extends across Waveney Road providing access from the wider PRow network and surrounding residential streets.



*Above: Link between Waveney Road and Hickling Way*

*Right: Footpath 025 leading to Waveney Road*



Informal access from Coldharbour Lane – Leads on to the route through the developing secondary woodland.





*Informal access from Coldharbour Lane*

Hickling Way –At the corner of Hickling Way the route once again takes the form of an off-road path.

Station Road – There is ramped access from Station Road onto the Lea Valley Line which then passes underneath the road.



*Ramped access from Station Road*

A chain-link fence runs across the path at the top of the ramp.





*Chain-link fence at Station Road entrance*

Crabtree Lane – Open access to pedestrians and cyclists with bollards to prevent vehicular access. Kickrail fencing is in poor condition.



*Crabtree Lane road crossing*



*Damaged kickrail fencing*

Crabtree Fields – There are steps which lead down from the area of waste ground and woodland adjacent to Harpenden Sewage Works. There are a number of informal paths through the woodland leading to Crabtree Fields, a local greenspace, and surrounding residential streets.



*Stepped access towards Crabtree Fields*

Marquis Lane – The route passes over Marquis Lane via a bridge, with steps and adjacent cycle ramp providing access to and from the route. These steps were renovated during the last five years with new timber risers and stepped surface, however erosion at the bottom of the steps has created an uneven final step.



*Stepped access from Marquis Lane*





*Stepped access from Marquis Lane with adjacent ramp*

### **2.8.3 Bridges**

Of the seven road crossings along the Harpenden section of the Lea Valley Line, three comprise an old railway bridge, detailed below:

Ox Lane Bridge –owned by HCC, carries the Lea Valley Line over Ox Lane.



*Route over Ox Lane bridge*

Station Road Bridge – owned by HCC, carrying Station Road over the Lea Valley Line. The bridge is currently screened from view by overgrown and overhanging vegetation.



*Route under Station Road bridge*

Marquis Lane Bridge – owned by HCC, carrying the Lea Valley Line over Marquis Lane.



*Route over Marquis Lane bridge*

#### **2.8.4 Surfacing**

The majority of the Harpenden section of the Lea Valley Line covered within this GAP has been surfaced with tarmac, providing a smooth surface suitable for use in all weathers. This path is for the most part in good condition.



#### *Tarmac surface*

Accumulation of organic matter, in particular leaf litter, can be present along sections of the route, mainly along the narrower and muddier sections generally associated with the cuttings, which have steep banks and are darker, shadier and have more overhanging vegetation. The section between Station Road and Crabtree Lane is a good example of this.

#### *Route sweeping*

As the path travels under Station Road bridge, there is significant erosion at the side of the path. Route sweeping is carried out monthly on sections owned by SADC.





*Eroded edge under Station Road bridge*

The section heading east from the Marquis Lane Bridge is surfaced with crushed stone and can become muddy at times.



*Crushed stone surfaced section of route*

### **2.8.5 Park furniture**

There are five dog waste bins situated at the entrances from Westfield Road, Waveney Road, Hickling Way, Crabtree Lane and Marquis Lane.





*Dog waste bin*

There are currently no benches along the route of the Lea Valley Line.

### **2.8.6 Signage**

Signage along the route is currently limited, with no information provided on the length of the route, destinations, and little indication of the connections available to other routes. The majority of route-specific signage concerns shared-use of the path, with a number of styles installed.



*Shared-use signage*

Waymark signs are found for many of the promoted routes for which the Lea Valley Line forms part of the routes. These include the Lea Valley Walk, Sustrans National Cycleway Network routes, and the Chilterns Cycleway.



*Waymark for the Lea Valley Walk*

### **2.8.7 Interpretation**

There are currently no interpretation panels along the route.

### **2.8.8 Historic features**

Few features relating to the railway heritage of the route survive, with the main remaining feature a lattice post found along the section between Westfield Road and Ox Lane.



*Historic lattice post*

## **2.9 Community and Events**

To date local volunteers have had limited involvement along the SADC owned section of the Lea Valley Line along the route of the disused railway. Across the wider area, the local Sustrans volunteer group have been involved in maintaining signage and clearing vegetation from sections of the Lea Valley Walk between Luton Parkway and Harpenden. The Batford Springs Volunteers (formerly the Upper Lea Valley Group) are an active conservation group founded in 1972, and help to maintain and manage the LNR, whilst also providing educational and recreational opportunities for the public. The BSV created the first section of what later became the Lea Valley Walk.

## **2.10 Marketing and Communication**

### **2.10.1 Leaflets**

There are a series of leaflets which cover the entire route of the Lea Valley Walk from Luton to Bow in London. These leaflets describe the whole route, its history, and places of interest and provide contact details for the organisations involved with the management of the route. The Harpenden section of the route is described in the Stanborough Lakes to East Hyde leaflet. This leaflet includes a sketched map depicting the route and shows the route extending through the Batford Springs LNR. Additional leaflets are available for the Luton section, and the route through London is described on both the Lee Valley Regional Park and Transport for London websites.

## **2.11 Site Management**

### **2.11.1 Tree Safety Surveys**

The safety of users is of primary importance to SADC. Formal tree safety surveys are undertaken in line with the Council's Tree Policy, with any works identified by the surveys addressed as appropriate. The recommendations relate only to risk and not to issues of nuisance or aesthetics. Each inspection will take into account the risk factors relating to condition and targets (proximity to public footpaths etc.) and project the date for the next inspection accordingly, prioritising inspections to those trees which potentially present the highest risk.

## **2.11.2 Grounds maintenance**

### *2.11.2.1 Vegetation clearance*

Strimming is carried out monthly, in line with grass cutting.

### *2.11.2.2 Litter and waste*

Dog waste bins are emptied once a week as a minimum, or when required by the Grounds Maintenance contractor. Users are encouraged to continue to take litter and bagged dog waste home where bins are not present.

### *2.11.2.3 Fly tipping*

Fly tipping occurs along the Lea Valley Line primarily in the form of dumped garden rubbish, particularly towards the south-eastern end of the route, whilst there is also occasionally fly tipping at the main entrance points. This is currently dealt with as part of the Grounds Maintenance contract.

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## 3.0 ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

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### 3.1 A Welcoming Place

#### 3.1.1 Links to green infrastructure

Links to RoW and other promoted routes will be improved through planned signage improvements along the Lea Valley Line.

#### 3.1.2 Access points

The access points should be attractive and accessible, whilst restricting unwanted vehicular access as much as possible. Regular maintenance at entrances from public footpaths and road junctions should include vegetation clearance to make these entrance points more open and welcoming.

Bollards at road crossings are currently of varying styles. Adopting a standard style for all new and replacement bollards in timber, to match those used elsewhere on the route towards Luton, would help create a stronger identity for the site, reflecting the railway heritage.



*Example of bollards used on route towards Luton*

Specific improvements can also be made to a number of entrance points to improve access, provide a more welcoming entrance to the route, and reflect the railway heritage of the site. These include:

Riverford Close – Replace handrail.

Station Road – Replace chain-link fence running across the path at the top of the ramp with post and rail fencing.

Station Road Bridge – Cut back vegetation to open up views of the bridge and make more of a feature of the railway heritage of the site. Where there is significant

erosion at the side of the path, the area should be topped up with material to protect the tarmac surface from damage, using railway ballast as the fill material would act as a further link to the railway heritage of the route and further enhance the bridge as a feature.

Crabtree Lane – Replace damaged kickrail fencing.

Marquis Lane Bridge – Existing fencing adjacent to the top of the bridge should be replaced to match the post and rail fencing recently installed at the Ox Lane bridge. The ground at the bottom of the steps should be reprofiled to fix the uneven final step.

### **3.1.3 Park furniture**

There are currently no benches along the route of the Lea Valley Line. Timber sleeper benches, reflecting the railway heritage, installed at natural stopping points would increase accessibility along the route. When choosing locations for new benches, consideration should be given to potential anti-social behaviour and secluded locations avoided.

### **3.1.4 Signage**

Improvements to signage would greatly help accessibility along the route. A new logo should be designed for the Lea Valley Line, reflecting the route's railway heritage, similar to those used on other nearby paths such as the Alban Way and Nickey Line. New signage should also be designed to reflect the railway history of the route and should be consistent along the route.

Signage is required at all access points, road crossings, and junctions with Public Rights of Way, providing visitors with useful information such as destinations and distances, and to make it clear which routes are part of the Lea Valley Line and where the connections lead to. In particular, where the Lea Valley Line emerges onto Waveney Road walkers must proceed on pavements to Hickling Way and around a corner to find the next section of the route. Improved signage is required here to improve navigability and to distinguish the Lea Valley Line from the Sustrans Cycle Route 57 which continues to extend through residential streets before re-joining the route of the Lea Valley Line at the Westfield Road entrance.

New shared-use signage on all entrances denoting a shared use route and promoting respect for other users should be designed and installed, following the

template of those used on other former railway routes including the Nickey Line and Cole Green Way.

Future signage projects should engage with neighbouring landowners and Central Bedfordshire Council to provide consistent waymarking along the whole length of the Lea Valley Line, running from the edge of Luton to Leasey Bridge.

### **3.1.5 Interpretation**

Interpretation panels would engage visitors with the history of the old railway line and could feature historic photos of the former Harpenden East Train Station and platform. The lattice post located between Westfield Road and Ox Lane, and the area near the Station Road bridge would provide suitable focal points and locations. Interpretation should also show the wider walks and cycle routes which are available in the area.

### **3.1.6 Lighting**

The majority of the route of the Lea Valley Line through Harpenden can become dark and shady, particularly in winter or early evening. However, the addition of artificial lighting would take away from the natural appeal that the Lea Valley Line provides whilst being expensive to install and maintain. Artificial lighting can also have detrimental effects on wildlife that use the route. Proposed vegetation and woodland management carried out along the route by thinning trees and opening up glades (through coppicing trees and scrub) will allow increased light into the path and help create a more welcoming environment.

## **3.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure**

### **3.2.1 Tree Safety Surveys**

Tree safety surveys should continue to be undertaken in line with the SADC Tree Policy, and identified works completed.

## **3.3 Well Maintained and Clean**

### **3.3.1 Grounds maintenance**

Regular maintenance of the route is important to ensure that it feels cared for and to encourage regular use. In particular, continued maintenance remains essential to maximise the lifespan and functionality of the surfaced route, which should be inspected annually and any problems addressed.

### **3.3.2 Vegetation clearance**

A regular programme of vegetation cutting along the margins of the route should establish a universal, minimum standard of maintenance along the whole length of the Harpenden section of the Lea Valley Line. A path corridor which is at least 4m high and extends 1m to either side of the track should be kept free of vegetation. This will keep the useable width of the path and access points free from encroaching vegetation, as well as around signage and park furniture.

### **3.3.3 Litter and waste**

Emptying dog waste bins and carrying out regular litter picking particularly around entrances should continue to be part of the Grounds Maintenance contract.

### **3.3.4 Fly tipping**

Prompt removal of fly tipping when it is reported should continue to be part of the Grounds Maintenance contract.

## **3.4 Environmental Management**

### **3.4.1 Funding**

CMS will continue to work closely with SADC to source external funding for the implementation of capital works. This will include grant applications, particularly in relation to the importance of the Lea Valley Line to communities and sustainable transport, with an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund planned.

### **3.4.2 Climate change**

Impacts of climate change will be considered in all management decisions and when planning for the future. Examples of where this may be implemented include when choosing tree species for planting or adjusting timing of management activities due to changes in weather/seasonal patterns.

In addition, the impacts of management operations on climate will also be considered. Examples of this include evaluating methods used (e.g., necessity for using machinery) and evaluating environmental sustainability of contractors and reducing carbon emissions when tendering contracts for site management.

Positive management and promotion of the Lea Valley Line as an active travel route will also help reduce emissions locally by encouraging journeys to be made by walking or cycling.



### **3.4.3 Environmental best practice**

The Council has a strong commitment to the environment, and environmental sustainability and recognises the impacts its operations have on the environment. SADC's dedication to protecting the environment is reflected in Council policies, strategies, commitments and partnerships, outlined in the Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy.

Natural regeneration will be utilised for restocking wherever appropriate; it is low cost, dynamic, adaptable to local conditions, and reduces the risk of importing pests and diseases to the woodland. However, replanting will be considered if natural regeneration does not achieve the required stocking levels. This presents an opportunity for some species diversification, with the aim of improving the resilience of the woodland against pressures from changing climate, pests and diseases. Working closely with organisations (such as the Forestry Commission and Hertfordshire County Council) in relation to biosecurity will provide up to date information on plant and tree health issues across the county and further afield.

## **3.5 Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage**

### **3.5.1 Woodland**

The multi-function nature of the route should be maintained and enhanced through a proactive programme of rotational woodland and vegetation management along the route.

#### *3.5.1.1 Thinning*

Light thinning should be undertaken along the wooded cuttings, favouring specimen trees and prioritising the felling of either dangerous trees or those of poor form, particularly large multi-stemmed specimens and those leaning heavily over the route. Attention should be paid to ash trees, and those showing signs of ash dieback targeted for felling. Woodland thinning is a high priority where the route is very dark and enclosed, primarily the section immediately north of the Westfield Road crossing and between Station Road bridge and the south-eastern end of the SADC owned section of the route.



*Heavily leaning trees over route*



*Large, multi-stemmed trees*

Thinning will protect older trees from becoming over-shaded and will encourage the development of a diverse woodland canopy. This will also allow light to reach the woodland floor, encouraging ground flora and an understorey of small plants, shrubs and trees to thrive, creating a more diverse structure. Thinning will give the remaining trees more space to develop and will break up any uniform pattern that may be emerging.

#### *3.5.1.2 Coppicing*

Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management where understorey trees are cut low to the ground and allowed to re-grow in a multi-stemmed form. Periodic cutting boosts the trees growth and coppiced trees in their various stages of growth provide a variety of habitats for animals, birds and butterflies. Rotational coppicing of previously coppiced hazel will create temporary open pockets which will not only improve the user experience and feeling of safety, but also contribute to the development and maintenance of the secondary woodland and scrub habitats which predominate. In order to maintain screening for residential properties, sections prioritised for coppicing will be those on top of embankments not adjacent to properties, including the northern side of the route opposite Riverford Close and the northern edge of the route between Waveney Road and Ox Lane, adjacent to Coldharbour Lane.



#### *Previously coppiced hazel*

Additional coppicing of shrub species within cuttings where thinning will be taking place will help with the development of a more varied understorey.

#### *3.5.1.3 Ivy*

There are a number of trees covered in an extensive amount of ivy. Ivy does not pose a risk to healthy trees and is important for wildlife through the key provision of shelter and nectar. However, the substantial growth of ivy, particularly associated with low, overhanging branches, has enclosed the route in some areas and contributes towards the low light levels. The growth of ivy will be controlled through the thinning and coppicing of trees, and the targeted removal of large overhanging branches.

#### **3.5.2 Scrub**

Periodic rotational scrub management, combined with coppicing, will contribute to the creation of temporary open spaces, helping create a more dynamic habitat along with more diverse ground flora and understorey.

Where areas of young ash trees are lost to ash dieback, native hedgerow species should be planted adjacent to the boundary of the site where required to maintain the screening to adjacent properties. Other areas should be left to regenerate naturally, contributing to grassland and scrub development.

#### **3.5.3 Grassland**

Increased light levels created through the woodland management operations of thinning, coppicing and INNS removal will help to promote the growth of ground flora and improve the quality of the grassland habitat for wildlife. As woodland management continues along the route more open pockets will be created and



others will disappear as the vegetation grows back, allowing flowers to disperse along the route. Towards the southern and northern ends of the route, creation of temporary open pockets will also open up views across the floodplain of the River Lea.

#### **3.5.4 Hedgerow**

The line of conifer trees, which run parallel with Hyde Close, cast a substantial amount of shade on the narrow path and should be removed.

#### **3.5.5 Species**

All works carried out along the route should take into account the requirements of protected and priority species, including bats, reptiles, badgers, invertebrates, nesting birds and Roman snails. For example, encouraging the growth of areas of scrubby habitat and the creation of log piles using timber from the woodland management will create suitable further suitable habitat for Roman snails along the route.

##### *3.5.5.1 Invasive species*

In order to improve the biodiversity value and appearance of the route, clearance of INNS and horticultural species should be implemented. INNS removal will contribute to the creation of more open habitats; however, where screening is required to the back of properties, planting of native shrubs will take place.

#### **3.5.6 Biodiversity Net Gain**

A formal habitat and condition assessment survey has not been undertaken as part of the development of this Greenspace Action Plan. Most of the actions set out in this plan are focused on maintaining the quality of existing habitats rather than changing habitat type or condition, and so it is not expected that any significant biodiversity net gain will be delivered through the plan.

#### **3.5.7 Historic features**

The historic lattice post should be restored to help acknowledge and interpret the route's former use.

### **3.6 Community Involvement**

A number of the practical conservation management tasks on the route outlined in this plan could be delivered by volunteers, including small-scale vegetation works, and installation of signage, interpretation panels, benches and fencing.

### **3.7 Marketing and Communication**

#### **3.7.1 Leaflets**

Working with landowners in neighbouring Bedfordshire, a new leaflet should be developed for the Lea Valley Line, covering the entire route of the former railway from Luton to Leasey Bridge.

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## 4.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

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The aim and objectives of the GAP will be as follows:

### Aim

To promote and enhance this multi-user route for all to enjoy, providing opportunities for use as both an Active Travel and recreational route, whilst enhancing wildlife habitats.

### Objectives

**A. A welcoming place** – *To provide and maintain clear, welcoming public access onto, and along the route.*

- A1 Improve access to, from and along the route, linking to local greenspaces, businesses and schools, residential areas, public transport, shops and local amenities.
- A2 Install appropriate signage to, from and along the route whilst making the route more attractive.
- A3 Inform site users and the wider community about the site's heritage through effective and engaging interpretation.
- A4 Improve provision of seating and maintain seats in a consistent style.
- A5 Enhance standard of infrastructure at access points to improve accessibility on to the route.

**B. Healthy, safe and secure** – *To provide and maintain safe public access onto, and along the route.*

- B1 Ensure that the Lea Valley Line provides a safe, high-quality route for all user groups.
- B2 Undertake tree safety surveys and carry out reactive tree works to address safety issues.
- B3 Respond proactively to anti-social behaviour and misuse of the route.

**C. Well-maintained and clean** – *To provide and maintain a high-quality route for a wide range of users.*

- C1 Manage and maintain the route's surface, signage and infrastructure.
- C2 Remove fly-tipping, undertake regular litter picking, empty litter bins, and carry out small scale vegetation management.

**D. Environmental management** – *To ensure compliance with the council's environmental policies and seek sustainable activities and solutions*

- D1 Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are financially sustainable.
- D2 Secure external funding to ensure the viability of capital works.
- D3 Ensure impacts of climate change are considered in management decisions, both in terms of the effect of climate change on wildlife habitats and of carbon emissions from management operations.
- D4 Ensure all management is carried out according to environmental best practice, including on herbicide use, plant biosecurity to minimise tree disease, and sustainable woodland management practices.

**E. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage** – *To protect and enhance the biodiversity and heritage that can be found along the route*

- E1 Undertake proactive, rotational woodland/vegetation management along the route to increase rates of regeneration, open up views across the countryside, create areas of temporary open space, and improve tree health.
- E2 Recognise the value of mature trees and provide optimum conditions for their longevity.
- E3 Remove Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) of plants, and selectively reduce introduced tree species.
- E4 Monitor tree pests and diseases, particularly ash dieback, and apply appropriate best practice in response to findings.
- E5 Recognise the value of the route as a wildlife corridor in the context of the wider area.
- E6 Conserve and enhance the on-site historical features along the route for visitor enjoyment.



**F. Community involvement** – *Develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community.*

- F1 Engage the local community in the development of the GAP to build understanding and support for the plan, enabling stakeholders to shape and influence the outcomes.
- F2 Enable the local community to become involved in the management of the site through structure and support, and ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the objectives of the GAP.
- F3 Work with local stakeholders to ensure integration with the wider green infrastructure network, particularly Rights of Way, the Lea Valley Walk, and National Cycle Network (NCN) routes.

**G. Marketing and communication** – *To improve awareness of the Lea Valley Line as both an Active Travel and recreational route.*

- G1 Develop and implement a promotional strategy to increase awareness and usage of the route.
- G2 Develop and produce a leaflet for the Lea Valley Line.

## 5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

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The action plans are colour-coded into 'ongoing management' and 'opportunities, subject to funding'. 'Ongoing management' items will generally be funded and delivered through existing Council revenue budgets. 'Opportunities, subject to funding' items have no funds currently allocated to them. Delivery would therefore require securing external funding or applying internally through the SADC capital bid process. All costs are estimates and full costs will need to be identified for each item prior to the submission of a capital bid or external funding application.

Ongoing management

Opportunities, subject to funding

**Abbreviations:** SADC – St Albans City & District Council; CMS – Countryside Management Service; JOC – John O'Connors; GM – Grounds Maintenance; Vols – Volunteers



## 5.1 ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Inspect/maintain path surfaces	C1	All year	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.2	Inspect/maintain infrastructure	C1	All year	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.3	Sweep path surface	C1		SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.4	Litter picking	C2	All year	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.5	Empty dog waste bins	C2	All year	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.6	Prompt removal of graffiti and fly-tipping	B3, C2	As required	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.7	Prompt response to incidences of site misuse	B3	As required	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.8	Undertake trees safety surveys in line with SADC tree policy	B2, E4	As required	SADC	Contractor	GM budget			
0.9	Undertake reactive tree work to safety issues	B2	As required	SADC	Contractor	GM budget			

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.10	Undertake small-scale vegetation management along route to maintain minimum standard once established	C1	Sep – Feb	SADC	JOC	GM budget			
0.11	Undertake of strimming path edges where required	C1	Mar – Oct	SADC	JOC	GM budget			

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## 5.2 YEAR 1 ACTIONS 2024-25

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Install sleeper style benches at 300m intervals along route	A4	2024/25	CMS	Vols	External funding	£1.5k	6.6	
1.2	Replace handrail on steps at Riverford Close entrance	A5	2024/25	CMS	Vols	SADC	£250		
1.3	Install timber bollards at road crossings	A5	2024/25	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£2k	6.6	
1.4	Reprofile base of steps at Marquis Lane bridge	A5	2024/25	SADC	Contractor	SADC	£500		
1.5	Replace chain link fence at Station Road entrance with post and rail fencing	C1	2024/25	SADC	Vols	External funding	£1k		
1.6	Replace kickrail fencing at Crabtree Lane road crossing	C1	2024/25	CMS	Vols	SADC	£500		
1.7	Fill eroded edges adjacent to path under Station Road bridge with railway ballast	C1	2024/25	CMS	Vols	SADC	£500		

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.8	Coppice hazel, hawthorn and other shrub species along route	E1, E2	Sep – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time		6.2	
1.9	Carry out rotational management of scrub patches along route	E1	Sep – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time			

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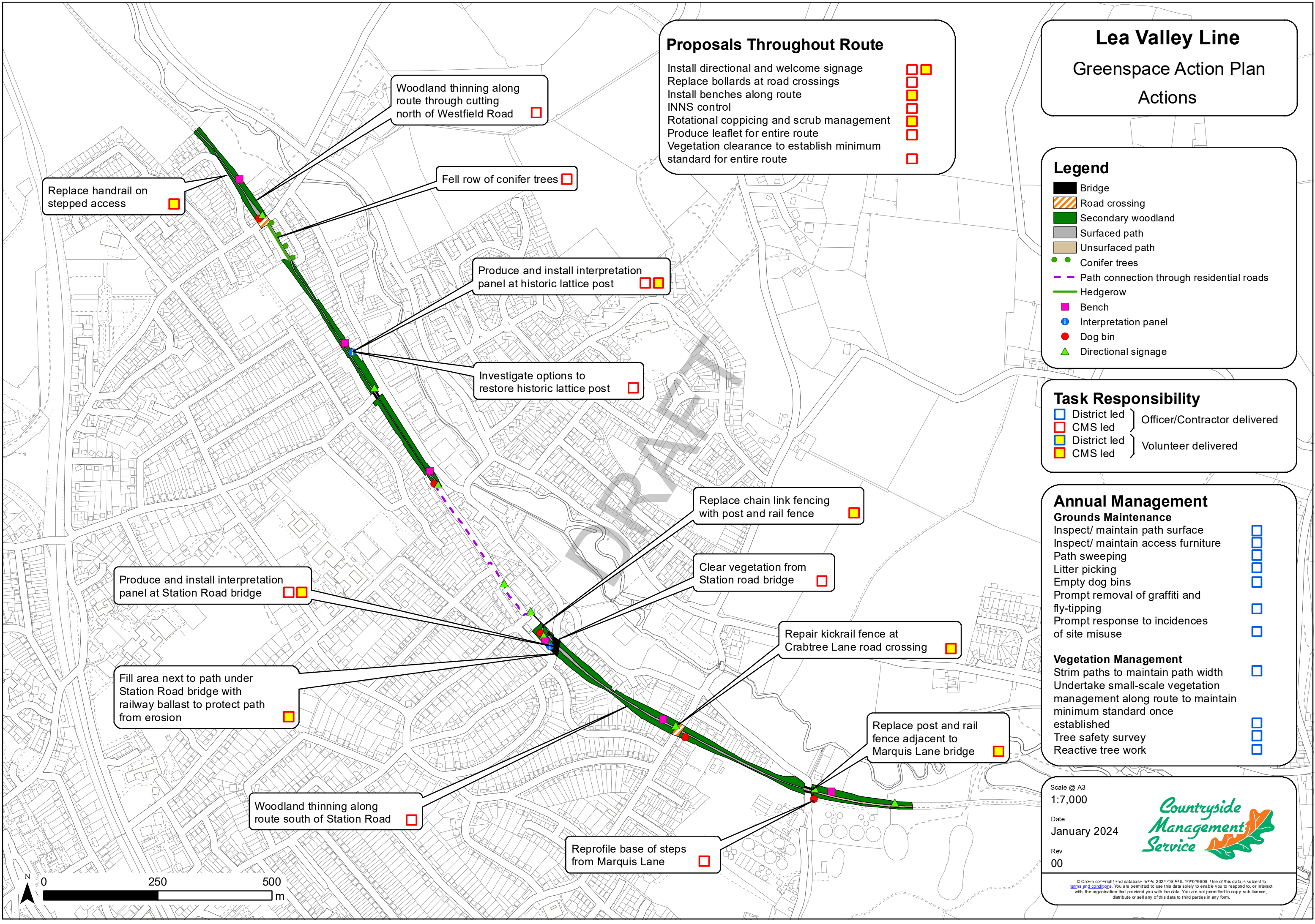
### 5.3 YEAR 2 ACTIONS 2025-26

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Design, produce and install welcome, shared-use, and directional signage	A2	2025/26	CMS	Contractor/vols	External funding	£10k	6.4	
2.2	Design, produce and install two interpretation panels	A3	2025/26	CMS	Contractor/vols	External funding	£5k	6.5	
2.3	Undertake vegetation clearance to establish minimum standard	C1	2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£5k	6.1	
2.4	Fell row of conifers south of Westmill Lane road crossing	E1	Winter 2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£2.5k		
2.5	Undertake thinning of mature trees along former railway cuttings	E1, E2	Winter 2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£15k	6.2	
2.6	Carry out removal of INNS and horticultural species along the route, replanting with native species where required	E3	Winter 2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£1k	6.3	
2.7	Carry out vegetation clearance to open up views of Station Road bridge	E6	Winter 2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£1k	6.2	

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.8	Restore historic lattice post	E6	2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£5k		
2.9	Work with stakeholders along the wider route to design and produce an online route map, mobile friendly, for the length of the Lea Valley Line along the former railway from the edge of Luton to Leasey Bridge, encompassing all the old railway routes.	G1	2025/26	CMS	Contractor	External funding	£5k	6.5	

#### 5.4 YEARS 3-5 ACTIONS 2026-29

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Coppice hazel, hawthorn and other shrub species along route	E1, E2	Y4 Sep – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time		6.2	
3.2	Carry out rotational management of scrub patches along route	E1	Y4 Sep – Feb	CMS	Vols	Officer time			



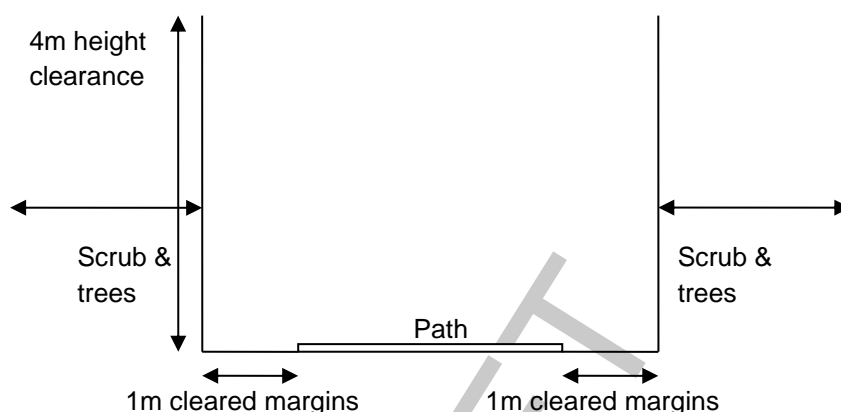


## 6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

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### 6.1 Path Side Vegetation

- a. Maintain a minimum of 4 m height and 1 m margins on either side of the surfaced path free from encroaching vegetation. This includes all access points to the route (see Diagram 1).



*Diagram: Minimum standard of maintenance along the route.*

### 6.2 Woodland Management

#### *Glade creation, thinning and removal of overhanging branches*

- a. Selectively thin the woodlands (maximum 20%) in areas of heavy shade within cuttings along the route.
- b. Trees to be marked individually for removal, targeting less healthy or less desirable species such as sycamore and ash and halo-thinning around oaks to aid their development.
- c. Substantial overhanging branches are to be removed; these will also be marked individually.
- d. All of the cut material to be removed from the site.
- e. Tree works to be undertaken between November and February to avoid bird nesting season, unless tree risk management inspections stipulate otherwise.

#### *Coppicing*

- a. Cut stems sloping towards the outside of the stool to shed rainwater.

- b. Aim for a rotation period of approximately 15 years to maintain this habitat.
- c. All cut material to be removed from the site where possible.
- d. All scrub work to be undertaken between November and February to avoid bird nesting season.

*Clearance of vegetation to expose Station Road Bridge*

- a. Clear all trees and scrub within 5 m of Station Road bridge, on both south-east and north-west sides.
- b. Clear all vegetation from the sides and top of the bridge, including all ivy, taking care not to damage the brickwork.
- c. All cut material to be removed from the site.
- d. Tree works to be undertaken between November and February to avoid bird nesting season.

### **6.3 Invasive Non-Native Species**

- a. Mechanically clear non-native invasive cherry laurel, snowberry and leatherleaf viburnum from along the route.
- b. Stumps should be treated directly after felling by painting or spot-spraying with glyphosate to prevent regrowth. All arisings to be removed from site.

### **6.4 Signage**

- a. New Rights of Way and Sustrans signage will follow the already established specification for these styles of sign, with finger posts located at main entrances and at the link between Hickling Way and Waveney Road. Where the route is shared with the Lea Valley Walk, signage will include the established Swan Logo.



*Example of existing signage used on route towards Luton*

- b. A design for further welcome signage will be established for the three bridge crossings, reflecting the railway history of the route.
- c. Design new shared use signage
  - a. Design a shared use sign for the Lea Valley Line in the style and font of historic railway signage.
  - b. Sign to be headed with the Lea Valley Line logo.
  - c. Sign to be titled 'Shared use route' with subtitle 'Please keep left'
  - d. Below a line there should be two additional messages: 'Please keep dogs under control and clean up after them' and 'No motorised vehicles'.
  - e. To include symbols for pedestrian, cyclist and horse-rider close to the title, and symbols representing the two additional messages. All symbols should echo the historic style
  - f. Provide two proof stages of design in PDF format.

## **6.5 Interpretation**

### *Logo*

Design a logo for the Lea Valley Line, reflecting the history of the route as a railway line. Logos produced for the Alban Way and Nickey Line can be used as examples.

### *Interpretation panels*



Design and produce two A2 interpretation panels which provide information for visitors on the route of the Lea Valley Line along with its key features, and provide PDF version of the same.

- a. To include a full colour computer-generated map of the Lea Valley Line showing the route and key features.
- b. Panels to feature historic photos of the former railway, including Harpenden East Train Station and platform. Text and photographs to be supplied.
- c. Provide two proof stages of full colour design in hard copy and PDF format.
- d. Supply two lectern frames of the same design used on the Alban Way, in black powder-coated stainless steel.

#### *Lea Valley Line leaflet*

- a. Design a map-based site leaflet for the Lea Valley Line following designs used for other old railway lines in Hertfordshire.
- b. Images and text to be provided.
- c. To be double sided, full colour and gate folded with seven sides to DL.
- d. Provide two proof stages of full colour design in hard copy and PDF format.
- e. Print 5000 copies on 130gsm recycled paper or similar and deliver.

## **6.6 Furniture**

A single style of bench and bollards will be established, with links to the history of the site and rolled out where appropriate along the route.

#### *Bollards*

- a. Remove any existing access control furniture at entrances from roads.
- b. Install wooden bollards across the full width of each entrance with a spacing between posts of 1500 mm.
- c. Posts to be pressure treated softwood, 1600 mm long and 100 mm square, with four-way weathered tops and incorporating red reflective circle.
- d. Posts to have 1000 mm above the ground after installation, and to be fixed in concrete. Lockable bollards to be installed where vehicle access is required.

*Design and install traditional railway-style benches*

- a. Establish a single style of sleeper bench, linked to the railway history of the site and the Lea Valley Line branding.
- b. Install new bench at 300m spacing.

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## 7.0 APPENDICES

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