



Nickey Line Greenspace Action Plan

2016 - 2021

Produced by:
Countryside Management Service

On behalf of:
St Albans City & District Council



SUMMARY

This Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) identifies three key roles for the Nickey Line – a leisure route, a sustainable transport connection and a green corridor. The actions proposed in this GAP aim to enhance each of these three functions.

To improve the use of the route for leisure, the Nickey Line will be presented as a series of 'stations', with improved interpretation at key points along the line encouraging interest and understanding of the history.

The role of the Nickey Line as a transport route across Hertfordshire will be highlighted by indicating destination points that can be reached along the route. Capital improvements to surfacing and access points will be implemented should funding allow.

Vegetation along the Nickey Line will be managed to create high quality habitats that enhance the value to wildlife.

Alongside these, events will be held to encourage further community engagement. Maintenance arrangements will also be reviewed, seeking a single standard of good management across the Nickey Line.

Amendments

Amendment Date	Section Updated	Details	Officer
April 2016	All	Draft issue for consultation	GA
June 2016	All	Final issue	GA

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Greenspace Action Plan

This Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) has been produced by The Countryside Management Service (CMS) in close consultation with St Albans City and District Council (SADC). This GAP is for the sections of the Nickey Line that are under SADC and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) ownership.

The purpose of this GAP is to determine a management programme that will deliver ongoing enhancement of the Nickey Line, aiming to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. The plan covers a five year period from 2016-2021. It will guide works carried out by CMS, SADC and the Friends of the Nickey Line.

1.2 Consultation

To ensure that this GAP reflects the needs and interests of all stakeholders, CMS has developed it alongside St Albans City and District Council and in consultation with local stakeholders and the Friends of the Nickey Line.

An initial consultation was held on the aims and objectives of this GAP and the feedback from this has been used to inform a draft plan. Comments were then invited upon the draft plan ahead of production of the final plan.

1.3 Co-Operation of Owners

This GAP covers the section of the line that falls within St Albans District. The administrative boundary with Dacorum Borough is approximately 100m to the southwest of Cherry Tree Lane bridge, where the residential estate starts.

SADC and Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) operate separate management regimes for their respective sections. However, to ensure a coordinated approach CMS, SADC and DBC will work in collaboration on key projects to ensure plans are complementary and agreed across the ownership boundary wherever possible.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Background

The Nickey Line is a closed railway line that connects the settlements of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden. The line is now approximately 7.2 miles long, with about 1.4 miles at the Hemel Hempstead end having been lost to development.

The primary present-day function is a recreational route for pedestrians and cyclists, forming part of the Sustrans National Cycle Route 57 connecting Welwyn Garden City and Oxford as well as the Chiltern Cycleway.

The current route broadly follows the original position of the rail line, with the exception of minor repositioning around road junctions near to Redbourn and the removal of sections as part of the development of Hemel Hempstead new town.

2.2 Historical Context

As a rail line, the route originally connected Hemel Hempstead with the Midland Main Line at Harpenden. Officially called the Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead Railway, it was commonly known as the Nickey Line.

Construction of the line was initially driven by trade as well as passengers. When the line opened in 1877 it included four passenger trains and one goods train, stopping at Hemel Hempstead (different to the present day Hemel Hempstead station, note historic spelling) and Redbourn stations before joining the Midland line on its way up to Luton. This provided an important connection between the straw plaiting textiles trade at Hemel Hempstead and the hat making of Luton.

As the straw plaiting industry declined in the late 19th and early 20th century, the line shifted its focus towards passengers. Following a takeover by Midland Rail, a southern connection was added in 1888 onto the junction with the Midland Rail line, thereby joining up with the London-bound train at Harpenden Central station. The northern link to Luton was closed at the same time. During the early part of the 20th century Heath Park Halt, Godwin's Halt, Beaumont's Halt and Roundwood Halt were opened to encourage passenger use.

A connection was made to Boxmoor Station (now Hemel Hempstead). However, this was only briefly used for goods trains before closure.

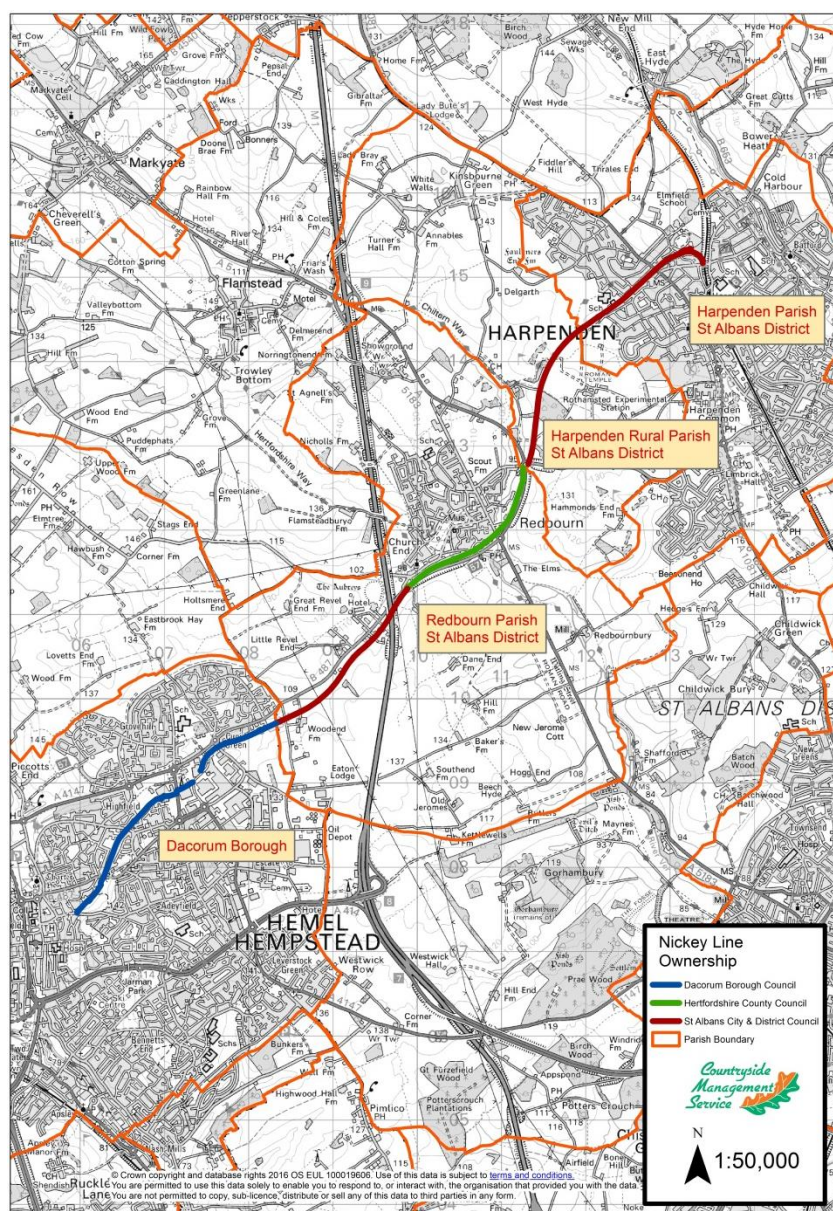
With low usage, passenger services ceased in 1947. Goods trains remained until the expansion of Hemel Hempstead in the 1960s, albeit on an increasingly rare basis. Thereafter, part of the line remained in use by the Hemelite brickworks, becoming privately owned by them in 1968.

The upgrade of the Bedford Line (former Midland Line) removed the junction at Harpenden in 1979, leading to the final closure of the line. The tracks were removed in 1982 and the route opened as a cycleway and footway in 1985.

2.3 Ownership and Management Responsibilities

Ownership of the Nickey Line is divided between SADC, HCC and DBC. The sections owned by SADC and DBC correspond with the district boundaries. HCC ownership is along a 1.3 mile section within St Albans District, adjacent to the village of Redbourn.

Following a review of management arrangements, SADC have recently taken on full responsibility of the management of all sections of the line that are under their ownership. On agreement, the management of the HCC owned section is also overseen by SADC.



The Friends of the Nickey Line was established in 2006 and the group is active in the research and publicity of the line and in carrying out management through their volunteer work parties. They also source funding towards management and improvement projects. The aims of the group are:

- To conserve and enhance the Nickey Line for the benefit of the local communities and wildlife.
- To encourage and maintain community interest in the Nickey Line.

- To advise, assist and work with any person or body which shares a common interest in the Nickey Line.

The last management plan produced for the SADC/HCC owned sections of the Nickey Line was for the period of 2006 to 2011. Since then, management and the Friends' work programmes have been agreed with CMS and SADC on an annual basis.

2.4 Character Areas

The Nickey Line combines the rural landscape of Hertfordshire with the urban settlements of Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden. There are four broad character areas along the St Albans section of the route, each of which is described below. The proposals of this GAP are also divided into compartments based upon these character areas.

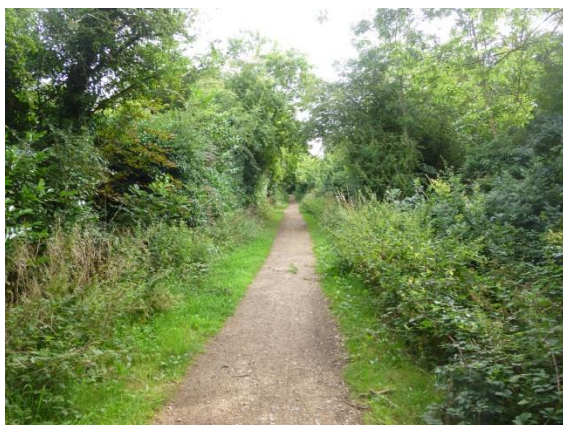
Harpenden Town



Harpenden to Redbourn



Redbourn



Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead



2.4.1 Harpenden Town

Close to the town centre, embankments lined with mature trees create an impressive sense of enclosure, yet due to their height there is sufficient room for them not to be intimidating.

The high canopy differs from the rest of the Nickey Line where the user often travels at the same height or at a higher level than the adjacent rural land. This transition in levels corresponds with the change from rural to urban, marking the arrival to the town of Harpenden.

At other locations within Harpenden Town the towering trees are lost to close enclosure by garden fences. The path narrows and becomes momentarily unattractive.

2.4.2 Harpenden to Redbourn

A wide path typically with an open feel. Despite intermittent sections of taller trees, the majority of this section is lined with hedgerows, creating a sunlit path, often with attractive grass and wildflower edges. Occasional breaks in the hedge line open up views onto the surrounding agricultural landscape. Often busy with people, this section has more vibrancy than elsewhere on the route.

2.4.3 Redbourn

The majority of this section is enclosed by hedgerows close in to the user. With very few views out, the section quickly becomes uninteresting. The path narrows considerably to create a more intimidating atmosphere and is not wide enough for two bikes to ride alongside each other or to comfortably pass.

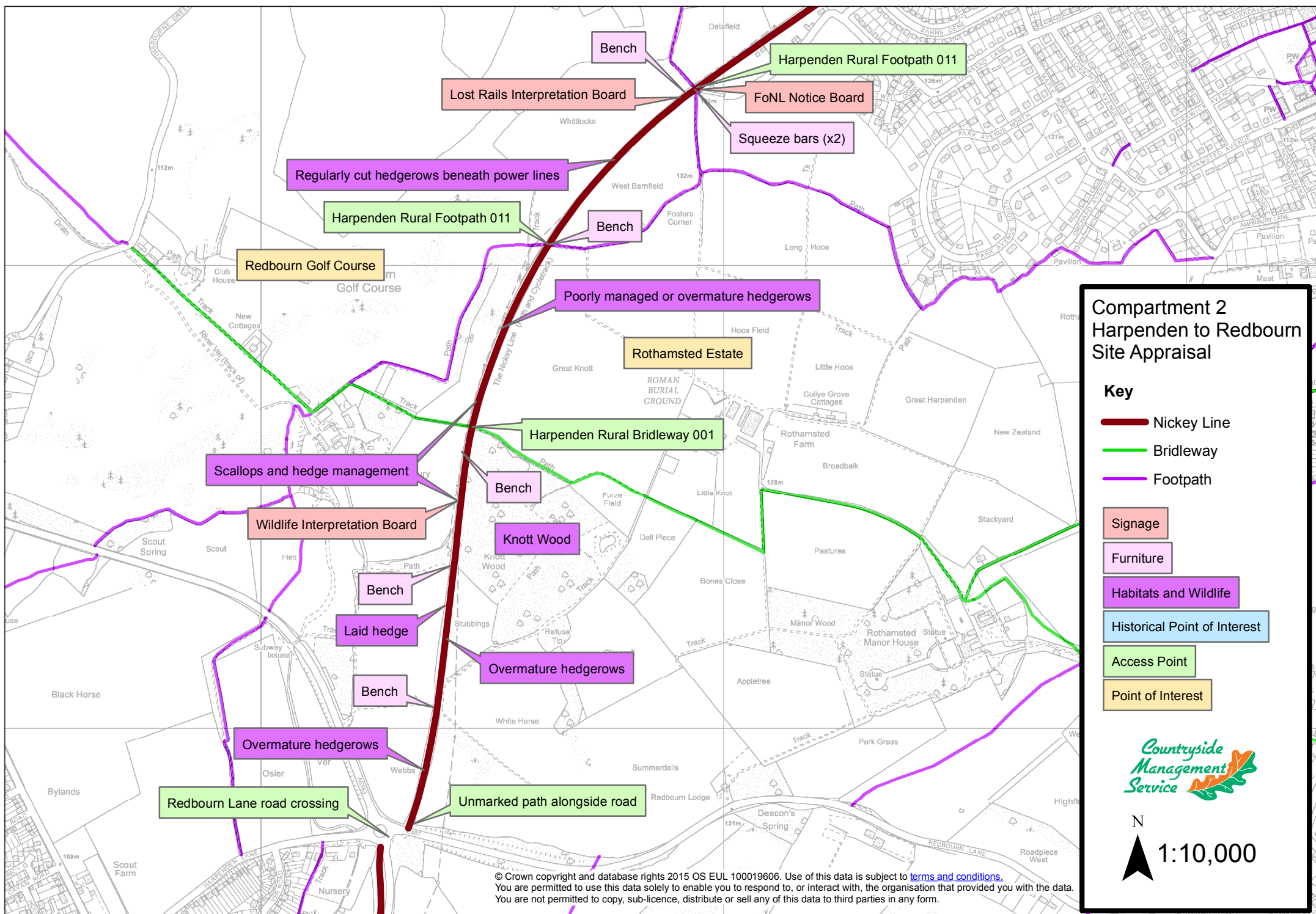
2.4.4 Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead

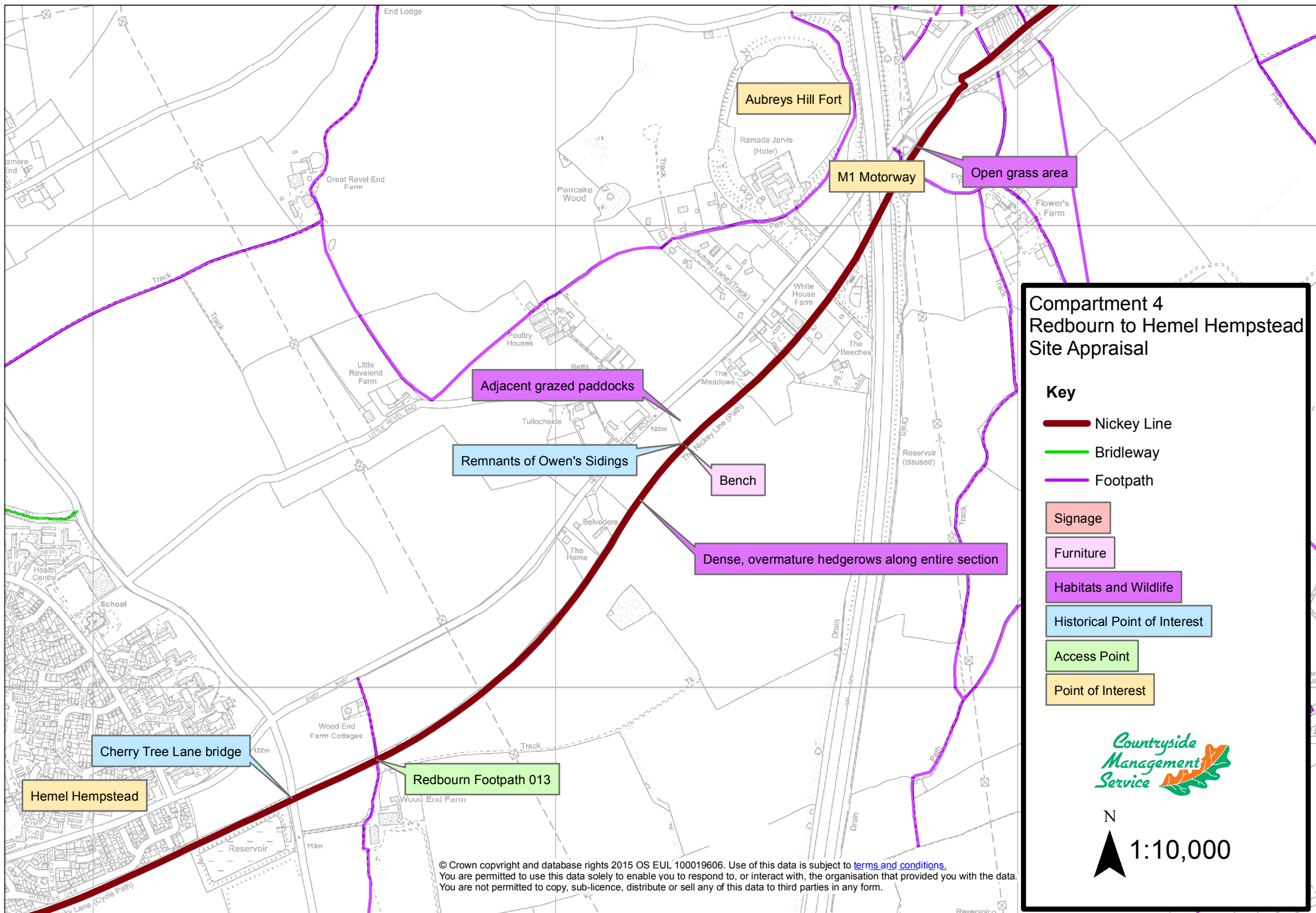
Dense and overmature hedge planting lines the route and shuts out light from reaching the ground. Where ground flora does exist, it is typically scrubby vegetation. The surface is poor with encroachment of vegetation narrowing the path. Despite occasional views onto the surrounding landscape, the area feels unmanaged and therefore unwelcoming.

2.5 Designations

The Nickey Line is designated as a Local Wildlife Site from Harpenden to Redbourn Lane and from Hemel Hempstead Road to the Maylands Industrial Estate.

Knott Wood, located adjacent to the Nickey Line between Harpenden and Redbourn, is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site.





3. SITE APPRAISAL

3.1 Historical Points of Interest

Due to the infrequency of remaining iconic features, the journey along the Nickey Line currently does not provide the feel of a former railway line.

The most clearly identifiable remnants of the railway are part of the platform and a quadrant signal at Roundwood Halt. Part of the platform was buried when making the path connection to the adjacent roads, whilst much of what remains is becoming overgrown with vegetation. There is no interpretation explaining its history.



A large brick retaining structure in Harpenden and two brick road bridges, at Ambrose Lane in Harpenden and at Cherry Tree Lane near Hemel Hempstead are also visible features of the rail line.



A former goods yard that was located beside Redbourn Station is now a picnic area called the Millennium Site. Apple trees have been planted at the north-eastern end alongside an art installation made from railway sleepers. Access points into the area are easily missed, comprising gaps within the hedge, whilst signage is limited. Once there, the history of the area is not clearly displayed or evident from the landscape.



Owen's Sidings - a former railway siding that previously served a nearby gravel pit, is located between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead. Its location is evident today only through remaining brick foundations.

The Nickey Line bridges over Luton Road in Harpenden and High Street in Redbourn. These comprise of a brick archway and a wrought iron bridge respectively. Crossing under these bridges, people are not made aware they are passing under the Nickey Line.

3.2 Public Usage

3.2.1 The Green Infrastructure Network

The Nickey Line presents an opportunity to provide vital green infrastructure for the area. As a sustainable transport route it encourages people to be physically active, reduces the pressure on the road system and provides a recreational activity. Use of green transport routes also provides considerable benefits to mental wellbeing.

Accordingly, the Nickey Line was highlighted within the Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan (2011) as a Rural Green Link to be used within the Reconnect Project. Similarly, it was considered to be a Strategic Link within the St. Albans District Green

Infrastructure Plan (2011), where it also connected to the River Ver strategic link down to St Albans.

Existing public connections with the Nickey Line are stronger around Harpenden and Redbourn, and the line is well used as a sustainable transport route between these two settlements.

Lower usage levels of the southern section reflect more inconspicuous entrances and lower levels of maintenance along this section of the route. In addition, there is at present little incentive for those using the northern section to travel further down the line towards Hemel Hempstead. This current failure to actively connect with Hemel Hempstead is greatly reducing the routes' role in providing wide reaching green infrastructure. Establishing connections between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead and providing a purpose for this southern section will be fundamental to enhancing the use of this part of the route.

3.2.2 As a Place to Visit

Beyond the role of connecting Hertfordshire's settlements, the Nickey Line has significant potential to be a leisure route in itself. However, visits at the moment are limited by the linear nature of the route, which requires people to travel along the line and then back along the same route. Connecting paths that could be used as part of circular routes are poorly and inconsistently marked.

3.2.3 Public Rights of Way

Harpenden Rural Footpath 011 crosses the line twice, connecting up to Footpath 013. These provide convenient access from elsewhere in Harpenden.

Harpenden Rural Bridleway 001 crosses between Harpenden and Redbourn and allows for access to Redbourn Golf Course and Rothamsted Estate.

Redbourn Footpath 020 provides access into Redbourn to the west, and to the east takes people to the southern end of Harpenden via Harpenden Golf Course.

Redbourn Footpath 024 follows the River Ver down to Redbournbury Mill and St Albans.

Redbourn Footpaths 038, 034, 031 and 012 provide access south to a network of rural walks.

Redbourn Footpath 013 connects the line from close to Hemel Hempstead up to Redbourn Road and to Cherrytree Lane via farm tracks.

3.3 Access Points

Primary points of access are marked with the yellow Nickey Line logo, often alongside way-marking signage. Secondary access points are typically unmarked.

3.3.1 Harpenden

There are several access points within Harpenden. The first pedestrian access is off of Hollybush Lane, beside where the Nickey Line historically joined up with the Midland Main Line. This entrance includes a way-marker, information board, Nickey Line logo and a Friends Group notice board. However, the overall appearance is underwhelming for the start of the line. Steps allow pedestrians down onto the Nickey Line, with these shaded by overhanging sycamore. There were previously views out from these steps onto the existing rail line and viaduct road crossing, but these have now been lost in summer due to vegetation growth.



A second major entrance within Harpenden is a recently installed ramp from Ambrose Lane. This provides bike and disabled access and joins the Nickey Line at the point where the original railway line broke away to travel north to Luton. This entrance also features direct stepped access. There is less signage here, with way-marking and an information board. For those arriving at the Hollybush Lane entrance, there is no indication of the presence of this easy access option, meaning people unfamiliar with the line could unnecessarily struggle down the steps with bikes, unaware of the ramp.

Stepped access, including a bike ramp, is located along Park Hill. Further access points are located further south on Park Hill, Roundwood Park and Moreton End Lane. These include only basic way-marking signage and vehicle squeeze barriers.

3.3.2 Redbourn

There are two access points off of High Street. A ramped entrance runs via the Millennium Site at the point of the former Goods Yard, whilst a stepped access further south takes pedestrians directly onto the Nickey Line. The ramped access features the Nickey Line logo and way-marker. The stepped access includes an information board and way-marker, with a Friends Group notice board located at the top of the steps.

A simple alleyway approach provides a secondary access point off of The Park. This joins the Nickey Line with a redundant timber structure likely to have previously formed part of a kissing gate.

The crossing of Chequer Lane was previously bridged, but users must now drop down to street level to cross. To the eastern side of Chequer Lane there are alternative routes of a stepped and ramped access. The ramp is in a poor condition and is only just useable for bikes. It is not suitable for disabled access. There is very limited signage to mark this entrance point.

The entrance on the western side of Chequer Lane features timber squeeze barriers with the Nickey Line logo, alongside way-markers and an information board. A steep slope then takes users back up to the level of the Nickey Line. The roadside includes a full kerb, requiring cyclists to dismount and providing an awkward feel to the entrance. It is also heavily shaded and visibility of the entrance is poor. Chequer Lane is a main vehicle route into Redbourn where there is the potential for many people to see the Nickey Line, but this is not being realised to its full potential at present.



A footpath further west along Chequer Lane also takes people onto the Nickey Line. This starts much closer to the centre of Redbourn and is more easily accessible. Signage points to this providing access to the Nickey Line.

An additional two secondary access points are from footpaths at the western end of Hemel Hempstead Road. These join the Nickey Line with Rights of Way standard signage.

3.3.3 Hemel Hempstead

The majority of access points are from within Dacorum Borough. Stepped access is possible from Cherry Tree Lane. This is not in a highly used pedestrian area, although usage is likely to increase as a result of the adjacent Spencer's Park residential development.

3.4 Interpretation and Signage

3.4.1 Interpretation Boards

An interpretation board was installed in 2009 by the CMS and Friends of the Nickey Line opposite Knott Wood that portrays the wildlife that can be found on the route. This is located within a well-used section of the route where views of the adjacent countryside have been created and scallops cut, taking advantage of a prime location with interesting wildlife.

The Lost Rails project installed a board that details the history of the line and provides audio of interviews with local people about the line. Similarly, this is well positioned adjacent to squeeze bars where people will be slowing down and cyclists dismounting.

Although these existing boards add value and interest to the route, opportunities to interpret other points of interest have been missed. Former halts and platforms, for example, are typically unmarked. The former goods yard (Millennium Site) is marked with a small plaque. This, however, is only evident once the user has already left the Nickey Line and entered this site and may not draw people in unless they already know of it.

Aside from those outlined above, the main recurrent signage is information boards (shown in photo), which provide basic outline information, primarily focussed around the different land ownership. In reality, this is likely to be of little relevance or interest to the majority of Nickey Line users. This tall, metal signage urbanises the Nickey Line and is arguably unattractive in its rural setting.

There are a number of Rights of Way signposted. These are standard Rights of Way signposts, but typically also feature the Nickey Line logo.



3.4.2 Notice Boards

Notice boards of varying styles are used and maintained by the Friends of the Nickey Line at several locations. These engage the surrounding communities by providing information about current projects and events. Keeping these up to date, particularly as the delivery of this management plan progresses, will be important in ensuring that local people remain updated and have the opportunity to get involved.

3.4.3 Leaflets

A leaflet was produced in 2006 featuring a map of the entire length of the Nickey Line. This identifies points of interest along the route, the wildlife that can be seen and a historical timeline.

3.4.4 Online Interpretation

The main online resource for the Nickey Line is through the website of the Friends Group. This provides a considerable coverage of the history, wildlife and walking routes.

Hertfordshire Cycling also present online videos of main cycling routes through the county. This includes videos either way along the Nickey Line.

3.5 Surfacing

The majority of the route is surfaced, typically with unbound material that is suitable for pedestrians and for leisurely bike rides.

Some sections of the route are in poor condition or have become narrow due to vegetation encroachment. This is particularly the case in the section that runs to the south of Redbourn Bypass, on approach to Hemel Hempstead. It has a very old surface that is now missing in large parts. As a result this section can become difficult to pass in winter.

Similarly there are poor sections between Roundwood Halt and Harpenden Rural Bridleway 001 (for the connection to Rothamsted Estate and Redbourn Golf Course) which can also present access issues in wetter months.

3.6 Furniture

There are a number of benches along the Nickey Line. These comprise simple timber structures, many of which are in need of replacement due to their age. The benches vary in terms of how appropriately positioned they are, with some at unnatural stopping points. Some locations that would provide an interesting place to stop lack seating.



Where the Nickey Line intersects Harpenden Rural 11 footpath, there are rusted metal squeeze bars and vehicle access gates on either side. There are now wide and readily used desire lines around the side of each of these, which have established due to the difficulty in getting through the squeeze bars, particularly for cyclists. The bars and gates are therefore both ineffective and unattractive.



3.7 Road Crossings

There are two major road crossings where the Nickey Line crosses the Redbourn Bypass (B487/ A5183).

A survey by the Friends of the Nickey Line in summer 2015 found users expressed concerns about the safety of these crossings. This was also reflected in consultation responses for this GAP.

The main issues raised were at the roundabout with Redbourn Lane, where users cross two roads. Consultation feedback highlights that users feel visibility crossing Redbourn Lane northbound is particularly poor and that this presents a safety issue. The Friends' survey found this crossing was used over 1,600 times per week in summer.

From a navigation perspective, this junction also provides a break in the Nickey Line, with poor visibility of where the Nickey Line recommences on the other side.

The other main crossing is just to the northeast of Hemel Hempstead Lane. This crossing was also perceived as presenting safety issues due to the speed of traffic and reduced sightlines. Continuation of the Nickey Line, particularly on the southern side, is again not well marked.

The Nickey Line also crosses Chequer Lane within Redbourn. Concerns were raised within the consultation about sightlines and traffic speed at this crossing.

3.8 Habitats and Wildlife

3.8.1 A Green Corridor

As a railway line, adjacent vegetation would have been cut back or restricted due to or in prevention of fires. However, since its conversion to a pedestrian and cycle route, the banks have either been planted or naturally self-seeded with trees and hedgerows.

This provides a near continuous corridor of vegetation through the Hertfordshire countryside, delivering a connection between a number of habitats including woodland, agricultural land and the River Ver.

This has provided a valuable biodiversity resource, but has also reduced views out onto the surrounding landscape which would otherwise be contributing to an enjoyable and interesting route.

3.8.2 Hedgerows

There are numerous hedgerows along the route. A large number of these are overmature, with species becoming tall with reduced growth at the base. This is either due to an absence of previous adequate management or due to the time since previous coppicing. As a result of this, the benefit they are providing to wildlife is reducing.

Some of the hedgerows are boundary hedges. Management of these hedge lines varies between the adjacent landowners and future works proposed within this management plan will be dependent upon gaining their agreement.

Part of the area between Harpenden and Redbourn has overhead power lines. Due to this, some of the hedgerows are cut by the power company. This has not typically been done in a way that is in line with best practice from a biodiversity perspective.

One hedgerow, adjacent to the A5183, will have previously provided screening of the road. Due to the overmature nature of the hedgerow there is now visibility of the adjacent road from the path.

The Friends of the Nickey Line have been involved in hedge laying and coppicing in a number of locations. This work has been focussed at points where it provided views of the surrounding landscape and has enhanced the hedgerow form.

3.8.3 Trees

Mature trees are scattered along the route, but become a prominent feature upon reaching Harpenden where they create a shaded and imposing feel as they stand above the user on tall embankments. This provides a distinctly different character to this part of the route, signposting to the regular user that they have reached Harpenden.

Beneath these tree canopies there is generally scrub growth. The grounds maintenance contract run by SADC includes for keeping this vegetation back from path edges.

Tree species include a large number of Oak, Sycamore and Ash, with smaller numbers of Beech. The tree canopies have a particularly impressive nature where they are Oak and

Beech, which will also be providing a significant wildlife benefit. The Sycamores have a less striking impression, lower wildlife benefit and also create substantial management requirements due to their prevalence to seed. Although Ash are a beneficial tree, management needs to acknowledge the potential impact of Chalara Ash Dieback.

3.8.4 Woodlands

Knott Wood to the south of Harpenden is the only major woodland along the St Albans District section of the route. This Beech woodland has good spring coverage of ground flora, including Bluebells. The woodland is private land, although Harpenden Rural Bridleway 001 runs along the northern boundary and allows for good views in.

3.8.5 Rivers

The River Ver passes beneath the Nickey Line on the eastern side of Redbourn. This provides a connection to another major wildlife corridor, with the river, vegetated banks and wetland sites providing an important habitat for a number of species.

3.8.6 Grassland

Scallops have been created at various points to the south of Harpenden. Carried out alongside hedge laying and coppicing, this has both created views out onto the agricultural land to the west and also allowed in light to create species rich grassland.

Elsewhere along the line there are intermittent areas where a reduced tree canopy has allowed for good quality grasslands to establish alongside the path. These, however, are not typical of the route, with scrub or ivy the most common ground cover.

Where thin strips of grassland occur, these have typically been managed as short grass due to the need to keep vegetation off of the path.

A larger area of grassland exists adjacent to the Redbourn Bypass, from where trees were removed to as part of the M1 improvements. This is gradually being lost to scrub and sporadic tree re-planting has been carried out. The continued progression of this area to scrub or woodland would lead to the loss of a potentially valuable grassland habitat. There is currently no public access onto this land due to fencing.

3.8.7 Ground Flora

Despite large areas being dominated by scrub and ivy, the Friends of the Nickey Line have recorded a number of individual ground level plants. These include Lords and Ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Common Dog-Violet (*Viola riviniana*), Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*), Townhall Clock (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*). They have also recorded a number of fungi species.

3.8.8 Fauna

The habitats along the Nickey Line have given home to a number of species. The Friends of the Nickey Line have records of numerous birds and butterflies on or adjacent to the line, including Red Kites, Skylarks, Goldfinches, Cuckoos, Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Whitethroats, Chiffchaffs, Jays, Redwings and Fieldfares.

They have also recorded numerous butterflies, including Brimstones, Orange Tips, Large Skippers, Ringlets, Speckled Woods, Marbled Whites and Common Blues.

3.9 Surrounding Areas

The Nickey Line can connect people to a number of adjacent destinations and points of interest.

Harpenden Town

The town is a local centre for shops and services. It also retains a direct rail link into London. Despite its role as a commuter town it has retained the character of a village. A large common is located towards the south of the town.

Redbourn Golf Course

The golf course between Redbourn and Harpenden is well connected to the Nickey Line, with a Right of Way running up to the entrance.

Rothamsted Estate

The estate includes a Jacobean Manor House and the site of Roman Burials. John Bennet Lawes and Joseph Henry Gilbert began agricultural experiments here in 1843. This eventually led to the establishment of Rothamsted Research, who continue to use the land for scientific research. A number of public footpaths cross the estate.

Redbourn Conservation Area

Redbourn is a settlement originally dating back to Saxon and Mediaeval times, and has a number of places of interest. The High Street is located along Watling Street, the Roman road that ran up to Chester, and has a number of shops, pubs and restaurants. Church End includes attractive brick cottages as well as St Mary's Church, part of which dates back to the 12th century. The Common provides the village with a central greenspace.

Redbournbury Mill & St Albans City

The historic Redbournbury Mill can be accessed by the footpath along the River Ver or along St Albans Road. Continuing further along either of these eventually takes you to the Roman

part of St Albans and Verulamium Park. Access to this footpath is direct from the Nickey Line but signage at present is minimal and understated.

Aubreys Hill Fort

Land currently owned by Aubrey Park Hotel, to the southwest of Redbourn, includes earthworks of an Iron Age Hill Fort. This is located approximately 200m north of the Nickey Line. The hotel is currently appraising improvement options to this Scheduled Monument.

There is currently no direct access to Aubrey Park from the Nickey Line, but it can be reached by a short walk along Redbourn Footpath 012 and along Hemel Hempstead Road.

Spencer's Park Residential Development

Planning approval has been granted for the development of 357 new homes adjacent to the Nickey Line within Dacorum Borough. This will include a number of connecting point to the Nickey Line, as well as an adjacent Neighbourhood Park and play area.

Maylands Business Park

Industrial and business areas on the eastern side of Hemel Hempstead provide considerable local employment, with the Nickey Line providing a sustainable access route to these. This is a healthier, cheaper and in many cases quicker alternative to cars and public transport, and is possible during late or night shifts. However, this part of the Nickey Line does not appear well used and it is unclear how readily it is used for commuting.

The Spencer's Park development may see access to the Nickey Line increase within Dacorum Borough.

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

The Nickey Line runs very close to the Old Town of Hemel Hempstead, featuring attractive streets with historic architecture. It then continues down towards the Marlowes shopping area. A strong connection with Hemel Hempstead is increasingly important as the town centre is undergoing a significant regeneration project.

3.10 Grounds Maintenance

St Albans City and District Council

SADC currently oversee maintenance for the entire section of the Nickey Line within St Albans District, including the section under the ownership of Hertfordshire County Council.

The Countryside Management Service

CMS work with SADC and the Friends of the Nickey Line to produce an annual work programme.

Friends of the Nickey Line

Through their work parties, the Friends have implemented a number of projects such as coppicing, hedge laying, removal of self-set trees and installation of benches.

4. THE VISION

This Greenspace Action Plan will enhance the Nickey Line as an important component of Hertfordshire's Green Infrastructure network. It will provide a corridor for wildlife, be well used for sustainable transport and will be a popular place for leisure. In doing so it should meet the needs and interests of the communities that it passes through.

4.1 Aims & Objectives

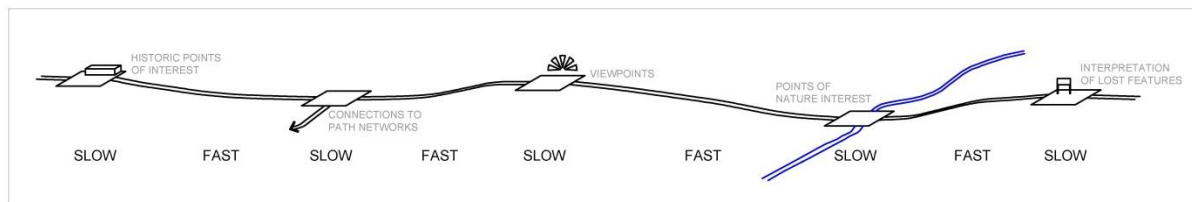
1. Develop a leisure route based around the history of the Nickey Line
 - A. Establish a scheme of interpretation that allows users to understand both where they are along the Nickey Line and also within the surrounding area and nearby points of interest.
 - B. Restore and document historical features along the line
 - C. Allow for the enjoyment of the surrounding environment in a way that also supports wildlife
 - D. Create an enjoyable, attractive and user-friendly route
 - E. Support and update off-site interpretation, including publications and online resources
2. Enhance the Nickey Line as a green corridor
 - A. Carry out habitat improvements along the route
 - B. Strengthen the continuity of vegetation that provides a biodiversity corridor
 - C. Secure the future of high quality habitats
3. Encourage a safe and sustainable transport route
 - A. Create a route that is used for non-motorised travel between Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden
 - B. Provide access points that are clearly signed, welcoming and are suitable for cyclists, wheelchairs, pushchairs, mobility scooters and pedestrians
 - C. Connect, where possible, to the wider Green Infrastructure network
 - D. Endeavour to improve the safety and navigation of major road crossings
4. Ensure engagement and involvement of local communities along the route
 - A. Support the continued involvement of the Friends of the Nickey Line
 - B. Publicise and facilitate involvement from all communities along the line, including Hemel Hempstead, Redbourn and Harpenden.
 - C. Hold events to encourage public use and understanding of the Nickey Line
 - D. Engage with schools to provide educational opportunities
5. Adopt an appropriate and sustainable management regime
 - A. Determine management responsibilities and arrangements across the different ownership boundaries
 - B. Ensure all parties are working towards the same management objectives that are appropriate to meeting the aims of this GAP
 - C. Ensure best value for money is obtained from the management arrangements

5. DESIGN & MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Leisure Route: A Journey through the Past and the Present

5.1.1 Hop On, Hop Off – The Nickey Line as a Series of Stations

Objectives Achieved: 1A, 1B, 1C, 3C



The Nickey Line represents both an historic and present day transport route across Hertfordshire. To connect the present with the past, the experience of the former rail line will be recreated on a modern off-road transport route.

As a railway, the Nickey Line had a series of stations and halts. At each point the passenger could get off and experience something different. To reflect this, today's Nickey Line will be presented as a series of 'stations' at interesting points along the route. These will represent slow spaces where people can stop, take in their surroundings, engage with history or leave the Nickey Line to explore the surrounding area.

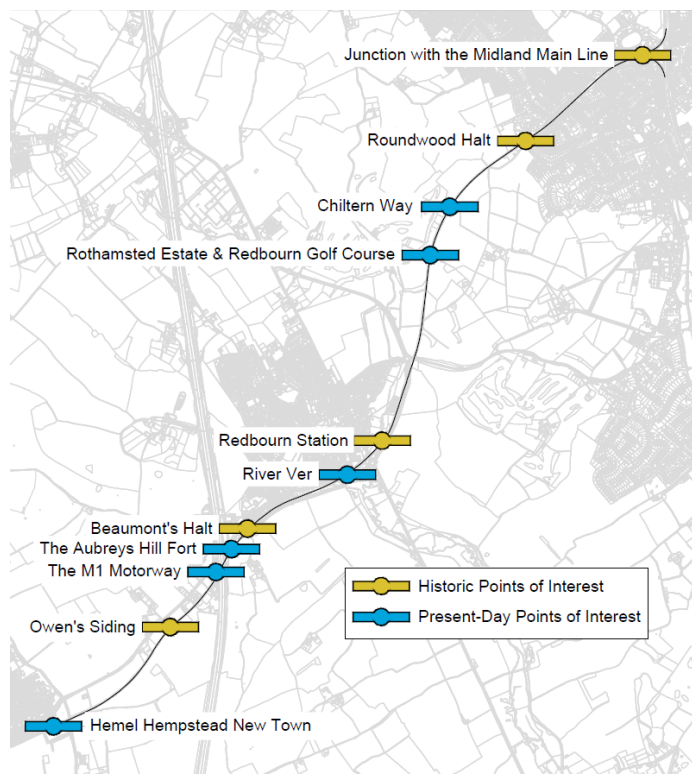
The journey between the stations would have once allowed people to quickly move through the landscape, with views out onto the surrounding areas. The experience of moving through these fast spaces would change along the line, reflecting changes in the surrounding landscape and topography. Similarly, fast spaces will be created along today's Nickey Line with views out onto the surrounding rural landscape.

The use of stations will create a route that reads as a former railway line, but will also enhance the legibility of the route. It will allow users to have a reference point as to where they are within the context of the entire line. Letting people know what is coming up will encourage exploration further along the line and highlight the use of the Nickey Line as a way to reach places of interest and destination points. This will be an important factor in increasing usage of the southern end of the line between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead.

Stations will be sited at historic points from the old railway line, present day points of interest and at destination points:

- [Map reference C1-06] Junction with Midland Mainline at Harpenden will be marked with simple signage where the rail line historically split to go north to Luton or south to London.
- [Map reference C1-14] Roundwood Halt: The clearest remnant of the former rail line, with part of the old station intact and an old quadrant signal. Interpretation boards will explain the historical significance (see also section 5.1.3.1)
- [Map reference C2-05] The Chiltern Way: An adjoining route that leads to Flamstead and beyond into the Chilterns. This will be marked with simple interpretation and way-marking.

- [Map reference C2-10] Rothamsted Estate & Redbourn Golf Course: Adjacent footpaths provide interesting walks around the surrounding countryside. These will be marked with simple interpretation and way-marking.
- [Map reference C3-07] Redbourn Station: The station is no longer present; however the adjacent goods yard is now the Millennium Site. Interpretation will explain the history of the location.
- [Map reference C3-09] The River Ver: An important ecological and landscape feature. This also provides an off-road transport route to Redbournbury Mill and St Albans. This will be marked with clear way-marking.
- [Map reference C3-15] Beaumont's Halt: A passenger stop. No evidence remains. Interpretation will explain mark the historical location.
- [Map reference C4-03] The Aubrey's Hill Fort: An Iron Age hill fort, now part of Aubrey Park Hotel. Way-marking will indicate the location from the Nickey Line.



- [Map reference C4-04] The M1 Motorway: Simple interpretation will mark the motorway and the underpass installed as part of recent widening.

- [Map reference C4-08] Owen's Sidings: Installed in 1898 for a nearby gravel pit. Remnant brickwork indicates its location. Interpretation will explain the historical significance.

- [Map reference C4-10] Hemel Hempstead New Town: The growth of Hemel has both altered the Nickey Line and given it a new purpose. Simple interpretation will mark the start of the town.

5.1.2 'Station' Design

Objective Achieved: 1B

Each 'station' will be produced to a similar design style, creating a sense of arrival at each point along with a rhythm and continuity akin to that of a railway line.

'Markers' will identify the location of the station. These will make use of timber in the size and shape of railway sleepers. This will invoke a sense of history whilst providing a natural appearance that is in-keeping with the present day rural appearance of the Nickey Line.

The markers will be used alongside interpretation boards at historically important locations. Both the design of interpretation boards and station markers will be contracted to a designer.



Examples of a routed railway sleeper and the use of vertical timber alongside interpretation

Where possible, stations will also reflect the characteristics of their location. For example the incorporation of gravel at Owen's Siding to reflect its former use for gravel extraction and the use of visuals such as historic photos. Such designs will provide a sense of place as well as a means of quick interpretation of the station. This is particularly relevant for those that would not wish to stop and read static interpretation boards, including cyclists, for whom otherwise the relevance of the place would be missed.

5.1.3 Restoration of Historical Features

Objective Achieved: 1B

Few relics of the former rail line still exist along the route. An interpretation board from the 'Lost Rails' project explores the social history of the route. However, there is little capacity for direct engagement with the former use.

Where features are present, it is therefore important to restore these as a tangible connection to the Nickey Line's history. A combination of restoration of former structures and interpretation boards will help users to imagine and understand the appearance and workings of the Nickey Line's history.

5.1.3.1 Roundwood Halt

[Map reference C1-14] Roundwood Halt will be cleared of scrubby vegetation that has grown on the platform. This will open it up for people to walk on and as a visual feature. Where possible it will be restored to its previous appearance. A panel featuring a viewpoint through a translucent historic photograph could allow users to clearly visualise the former appearance of the halt.

5.1.3.2 Road Bridges

The two brick road bridges that cross the Nickey Line, at Ambrose Lane in Harpenden [Map reference C1-08] and Cherry Tree Lane near Hemel Hempstead [Map reference C4-09], will have vegetation removed on the adjacent embankments to open up views.

In Harpenden the banks will be replanted with Beech trees that will eventually discourage low level vegetation.



The bridge at Ambrose Lane (left) along the Nickey Line is overgrown. Clearance work along the Alban Way (right) has increased the prominence of a bridge.

5.1.3.3 Redbourn Goods Yard/ The Millennium Site

[Map reference C3-06] CMS and SADC will work with local groups to consider a redesign of the Millennium Site to a landscape that reflects a former Goods Yard, as well as one that is readily used as a picnic area. A crucial aspect of this redesign will be more prominent entrances off of the Nickey Line.

5.1.3.4 Owen's Siding

[Map reference C4-08] The historic location of the siding tracks will be marked with gravel, either in small gabions or filled into trenches between sleepers.

5.1.4 An Enjoyable, Attractive and User-Friendly Route

Objective Achieved: 1D

5.1.4.1 Furniture

As benches become worn out, these will be replaced and repositioned to reflect points of interest along the route. This will include at the 'stations' and where there are views out onto the landscape. The Millennium Site picnic area will also feature a redesign with new benches and tables. New benches and tables will be constructed from sleepers to reflect the design of the stations.

[Map reference C2-01] The vehicle gates and squeeze bars, located where the Nickey Line crosses Harpenden Rural 11, will be replaced. The new design will include central

pedestrian and cycle access point that are easier to pass through and will not require the user to walk around the side, whilst maintaining a barrier to larger vehicles, for which locked gates will be provided. If possible, these will also be constructed from sleepers.

[Map reference C4-05] Bollards and broken fencing will be replaced. These will be timber to be in-keeping with other furniture along the line.

5.1.4.2 Dog Waste and Litter Bins

The levels of dog waste and litter along the line will be under ongoing review. If deemed necessary, additional bins will be installed.

5.1.5 Static Interpretation Boards

Objectives Achieved: 1B, 1E

Interpretation boards will be located at the most prominent of the 'stations' and will explain the importance or history of that particular stop, providing an important educational and recreation resource that will build understanding and a sense of identity with the local area.

Alongside explanatory text and photos, each board will include a route map (such as that shown in section 5.1.1) to provide a location reference and to identify other places to explore further along the route. Particularly for historical locations, QR codes or websites will be added that link to online resources.

To ensure that these are in-keeping with a rural setting, new boards will be constructed from timber and will be at a lower height than existing. Boards will vary in size and detail depending on the prominence of each station. They will be set into timber frames to ensure they complement the rural nature of the route.

Existing information boards that display ownership will be removed. Where these mark access points, replacement entrance boards will be installed.

5.1.6 Online resources

Objective Achieved: 1E

The Friends of Nickey Line website is well developed and provides comprehensive information about the route. QR codes or websites on the interpretation boards will link directly to the relevant page on the site.

Hertfordshire Cycling have developed YouTube videos of bike journeys both ways along the Nickey Line. The use of annotations on these videos can explain points of interest. This will be an important resource for cyclists who will be less inclined to stop and read on-site interpretation.

5.1.7 Publications

Objective Achieved: 1E

Leaflets are currently available for both the Nickey Line and the Alban Way (a former railway line between St Albans and Hatfield) to a similar design. The details of this leaflet will be updated to reflect this GAP.

5.2 Enhancing the Green Corridor

5.2.1 Bringing the Wider Landscape onto the Line

Objective Achieved: 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C

The Nickey Line, along with the other former rail lines of Hertfordshire, provides a valuable green corridor across the county and will be managed to maximise its benefits to biodiversity.

Alongside the Nickey Line, the varied landscapes invoke a strong sense of place and identity within rural Hertfordshire. In between the 'stations', the route will be managed to allow people to look out over the surrounding landscapes in the way that train passengers once would have done. In order to allow a quick experience of the landscape, which cyclists can experience without stopping, reasonably long sections will be opened up.

Opening up views of the surrounding landscape will be done in a way that is complementary to biodiversity. Much of the vegetation along the route consists of overmature hedgerows or coppice stools. Through the introduction of staggered cycles of hedge laying and coppicing, open views will be created for the first few years that later develop into dense, bushy vegetation providing a valuable habitat. Staggering the coppicing and laying will provide a varied hedgerow habitat, supporting different flora and fauna at each stage of the cycle. It will also ensure there are always areas of recent work that provide viewpoints. Coppice products will be sustainably used elsewhere on the route for hedge laying where possible.

Where meadows are located adjacent to the Nickey Line, it will be endeavoured to encourage these grasslands to colonise alongside the paths. This will be either through long open sections or through shorter scallops.

5.2.2 Hedgerows

Objectives Achieved: 2A, 2B, 2C

5.2.2.1 Compartment 1: Harpenden

[Map reference C1-16] Immediately as you head south out of Harpenden town, poorly managed hedgerows enclose the path, blocking views of the landscape and creating a heavily shaded section. Commencement of phased coppicing cycles over a 200m stretch will restore these hedgerows to good management, opening light to the path and create intermittent views out from the section most recently coppiced. This will be prioritised on the northern side of the path under the power lines. Management of the southern hedgerow will be done on agreement with the adjacent landowner.

5.2.2.2 *Compartment 2: Harpenden to Redbourn*

[Map reference C2-03] Hedgerows on both sides of the path are poorly managed over a 400m stretch, particularly under the power lines. Many of these would benefit from coppicing or laying that would provide a better structured hedgerow and would create views out over the adjacent countryside. As these hedgerows provide a boundary to the agricultural land, a management plan will be sought with the adjacent landowner that meets the interests of both sides.

[Map reference C2-06] Hedgerows are overmature and are creating heavy shading of the path. These would benefit from coppicing on the eastern side of the path over a length of approximately 75m. A management approach will be sought with the adjacent landowner.

[Map reference C2-08] Overmature hedgerows and dense trees would benefit from selective thinning and coppicing over a 100m section. A management approach will be sought with the adjacent landowner.

[Map reference C2-09] 50m length of coppicing under the power lines, where existing hedgerows have been insensitively cut.

[Map reference C2-12] Re-coppice a 280m length of Hazel coppice stools beside Knott Wood, creating intermittent views into the woodland. To be staggered in Years 3 and 5.

[Map reference C2-14] Coppicing of a 50m stretch of hedgerow on the eastern side of the line which will open up views over the adjacent fields.

[Map reference C2-15] Coppicing of two sections of hedge on the western side of the line, on agreement with the adjacent landowner, would create views out to the west. The most northerly of these is approximately 50m in length, and the southerly one approximately 100m in length.

[Map reference C2-16] Hedge coppicing of a 120m stretch of hedgerow to improve the biodiversity value.

5.2.2.3 *Compartment 3: Redbourn*

[Map reference C3-03] Overmature hazel coppice on the roadside will be re-coppiced and infill planted, creating a denser hedgerow that provides an improved habitat and a denser screen to the road. This is along a length of approximately 50m.

[Map reference C3-04] Hedge specimens within the first two metres of the track will be removed over 180m length to the west of the path, to encourage the establishment of grass verges. A denser hedgerow will be created set back from the path by coppicing the existing hedge specimens and infill planting between them.

[Map reference C3-05] A 130m section of hedgerow, predominantly comprising Hawthorn, previously provided screening to the Redbourn bypass. As the hedge has become overmature, this screening has become ineffective.

The hedge will be laid to the South of England style. Although this will temporarily make the road more prominent, after several years of growth the laid hedge will provide a denser barrier that is more effective for screening and also better for wildlife.

[Map reference C3-08] Views will be opened up of the adjacent public space through coppicing a 100m stretch of hedgerow on the northern side. Infill planting where required will be carried out further down the bank to encourage sustained views out.

[Map reference C3-12] Hazel coppice stools will benefit from phased re-coppicing. This will provide a well-structured habitat and maintain a dense barrier to the road. A 150m section will be staggered in Years 2 and 4.

[Map reference C3-14] Further hazel coppice stools that require re-coppicing. This 150m section will be staggered in Years 1 and 3.

5.2.2.4 Compartment 4: Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead

[Map reference C4-06] The majority of Compartment 4 would be enhanced by thinning of trees, prioritising Sycamore, and coppicing hedgerows with infill planting where required. This would create a better habitat and increase light levels along the path. Views can also be created over the adjacent fields.

There will be a need to stagger these improvements to avoid sudden disturbance to the existing biodiversity. With the total length of this section over 2km, complete improvements of this part of the route will require works beyond the length of this GAP. Staggered improvements of 400m sections in each of Years 1, 3 and 5 will however, ensure that the majority of this section is enhanced. It will be aimed for the timber product to be sold in order to offset the costs of the work.

5.2.3 Grassland

Objectives Achieved: 1C, 2A, 2B



5.2.3.1 Compartment 2: Harpenden to Redbourn

[Map reference C2-02] Vegetation will be cut back to the hedgerow to create a new scallop. This will be managed with annual cut and lift operations to encourage the establishment of wildflower grassland.

[Map reference C2-04] Vegetation will be cut back to create a new scallop, enhancing views over the adjacent field.

[Map reference C2-07] Intermittent cuts to prevent scrub establishment will retain views of the adjacent conifer woodland until the previously coppiced hedgerow has regrown.

[Map reference C2-11] Existing scallops will continue to be managed to ensure these provide diverse grasslands, with adjacent hedgerows trimmed to maintain outward views.

5.2.3.2 Compartment 3: Redbourn

[Map reference C3-01] Grass will be cut & lifted annually to prevent the establishment of scrubby species, ensuring views to the west over the Ver Meadows are maintained, whilst promoting a diverse wildflower grassland that reflects the adjacent meadow.

[Map reference C3-11] An area previously cleared of trees as part of highways work has created the opportunity for an open grass meadow. This is currently being lost to scrub. This will be cleared of existing scrub and managed as wildflower grass going forward. Removal of the fence will create open access and picnic benches will encourage public use.

[Map reference C3-13] A 200m stretch of the route will be managed to encourage species rich grass verges. Scrub will be cut back from approximately three areas to create open grass scallops.

5.2.3.3 Compartment 4: Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead

[Map reference C4-01] A valuable area of grassland, which includes Bee Orchids, is competing with self-set Ash. This Ash will continue to be cut back by the Friends and a contractor employed to treat stumps as appropriate, to maintain the area as grassland.

[Map reference C4-07] Alongside hedgerow coppicing that will open up light, wildflower grass cuts will be carried out to the northern side of the path, encouraging the continuation of wildflowers from the adjacent grazed land onto the Nickey Line.

5.2.4 Trees

Objectives Achieved: 2A, 2B, 2C

5.2.4.1 Compartment 1: Harpenden

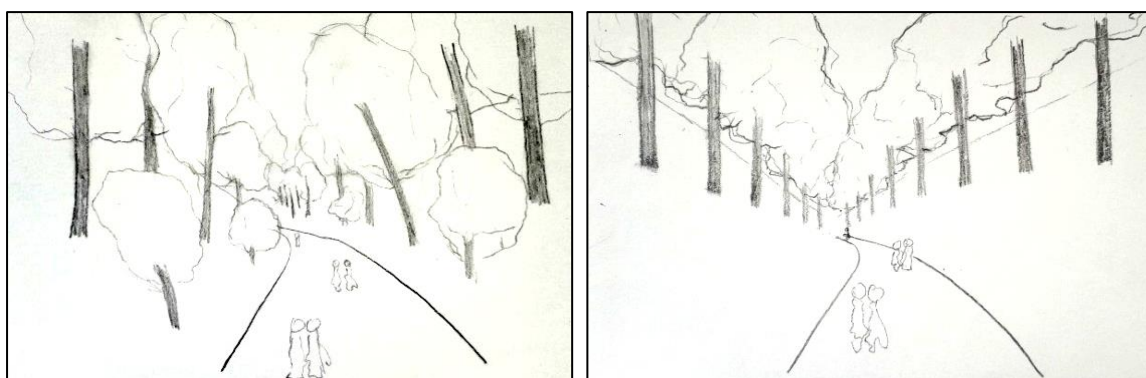
[Map reference C1-02] Overhanging sycamore will be cut back from the steps of Hollybush Lane to create less shaded steps. If possible and agreed with Network Rail, trees to the east of the steps will be reduced to create views of the Midland Mainline and the Hollybush Lane road bridge – this is an important historical endpoint for the Nickey Line.

[Map reference C1-03] Self-seeding sycamore grow on the railway embankments, shading out other ground flora. Ongoing maintenance will continue to remove these with contractors employed as necessary to clear vegetation at the top of the banks.

[Map reference C1-04] The corridor of mature trees on approach to Harpenden is a clear contrast to the more open, rural landscape further along the Nickey Line. To enhance the

impact of these tree lined embankments, a gradual process of replacements will be commenced. This will primarily focus upon trees in poor health and less desirable species such as Sycamore. Replanting with a native species mix, comprised largely of Oak, will eventually produce a tree canopy that is more visually impressive than at present. These will be planted at sufficient spacing to allow in some light and support and biodiverse ground layer. Beech will be used where a reduced level of ground vegetation is preferable, such as beside bridges, where the increased shading will produce a low maintenance way of maintaining views.

To reflect the urban landscape, and the historical use as a rail line, linearity will be restored through the planting. Rather than trees scattered across the embankment, new planting and use of existing trees will follow a single clear line. This semi-formal arrangement will contrast with the rural sections of the line as well as enhancing the avenue effect of the trees.



Sketches of the existing and the proposed long-term appearance of trees through Harpenden

Operations under this GAP will focus on the section between the Hollybush Lane steps and just to the southwest of the Ambrose Lane bridge. A 60% thin will be carried out to the northern side where the line does not back onto residential gardens. On the southern side this will be around 25%, retaining the larger trees. Replanting with Oaks and Beech will be at approximately 10m intervals.

[Map reference C1-05] Previous tree and shrub planting carried out by the Friends, as well as new planting, will be maintained to ensure successful establishment.

[Map reference C1-10] Immediately to the west of Luton Road in Harpenden there is a wide embankment on which there are scattered trees on the northwest side. Linear oak planting approximately half way up the embankment will provide an attractive tree cover. In the 4m closest to the footpath, trees and shrubs will be removed to allow in light to the floor, with the establishment of species rich grass on either side of the path.

[Map reference C1-12] A 200m section of the route is lined by dense trees, including a number of less favourable species such as sycamore. These will have a 50% thin and replanting of significant gaps with oaks to improve the visual appearance and biodiversity of this section.

[Map reference C1-15] A 100m section of dense oaks are restricting each other's establishment. These will have a 30% thin to encourage better growth from those retained.

5.2.4.2 *Compartment 2: Harpenden to Redbourn*

[Map reference C2-13] A 60% thin of self-set trees will be carried out over a 100m stretch to the west of the line, with understorey hedge specimens coppiced.

5.2.4.3 *Compartment 3: Redbourn*

[Map reference C3-02] Trees will be 50% thinned on the western side over a 100m length, prioritising less favourable species such as Sycamore. This will ensure the better establishment of those retained and increase visibility of the adjacent meadows. At the northernmost 50m, understorey hedge species will also be coppiced.

5.2.4.4 *Tree hazard surveys*

In addition to the prescribed works above, trees along the entire length of the Nickey Line will be continue to undergo hazard surveys, with mitigation work carried out as necessary to minimise risk to users of the line.

5.3 A Component of the Green Infrastructure Network

5.3.1 Surfacing

Objective Achieved: 3A

5.3.1.1 *Compartment 1: Harpenden*

The existing unbound gravel surface that exists for much of Compartment 1 provides an acceptable surface type for some bikes and pedestrians. However, for much of the year it restricts access for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs.

If funding can be obtained, a tarmac surface will be installed as far as the junction with Harpenden Rural Footpath 011 (locally referred to as 'Fiveways'). This would make this section of the Nickey Line accessible for a much wider range of people, providing them with access to the countryside. The surfacing would match the specification for the tarmac surface that was installed within Harpenden Town as part of the Ambrose Lane ramp. This is coloured to ensure it is sympathetic to a natural and rural landscape.

Due to the poor condition, patch repairs will be required to the existing surface until a new surface is installed.

5.3.1.2 *Compartment 2: Harpenden to Redbourn*

Where the gravel surface is deteriorating it is proposed that ad hoc repairs are carried out. Any extensive repair work will be dependent on sourcing funding.

5.3.1.3 *Compartment 3: Redbourn*

The existing path is narrow and the surface only suitable for walkers. If funds allow, the path will be widened and re-surfaced with a more compact material.

5.3.1.4 Compartment 4: Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead

The section between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead has lower usage than elsewhere along the line, yet it has the potential to be a place for recreation, for sustainable commuting to Maylands and for travel into the towns of Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead. It will also gain increasing importance due to adjacent residential developments.

Although access to Hemel Hempstead town centre and to Maylands Business Park fall within Dacorum Borough and are not therefore directly addressed within this GAP, the issue cannot be adequately addressed without a co-ordinated approach across ownership boundaries.

Through collaboration between St Albans City & District Council and Dacorum Borough Council, there is an aspiration to re-surface the section between Redbourn and Maylands in Hemel Hempstead.

A wide, tarmacadam surface would best encourage sustainable commuting. This would provide an all-weather surface that would be accessible for a range of users, including pedestrians, runners, cyclists and for those with pushchairs, wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Existing tarmacadam surface from the Redbourn Bypass to the M1 is currently covered in organic matter, which will be scraped back *[Map reference C4-02]*. Ongoing maintenance will be needed to keep the route clear of leaf litter and encroaching vegetation.

5.3.2 Access Points

Objective Achieved: 3B

The access points onto the Nickey Line should be clearly identifiable, act as an advert for the route, provide relevant information and be attractive. This will ultimately encourage use of the route. To achieve this, the following actions are proposed:

[Map reference C1-01] Redesign the Hollybush Lane entrance at Harpenden to reduce the cluttered appearance of signage and to direct bike users to the Ambrose Lane ramp. The impractical bike channel will be removed. Vegetation encroachment will be reduced to create a more open appearance.

[Map reference C1-07] A simple entrance marker, featuring the Nickey Line logo, will be installed at the Ambrose Lane ramp.

[Map reference C1-09] Entrance signage at the bottom of the Park Hill steps will display the Nickey Line entrance from Luton Road. If possible, the Nickey Line logo will be added to the sides of the bridge.

[Map reference C1-11] A new level access point will provide disabled access onto the Nickey Line.

[Map reference C1-13] Timber squeeze bars will replace existing metal structures at the entrances from Moreton End Lane and Roundwood Park. These will include the Nickey Line logo. The design of these will ensure access is retained for cyclists.

[Map reference C2-17] Entrance markers featuring the Nickey Line logo will be installed on either side of the roundabout at Redbourn Lane/ Redbourn Bypass.

[Map reference C3-10] Improve the sloped access on the northeast side of Chequer Lane will make the Nickey Line more accessible. If possible, drop kerbs will be installed either side of the road to increase the ease of crossing. Vegetation will also be cut back from the southwest side to enhance visibility of the Nickey Line entrance and to open up sightlines for the road crossing.

In addition to the appearance of the access points, condition surveys will be carried out to identify any improvements or maintenance requirements.

5.3.3 Connecting to Surrounding Areas

Objective Achieved: 3C

The 'stations' along the route will include surrounding locations and will consist of way-marking. Connecting paths will also be used to encourage circular walks, particularly at key routes such as at the connection with the Chiltern Way and the Ver Valley Walk 4. These will be publicised through way-marking signage, organised events and online resources.

5.3.4 Road Crossings

Objective Achieved: 3D

Responsibility for the road network is held by the Hertfordshire County Council Highways Division. Major infrastructure changes are therefore beyond the scope of this GAP which identifies projects within the scope of work of SADC. However, SADC and CMS will encourage and support any initiatives that address road safety concerns.

Where vegetation along the Nickey Line can impede sightlines this will be kept cut back, such as at Chequer Lane *[Map reference C3-10]* and the western crossing of the Redbourn Bypass *[Map reference C3-16]*.

As outlined in section 5.3.2, additional signage will be installed to allow for easier navigation of the Redbourn Lane roundabout.

5.3.5 Promoting Sustainable Commuting

Objective Achieved: 3A

The Nickey Line presents a direct and safe commuting option for many people, with residential and commercial areas at various points along the route. The use of the Nickey Line for this will be promoted to local employers around the time of notable cycling dates, such as Bike Week or Cycle to Work Day.

5.4 Encouraging Community Involvement

5.4.1 Friends of the Nickey Line

Objective Achieved: 4A, 4B

SADC and CMS will continue to work with the Friends of the Nickey Line through the production of work programmes and collaboration on enhancement projects. Where possible, support will be given to publicity and promotion of the group.

5.4.2 Events

Objective Achieved: 4B, 4C, 4D

CMS operates Walks & More - a programme of walks throughout Hertfordshire. Walks will continue to be held regularly that provide an insight into the history of the line and that update people on the progress of the management plan. These will also be used to highlight surrounding areas and circular walks.

There are a number of nearby schools in the towns of Harpenden, Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead. Any events or activities held by schools or local groups that help to build an understanding of the role of the Nickey Line within Hertfordshire's history would be supported by CMS and SADC.

5.4.3 Schools

Objective Achieved: 4D

Previous consideration has been given to creating a direct access point from the Nickey Line to Roundwood Primary School. This would encourage use of the route for safe, sustainable and healthy journeys to school. If safety and security concerns can be addressed and agreed with the school, this access will be considered.

5.5 Sustainable Management

5.5.1 Grounds Maintenance

Objectives Achieved: 5B

Grounds maintenance will be carried out to meet the objectives of this plan. This will include litter picking, cutting vegetation back to the path edges, removal of self-set sycamore and grass cuts.

Following any re-surfacing work, leaves will be cleared under trees to prevent the build-up of organic material.

5.5.2 Management Responsibilities

Objective Achieved: 5A, 5B, 5C

SADC currently oversee the management of the section of the Nickey Line through Redbourn that is owned by HCC. This arrangement will be rationalised and brought up to date. The aim will be to create a single standard and continuity in the level of maintenance and have a clear understanding of responsibilities.

Arrangements will be sought that provide all desired management at the lowest cost, with cost savings used to fund enhancement projects.

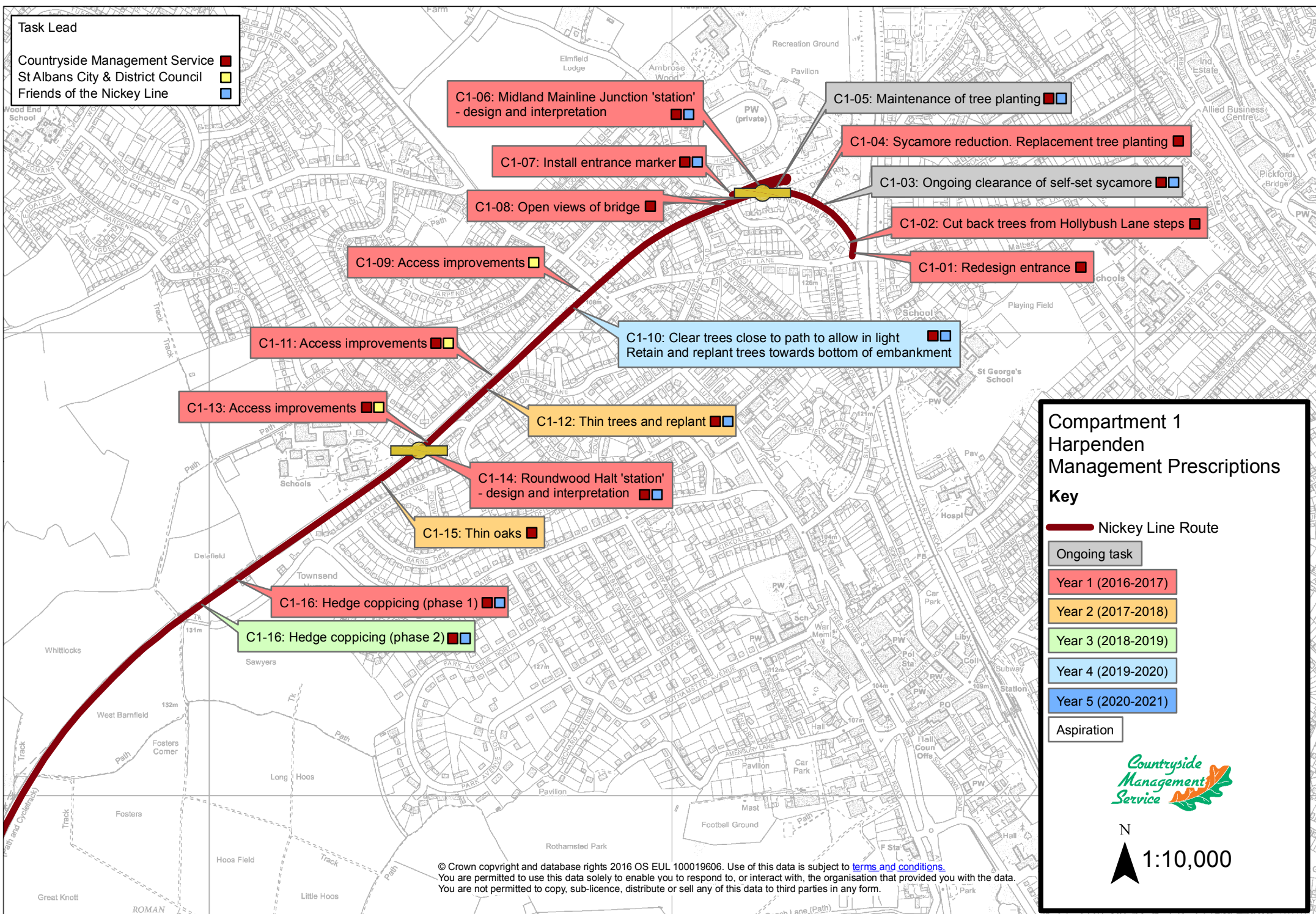
6. PROPOSED TIMETABLE AND MAPS

6.1 Tasks to the Entire Route

Proposed Task	Task Lead	Estimated Cost
Ongoing Tasks		
Tree Safety Inspections & Remedial Work	SADC	-
Year 1 (2016 – 2017)		
Replacement of benches	CMS/ FoNL	£750
Access point condition survey	SADC	-
Review and update management arrangements	SADC	-
Walks & More event	CMS	-
Schools walk	CMS/ HCC	-
Promotion of sustainable commuting	CMS	-
Year 2 (2017 – 2018)		
Walks & More event	CMS	-
Update and reprint of leaflets	CMS/ SADC	£1,000
Year 4 (2019 – 2020)		
Walks & More event	CMS	-

6.2 Compartment 1 - Harpenden

Map Reference	Proposed Task	Time of Year	Task Lead	Estimated Cost
Ongoing Tasks				
C1-03	Clearance of self-set Sycamore	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C1-05	Tree planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 1 (2016 – 2017)				
C1-01	Redesign Hollybush Lane entrance	Apr-Oct	CMS/ Contractor	£500
C1-02	Cut back vegetation from Hollybush Lane steps	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£500
C1-04	Sycamore reduction and replanting	Oct-Dec	CMS/ Contractor	£3,000
C1-06	Design and installation of Midland Main Line 'station'	Apr-Oct	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£300
C1-07	Installation of entrance marker	Apr-Oct	CMS/ FoNL	£250
C1-08	Open views of bridge	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£1,000
C1-09	Access improvements from Park Hill	Apr-Oct	CMS/ SADC	£250
C1-11	Access improvements from Park Hill	Apr-Oct	CMS/ SADC	£2,500
C1-13	Access improvements from Roundwood Park	Apr-Oct	CMS/ SADC	£500
C1-14	Roundwood Halt vegetation clearance	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£200
C1-14	Roundwood Halt 'station' design and interpretation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£2,500
C1-16	Hedge coppicing (phase 1)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 2 (2017 – 2018)				
C1-12	Tree thinning and replanting	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£3,500
C1-15	Thinning oaks	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£2,000
Year 3 (2018 – 2019)				
C1-16	Hedge coppicing (phase 2)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 4 (2019 – 2020)				
C1-10	Clear trees beside path. Replant on embankment.	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£3,000
Aspirations Throughout GAP Timeframe				
	Re-surfacing work	Apr-Sept	CMS/ SADC	£50,000

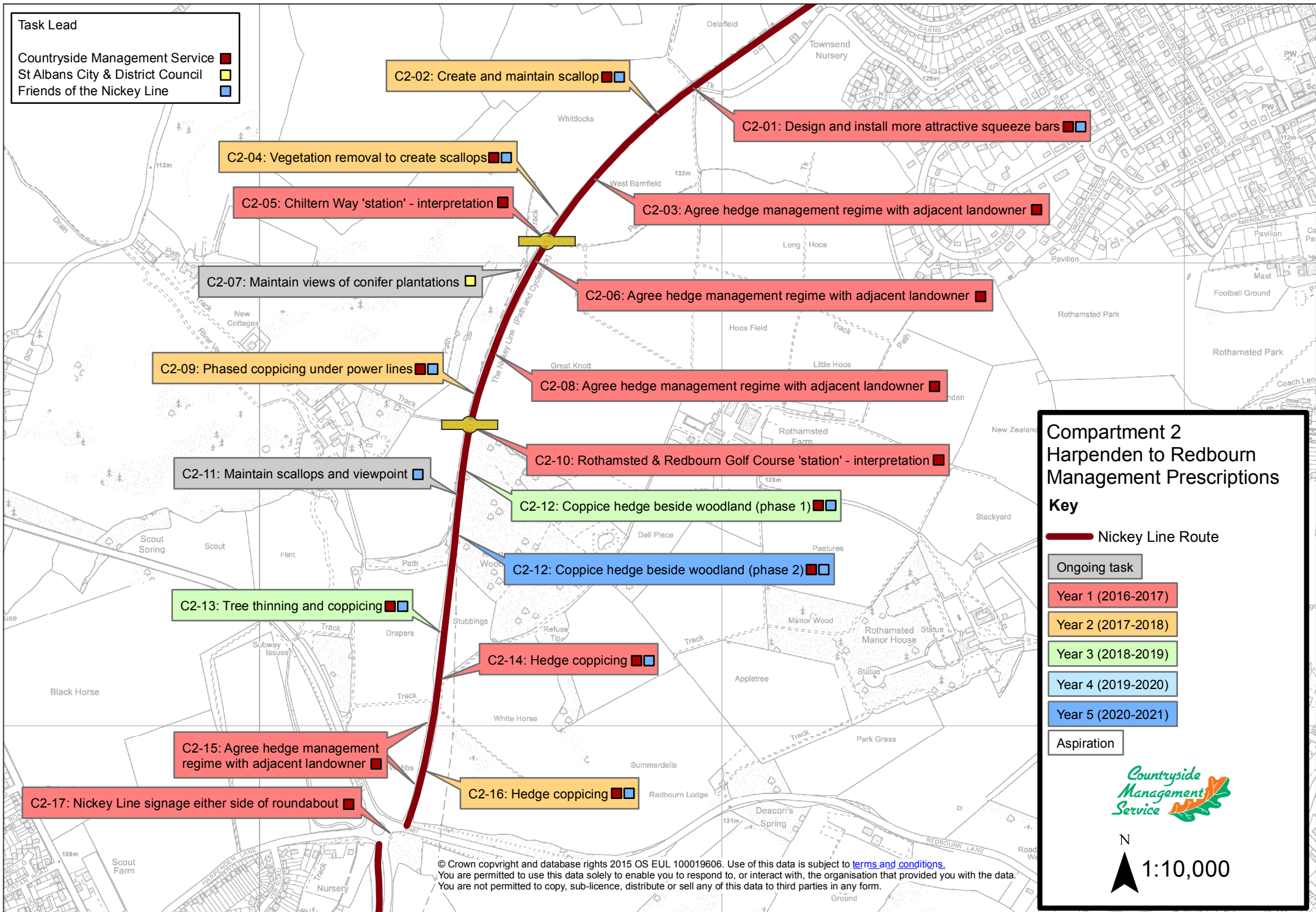


6.3 Compartment 2 – Harpenden to Redbourn

Map Reference	Proposed Task	Time of Year	Task Lead	Estimated Cost
Ongoing Tasks				
C2-07	Late summer grass cuts to maintain views	Aug-Sept	SADC	
C2-02 C2-04 C2-11	Grass cuts to scallops and intermittent hedge trimming.	Aug-Sept Oct-Mar	FoNL	-
	Ad hoc surfacing repairs & improvements	Apr-Sept	CMS & SADC	
Year 1 (2016 – 2017)				
C2-01	Replace squeeze bars	Apr-Sept	CMS/ FoNL	£1,500
C2-03 C2-06 C2-08 C2-15	Agree hedgerow management regimes with adjacent landowners	-	CMS	-
C2-05	Chiltern Way 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£300
C2-10	Rothamsted & Redbourn Golf Course 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£300
C2-14	Hedgerow coppicing	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C2-17	Installation of signage at roundabout	Apr-Oct	CMS	£400
Year 2 (2017 – 2018)				
C2-02	Cut back scrub to create scallop	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C2-04	Clear vegetation to create scallops	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C2-09	Hedgerow coppicing	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C2-16	Hedgerow coppicing	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 3 (2018 – 2019)				
C2-12	Coppicing beside Knott Wood (phase 1)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C2-13	Tree thinning and coppicing	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£1,500
Year 5 (2020 – 2021)				
C2-12	Coppicing beside Knott Wood (phase 2)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-

Task Lead

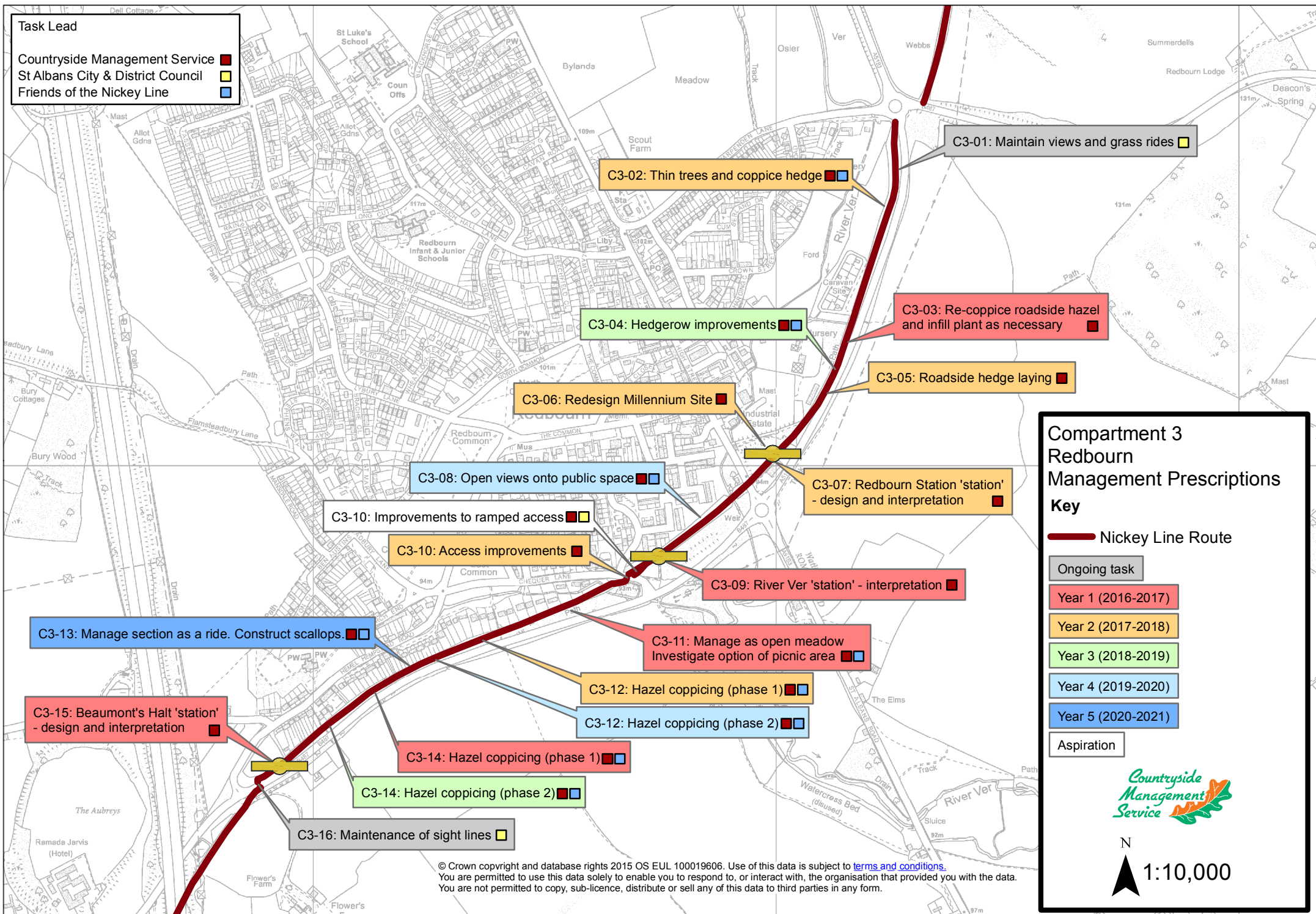
- Countryside Management Service
- St Albans City & District Council
- Friends of the Nickey Line



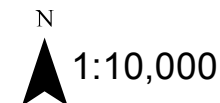
6.4 Compartment 3 – Redbourn

Map Reference	Proposed Task	Time of Year	Task Lead	Estimated Cost
Ongoing Tasks				
C3-01	Cut grass to maintain views	Aug-Sept	SADC	-
C3-11	Grass cuts to meadow	Aug-Sept	SADC	-
C3-16	Maintain sightlines beside road	All year	SADC	-
Year 1 (2016 – 2017)				
C3-03	Re-coppice roadside hazel and infill plant	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£1,500
C3-09	River Ver 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£300
C3-11	Clear meadow and create access	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£750
C3-14	Hazel coppicing (phase 1)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C3-15	Beaumont's Halt 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£1,500
Year 2 (2017 – 2018)				
C3-02	Thin trees and coppice understorey	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor/ FoNL	£2,000
C3-05	Hedge laying	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£6,000
C3-06	Redesign of Millennium Site	All year	CMS	£2,500
C3-07	Redbourn Station 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£1,500
C3-10	Access improvements	All year	CMS	£5,000
C3-12	Hazel coppicing (phase 1)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 3 (2018 – 2019)				
C3-04	Hedgerow improvements	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	£500
C3-10	Improvements to ramped access	Apr-Sept	CMS/ SADC	£10,000
C3-14	Hazel coppicing (phase 2)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 4 (2019 – 2020)				
C3-04	Planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
C3-08	Hedgerow coppicing to open views of public space	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C3-12	Hazel coppicing (phase 2)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 5 (2020 – 2021)				
C3-04	Planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
C3-13	Cut vegetation back to create 3No. scallops	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Aspirations Throughout GAP Timeframe				
	Re-surfacing work	Apr-Sept	CMS/ SADC	£30,000

- Task Lead**
- Countryside Management Service
 - St Albans City & District Council
 - Friends of the Nickey Line

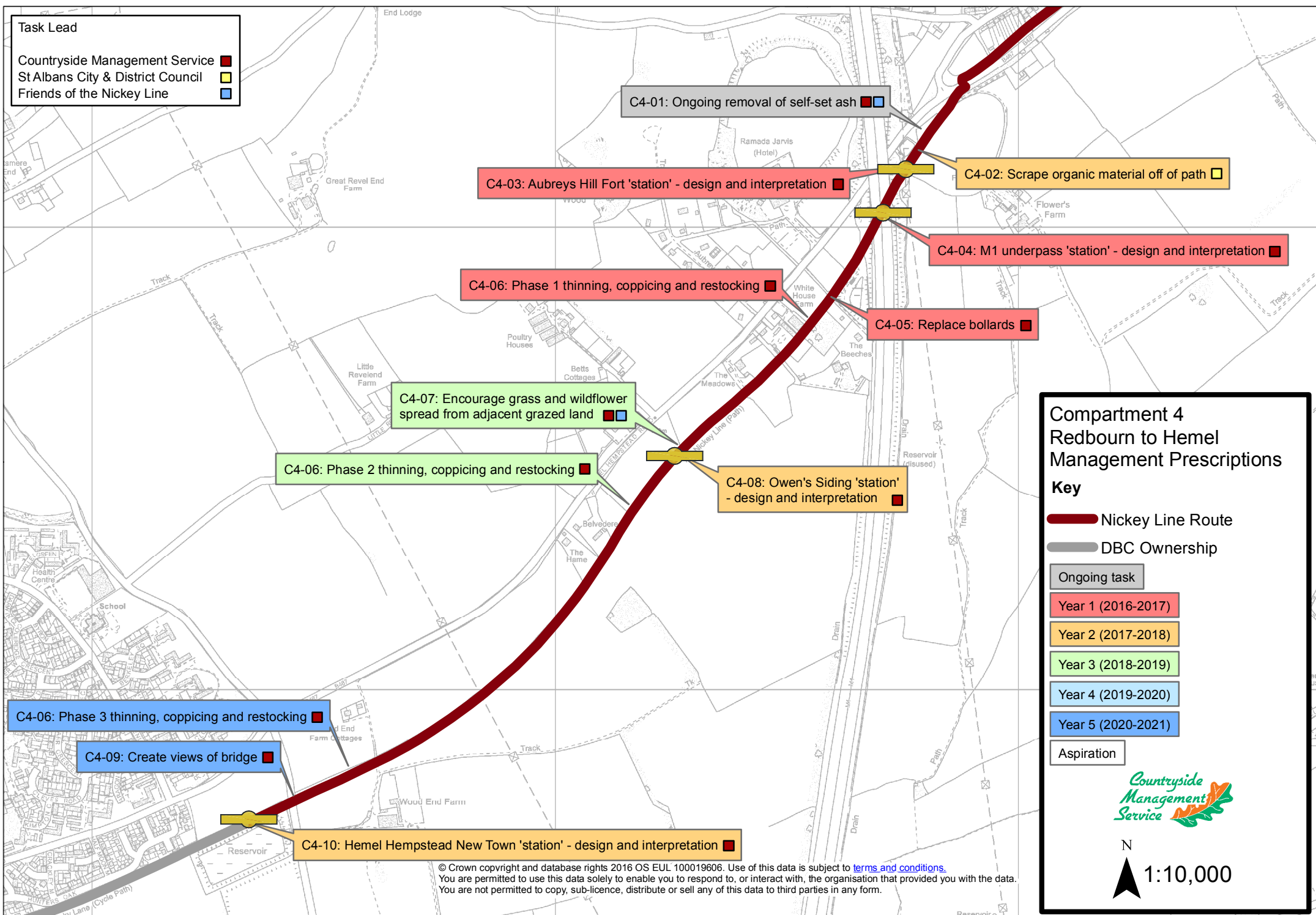


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6.5 Compartment 4 – Redbourn to Hemel Hempstead

Map Reference	Proposed Task	Time of Year	Task Lead	Estimated Cost
Ongoing Tasks				
C4-01	Removal of self-set ash	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 1 (2016 – 2017)				
C4-03	Aubrey's Hill Fort 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£300
C4-04	M1 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£1,500
C4-05	Replace bollards and fencing	Apr-Sept	CMS/ Contractor	£1,000
C4-06	Tree thinning, coppicing and re-stocking (phase 1)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£5,000
Year 2 (2017 – 2018)				
C4-02	Scrape organic material off of path	Mar-May	SADC	£1,000
C4-06	Tree planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
C4-08	Owen's Siding 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£2,000
C4-10	Hemel Hempstead New Town 'station' design and installation	Apr-Oct	CMS	£1,500
Year 3 (2018 – 2019)				
C4-07	Clear vegetation to create grass area	Oct-Mar	CMS/ FoNL	-
C4-06	Tree thinning, coppicing and re-stocking (phase 2)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£5,000
C4-06	Tree planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
Year 4 (2019 – 2020)				
C4-06	Tree planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
C4-07	Cut to newly created grass area	Aug-Sept	SADC	-
Year 5 (2020 – 2021)				
C4-06	Tree thinning, coppicing and re-stocking (phase 3)	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£5,000
C4-06	Tree planting maintenance	All year	CMS/ FoNL	-
C4-07	Cut to newly created grass area	Aug-Sept	SADC	-
C4-09	Create views of bridge	Oct-Mar	CMS/ Contractor	£1,000
Aspirations Throughout GAP Timeframe				
	Resurfacing work	Apr-Sept	CMS & SADC. In conjunction with DBC.	£50,000



7. FUNDING

The proposals outlined within this GAP require varying levels of financing. The delivery of all proposals and the suggested timetable for works is dependent upon the required funding being sourced.

7.1 St Albans City & District Council

SADC will review and update existing management arrangements in the first year of this GAP. Through this it is aimed to improve the cost effectiveness of the grounds maintenance. Savings made will be used to fund enhancement projects.

7.2 Section 106 and CIL

Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding from local developments will be sought where this can be used to enhance the Nickey Line. CMS & SADC will work with HCC Highways to identify these opportunities and with DBC to collaborate on projects where possible.

7.3 External Funding Sources

CMS will continue to work closely with SADC to source additional external funding for the implementation of capital works. This will include grant applications, particularly in relation to the Nickey Line's importance to communities and sustainable transport.