# Toddington
# Green Infrastructure Plan

# Pre-submission Version

## November 2018

The Greensand Trust
environmental partnership in action

Produced by the Greensand Trust on behalf of the
Toddington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and
Toddington Parish Council

Bedfordshire & Luton
Biodiversity
Recording &
Monitoring
Centre

Central
Bedfordshire

**Toddington**
Neighbourhood Plan

# Contents

# 1. Introduction:

The Green Infrastructure Plan for Toddington has been produced as part of the Toddington Neighbourhood Plan process. It has been produced by the Greensand Trust, a local environmental charity that works with local communities and landowners to conserve and enhance the landscape, wildlife and history of the area. At the heart of the Trust's work is the belief that the best results are achieved by empowering local communities, giving them a say in issues that affect them. The Greensand Trust has a wealth of experience in facilitating community consultation and significant knowledge of the local area.

## 1.1 Toddington Parish

Toddington parish is located within Central Bedfordshire, approximately 5 miles north-west of Luton and 4 miles north of Dunstable (see **Figure 1**).  It includes the hamlet of Fancott.  The population of Toddington village was 4,590 in 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census).  The village sits on top of a plateau, surrounded by lower lying clay vales and the valley of the River Flit in the east of the parish (the Flit rises just to the south of the parish boundary).

The M1 motorway cuts through the eastern side of the parish, 0.5 miles from the village, and the mainline railway just touches the south-eastern edge of the parish.

**Figure 1**

## 2. Green Infrastructure

2.1 Definition of Green Infrastructure

The Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership (formerly the Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium) has defined Green Infrastructure as "the network of green spaces, access routes, wildlife habitats, landscapes and historic features which provide:
- a healthy and diverse environment
- attractive places to live and visit
- a good quality of life
- a sustainable future"

Green infrastructure assets include:
- Accessible Greenspace
- Country Parks
- Green corridors
- Urban parks and gardens
- Habitats for wildlife including nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites.
- Historic parks and gardens and historic landscapes
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Waterways and water bodies, including flooded quarries
- Public rights of way and cycleways
- Allotments
- Children's play space
- Formal sports facilities
- Cemeteries

2.2 Green Infrastructure Planning

It is important to plan the green infrastructure network in the same way that we plan other networks and facilities, so that we can safeguard and enhance the environment and meet the needs of a wide range of people, both now and in the future. Green infrastructure also provides social and economic benefits, including:

- Places that can be used as a focus for community activity and events
- Opportunities to keep fit and healthy
- Helps support the local economy, including village shops, pubs and B&Bs
- Links between town and country helping people in rural areas access facilities
- Helps reduce the use of cars

In Bedfordshire, Green Infrastructure planning has taken place at three different levels within an established hierarchy:

- The 'Strategic': The Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic GI Plan (2007);
- The 'District': e.g. The Mid Bedfordshire GI Plan (2008); and
- The 'Local' – Parish GI Plans

## 2.3 What is a Parish GI Plan?

**Aim of this Plan:**

**To identify the key existing natural, historic, cultural and landscape assets, accessible greenspace and rights of way and to plan new features that will provide a connected network of green infrastructure for the benefit of present and future generations.**

**Objectives**
To create a comprehensive document that will assist the local community to:
- Protect and where possible enhance the landscape, biodiversity and the historic environment
- Improve access and links for people and wildlife
- Provide a multi-functional green infrastructure network
- Provide a source of information and guidance for planners, landowners and developers in formulating land use plans, including policy recommendations and spatial information to inform the Neighbourhood Plan
- Identify potential sites to be considered for designation as Local Green Spaces (LGS, see section 5.4.4).
- Promote community involvement
- Identify projects and produce an action plan to implement projects.

## 2.4 How does it achieve this?

The Parish Green Infrastructure Plan provides a baseline of existing information under four themes:

- Landscape
- Biodiversity
- Historic Environment
- Access and Open Space

It goes on to capture aspirations and proposals to enhance the local green infrastructure 'network', communicated by members of the local community via a range of consultation activities and events. These aspirations and proposals include priorities to maintain existing assets, enhance or restore existing assets, and create new green infrastructure, and aspirations for improving the green infrastructure network.

It also illustrates those aspirations that the community feels most strongly about, via a process of project prioritization.

The plan as a whole is based on a robust approach to making and implementing a high quality green infrastructure network for the existing and future residents of Toddington. It should be acknowledged that not all of the aspirations identified will be delivered, because there are many other influencing factors, such as the views of landowners, existing planning permissions and allocations, potential future land use allocations and the costs of enhancements. The value of the plan lies in the fact that it has been produced by local residents for their own community.

## 2.5 How the Parish GI Plan fits with the Neighbourhood Plan

The Localism Act (2011) introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure they get the right types of development for their community. Using these new tools, communities are able to:

- choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have their say on what those new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead

The Neighbourhood Plan will need to demonstrate that it is in conformity with the plans set out by the Local Planning Authority (Central Bedfordshire Council's Local Plan is expected to be adopted in late 2017) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

This Green Infrastructure Plan is available as a 'stand alone' document, but also informs the Toddington Neighbourhood Plan through policy recommendations, identifying projects and providing spatial information. Neighbourhood Plans can identify the type and location of development the parish would consider acceptable. The Neighbourhood Plan has to be independently assessed for conformity by an examiner, and then go through a public referendum – if it passes both it can be adopted through a Neighbourhood Development Order that gives it statutory basis within the local development plan documents.

The evidence base for Neighbourhood Plans needs to be robust, and must include GI in terms of existing assets and aspirations for the future. There is a risk that if a Neighbourhood Plan is not robust enough then poor quality/badly located development will happen. Parish GI Plans would neatly provide useful evidence of local aspirations in a spatial context at a scale that is meaningful.

## 2.6 How the Parish Green Infrastructure plan fits with Strategic and District GI Plans

The Parish GI Plan complements, but does not necessarily completely reflect, the Strategic and District GI Plans. All GI planning is derived from the same GIS-based information, albeit at different scales. The important difference is that district and strategic GI plan aspirations are drawn from a process of integrating multiple aspirations from different professional stakeholders, while Parish GI plans reflect the aspirations of the local community. Much of the time the local aspirations fir within the broader, more strategic aspirations of other GI plans, but occasionally they will not - often because the local community are not aware of the broader strategic aspirations. This is neither a problem nor a flaw, but does point to the importance of dialogue between the strategic and local levels.

## 2.7 How the Parish GI Plan fits with other Parish GI Plans

The spatial scope of the Green Vision for Toddington covers the administrative area of Toddington Parish Council. However, the way in which the local environment is used is not bounded by these administrative delineations, and in some cases, important aspirations and assets will be identified by communities outside their own administrative boundary. These aspirations may or may not be shared by communities from the adjacent town or parish. In parishes without a Parish GI Plan or Neighbourhood Plan, assets may have been identified by an adjacent parish. These cannot be considered comprehensive, and have not necessarily been endorsed or agreed. Neither can a lack of assets or aspirations identified through an adjoining plan be implied to suggest that there are no important assets or aspirations to improve the local area.

## 2.8 How the Parish GI Plan can be used....

**.....by the community**
The GI Plan identifies what is important to the community, and what they would like to see improved to enhance the green infrastructure network. It is a tool better inform decision making and help secure resources, and is not intended to stop development. The plan can be used to support funding bids, to help communities make improvements to their local environment. They can also provide a snapshot of the local environment at the time of producing the plan.

Projects identified within the Neighbourhood (and Parish GI) Plans will also be well-placed to receive funding via Section 106 agreements (relating to development).

**….by the Local Planning Authority**
The GI Plan can be used to inform planning decisions, as a stand-alone plan and also via the Neighbourhood Plan. The information can be used in pre-application discussions with developers, and to help evaluate submitted planning applications. The plan can also identify where financial benefits from development could be directed.

The GI Plan can also provide information to inform the Local Planning process.  At the time of producing this GI Plan Central Bedfordshire Council is part-way through the process of creating its Local Plan, and it is likely that the Local Plan will identify Parish GI Plans as important sources of evidence.  The authority is recently carried out 'Community Planning' consultation exercises based around 15 'groupings' of parishes, and the results of the consultation carried out in 'area 14' which included Toddington parish along with Harlington and Westoning have been fed into this Plan where appropriate.

**….by developers**
Developers can use the information contained within the GI Plan to identify important assets and aspirations for improvement, and consider how these could be integrated with, and delivered through, development proposals.

## 3. Methodology

A methodology for the production of Parish Green Infrastructure Plans was developed in 2007 and 2008 by the Parish Green Infrastructure Plan Working Group and endorsed by the Bedfordshire & Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium.  This standard methodology was adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council to produce 20 commissioned GI Plans in 2010.  Since then this methodology has been tweaked to fit with the Neighbourhood Planning processes, and the methodology is in the process of being adopted by the Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership (the successor to the Green Infrastructure Consortium), but the essential principles remain the same:

- Analysis of baseline information (Maps and associated information)
- Two rounds of public consultation (minimum)
- Production of a draft GI Plan including analysis of baseline information and an initial projects list informed by initial consultation.
- The second round of consultation provides an opportunity to comment on the draft GI Plan and prioritise projects suggested in the first round
- One of the rounds of consultation should provide the opportunity for the entire community to be involved (minimum)
- Once the above is completed a final version is produced and endorsed by the relevant parish council (and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group if appropriate) and Central Bedfordshire Council.

The full methodology is contained within **Appendix 1.**


## 4. Community Consultation

The consultation on the production of this plan was started in 2013 and the plan was completed in 2017. The lengthy timescale was largely due to delays in the Neighbourhood Plan process, themselves influenced by delays in Central Bedfordshire Council's Local Planning process.  Consultation included two community workshops, two public consultation surveys, discussion with special interest groups and landscape, countryside and access professionals. These are all in addition to any Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings or public/special focus group meetings for the Neighbourhood Plan.

A summary of the community involvement activity is included in **Table 1.   Appendix 2** provides a complete summary of the consultation activity and further detail around the methodology.

## Table 1. Community Involvement

| Method of community involvement | Date | Details | Attendance/response |
|---|---|---|---|
| Workshop – Toddington Social Club | April 2013 | • Promoted through posters in Parish Council notice boards and library, articles in the parish newsletter and Greensand Trust e-newsletter, email invitation to all parish councilors, stakeholders, local groups, businesses, clubs and societies.<br>• Facilitated workshop led by Greensand Trust staff using large maps and other information.<br>• Group work with opportunities for input on an individual basis. | 30 people attended. Age range 20 -74 years old. |
| Display in Toddington Library | August 2013 | • Promoted by posters in Parish Council notice boards and library and an email to participants and contacts from first workshop | Figures were not collected for the whole period of two weeks as the display was unsupervised. |
| Information stand and surveys at Toddington Market | August 2013 | • Greensand Trust officer attended the market for the whole day, talking to local residents, visitors and local businesses.<br>• Questionnaires available for people to fill in. | 22 completed questionnaires |
| Project Prioritization Questionnaire (online survey) | June/ July 2016 | • Widely promoted to participants and contacts from previous consultation and surveys<br>• Provided details of projects proposed at first workshop, and the opportunity for participants to highlight those they felt were the most important. | 114 online surveys completed |
| Project Prioritization Open Day in Toddington Social Club | July 2016 | • Widely promoted to participants and contacts from previous consultation and surveys<br>• Invitation on paper survey sent to every household in Toddington | 30 people attended during the open afternoon 12pm – 7pm.<br><br>The average length of time spent talking to Greensand Trust officer or Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group volunteers or looking at information was 25 minutes. |
| Project Prioritization Survey (hard copy) | July/Aug 2016 | • One paper copy of the online survey was delivered to every household in Toddington<br>• Paper copies were left in the library and parish council for residents to collect additional copies.<br>• Also sent to Local schools | 194 surveys were completed and handed in to the parish council office. |

# 5. Thematic Information:

For the purpose of community – level GI planning, Green Infrastructure has been divided into four themes as noted above:
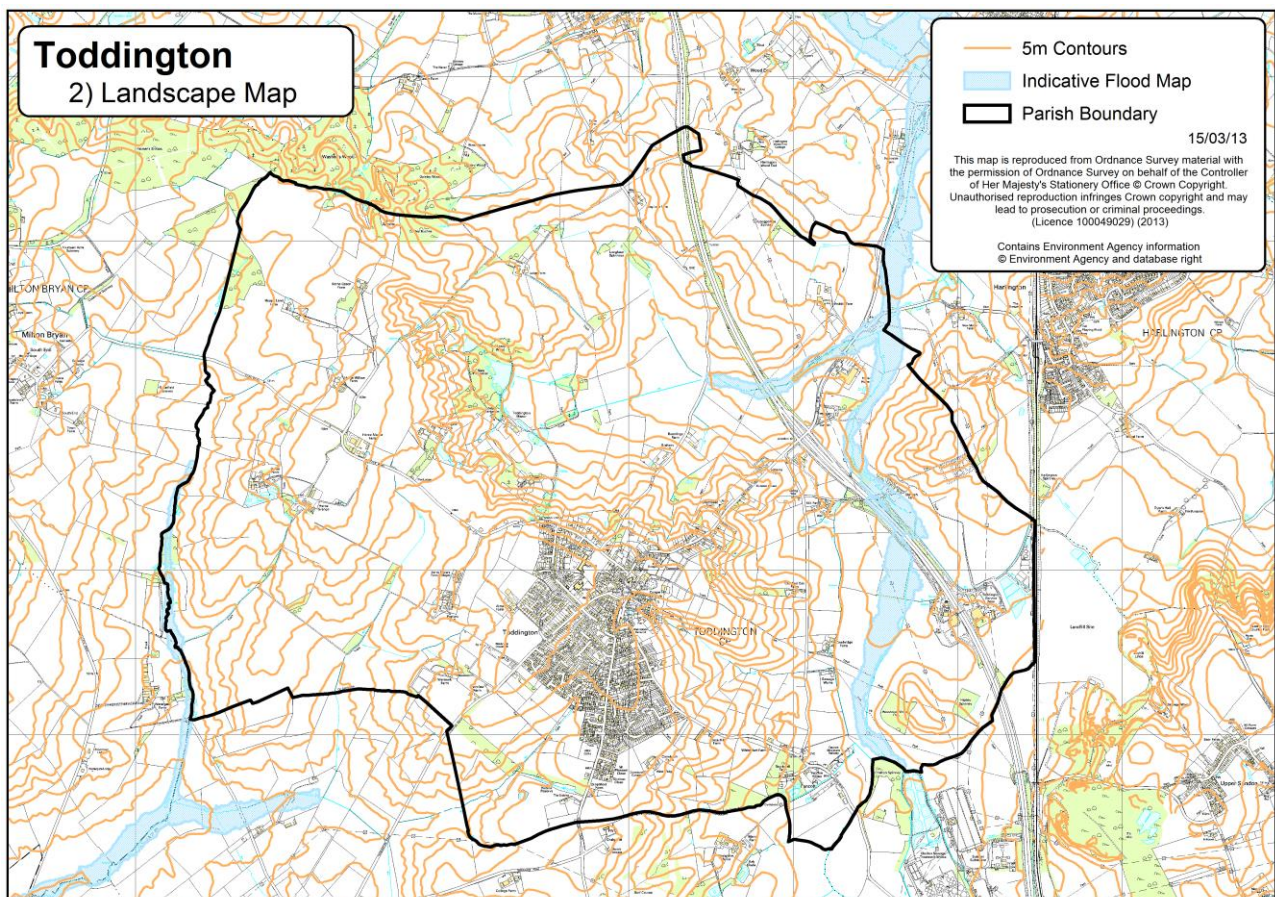
- Landscape
- Biodiversity
- Historic Environment
- Access, open space and recreation.

This approach allows the different elements of green infrastructure to be considered individually in detail as well as part of the integrated GI 'network'. Each element is described individually below:

5.1 Landscape:
The Landscape Map (**Figure 2**) shows contour lines to illustrate the relief of the land, highlighting the village's position on top of a plateau. It also shows the floodplain, highlighting in blue the areas at risk from a 1% chance of flooding which only affects the eastern area of the parish. Contours and flood zones can be useful when creating green infrastructure corridors.

**Figure 2**



The Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants, 2015) states that Toddington parish sits within three Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The majority of the parish sits within the Clay Hills LCA, a section to the north is in the Wooded Greensand Ridge LCA and a small part of the parish in the east is in the Clay Vales LCA.

The Clay Hills lie between the dramatically different low-lying, flat and open *Eaton Bray and Barton-le-Clay Clay Vales* and the elevated heavily-wooded landscape of the *Woburn Greensand Ridge*. The Clay Hills are characterised by undulating hills, with settlements on hill tops, dominated by arable crop with occasional pasture land, hedgerows form strong field boundaries and churches are prominent in the landscape on hill tops. The parish of Toddington lies adjacent to the low lying, flat, agricultural landscape character area of Clay Vales.

The large, rolling, elevated landscape of the Wooded Greensand Ridge occurs along the band of lower greensand which stretches (SW to NE) across Central Bedfordshire. The characteristics of this landscape area can be seen in the north of the parish with the elevated outcrop and remains of woodlands. Elevation, expansive views and visual connectivity with the North Chilterns chalk escarpment to the south also creates a strong link with this landscape which lies beyond the clay vale to the south.

Modern human influence on the landscape is visible in the main settlement of Toddington and the major transport corridors of the motorway (M1) and railway (mainline) in the east of the parish. More historic influence is also strong, particularly through historic landscape design at Toddington Manor and, to a lesser extent, in features such as ridge and furrow patterns, which still exist in the parish.

Overall, the village and its parish is set in an attractive and varied rural landscape, with elevation providing some very attractive and panoramic views. Initial consultation in 2013 illustrated this well – when asked what their favourite view was there was no true consensus among workshop attendees, with several different views getting one or two 'votes'. The village does have a strong sense of identity, which should be protected and enhanced.

*Policy recommendation:*
*It is recommended that Neighbourhood Plan recognises the special landscape value and settlement identity of Toddington and its parish, and that it seeks to protect the integrity of the settlement, particularly to the south where nearby settlements are expanding significantly.*

## 5.2 Biodiversity

**Figure 3** shows the location of designated sites, important habitats and opportunities to enhance wildlife in Toddington parish.
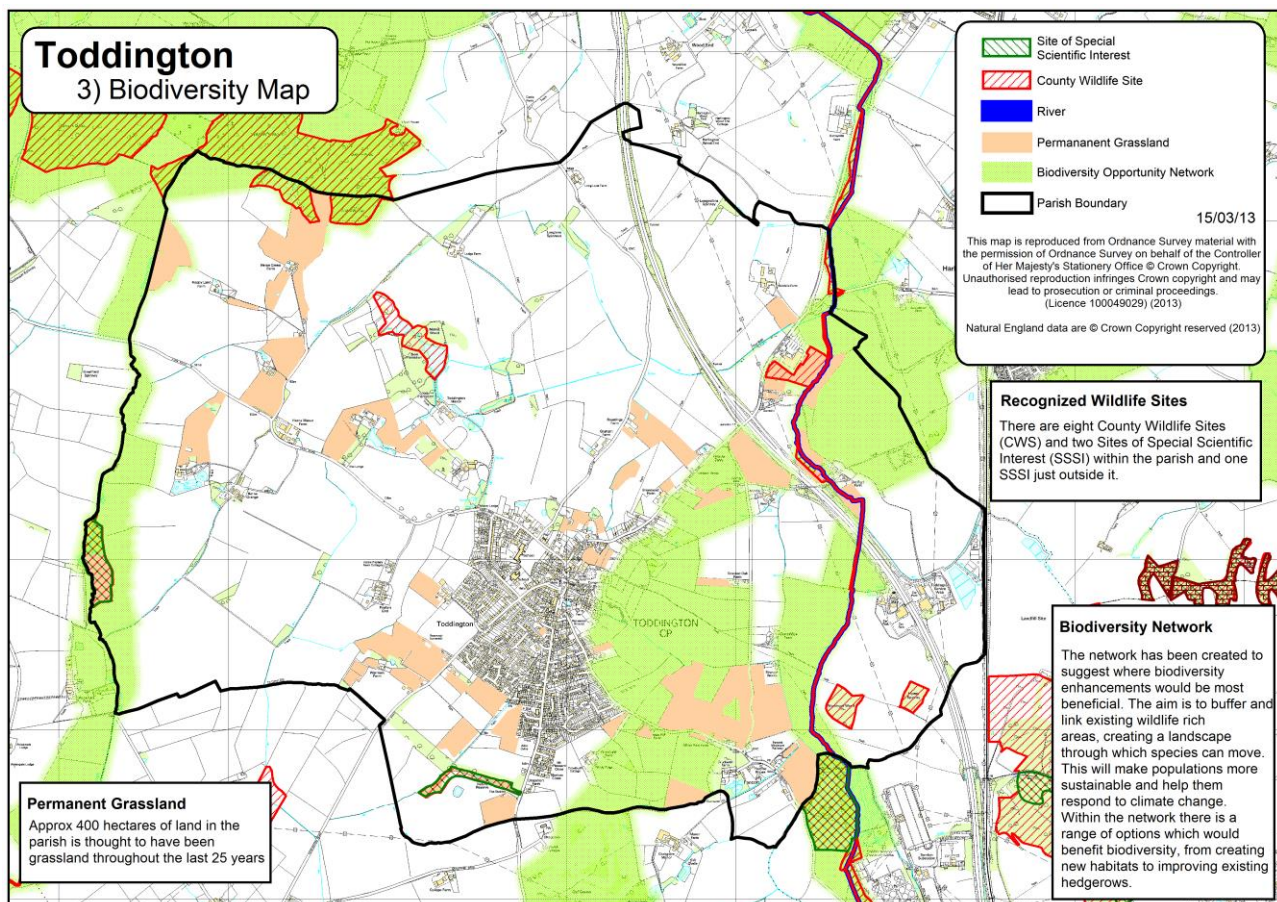


Within the parish are eight County Wildlife Sites (CWS) two of which are also Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

- Dropshort Marsh SSSI
- Hipsey Spinney CWS
- Poplars Nursery CWS
- River Flit CWS
- Tebworth Marsh SSSI
- Toddington Manor Lakes CWS
- Washer's and Daintry Woods CWS
- Woodcock Wood CWS

Immediately adjacent to the parish is another CWS and SSSI; Fancott Woods and Meadows SSSI, and the larger portion of Washer's and Daintry Woods CWS also exists outside the parish boundary.

County Wildlife Sites are recognized as important for wildlife when assessed against a set of criteria, which considers site size, diversity, rarity, fragility, typicalness and recorded history. The designation does not confer protection on the site, or right of access. However, for any significant land use change the planning authorities will expect the wildlife interest to be taken into account alongside other standard planning considerations. Sites of Special Scientific Interest are the country's best wildlife and geological sites and are legally protected. Natural England must be consulted if anyone wishes to carry out work that may damage a SSSI. This

requirement applies to operations within a SSSI, and to operations outside the SSSI that may affect the features of interest.

Dropshort Marsh SSSI (2.73ha) is just to the south of the settlement of Toddington. The wetland habitat once common in South Bedfordshire where a series of springs issue at the junction of glacial gravels with the underlying impervious Oxford clay. The Marsh has a mosaic of vegetation associations merging into neutral grassland and the flora is rich with both marsh and meadow species. An unusual feature of the marsh is a small area of 'quaking bog'. The type of habitat, although widely distributed in lowland Britain has been greatly reduced both in extent and quality as a result of drainage and changes in agricultural practice. Many of the characteristic species are also therefore now uncommon.

**Dropshort Marsh SSSI**



Tebworth Marsh SSSI is one of the largest base-rich marshes in Bedfordshire with a diverse plant community. There are a variety of habitat types including spring-fed marsh, reedswamp, carr woodland and neutral grassland.  It is bounded on one side by the Clipstone Brook.

The other six County Wildlife Sites have been recognized for a range of habitats and contain semi-natural ancient woodland, lowland meadow, marsh, lakes and a river.

The **Biodiversity Network** has been created to suggest where biodiversity enhancements would be most beneficial. The aim is to buffer and link existing wildlife rich areas, creating a landscape through which species can move. This will make populations more sustainable and help them to respond to climate change. Within the network there is a range of options which would benefit biodiversity, from creating new habitats to improving existing hedgerows. The Greensand Ridge has been recognised as a Nature Improvement Area, because of the existing habitats and the longer-term potential to create networks and corridors at a landscape-scale.  This covers a small area on the western side of the parish.

While the western side of the parish appears to have less sites and areas of biodiversity value in terms of 'designated' sites, there are approximately 400 hectares of land scattered throughout the parish that has probably been grassland for around 25 years or more.  A significant proportion of this is in the western part of the parish.  These parcels of land are inter-linked with hedgerows and copses, and whilst not recognized with a particular status, this network is of significant biodiversity value and should be protected and enhanced.  It is

recognized that this is more difficult without designation but can be achieved through working with and supporting landowners.

*Policy recommendations:*
  i. *It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan takes account of existing and potential biodiversity value, seeks to protect, buffer and enhance existing biodiversity assets, and link areas of biodiversity value to create more robust networks.*
  ii. *It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect areas of permanent pasture from development, particularly when they have no specific designation, and that landowners have access to information on the value of this land and how to ensure that they are protected.*

## 5.3 The Historic Environment

Toddington is a parish rich in history. Archaeological features and finds include those from the Neolithic period onwards, with finds from the Neolithic, Paleolithic, Anglo Saxon, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. Both Toddington and Fancott were settlements in medieval times with Toddington's Conservation Area being based around its medieval core. **Figure 4** clearly illustrates the richness of this history, including the contribution the estate of Toddington Manor (Archaeological Notification Area 97) makes, particularly to the local landscape (the key to Map 4 is contained in **Appendix 3**), and corresponds with records held in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER).
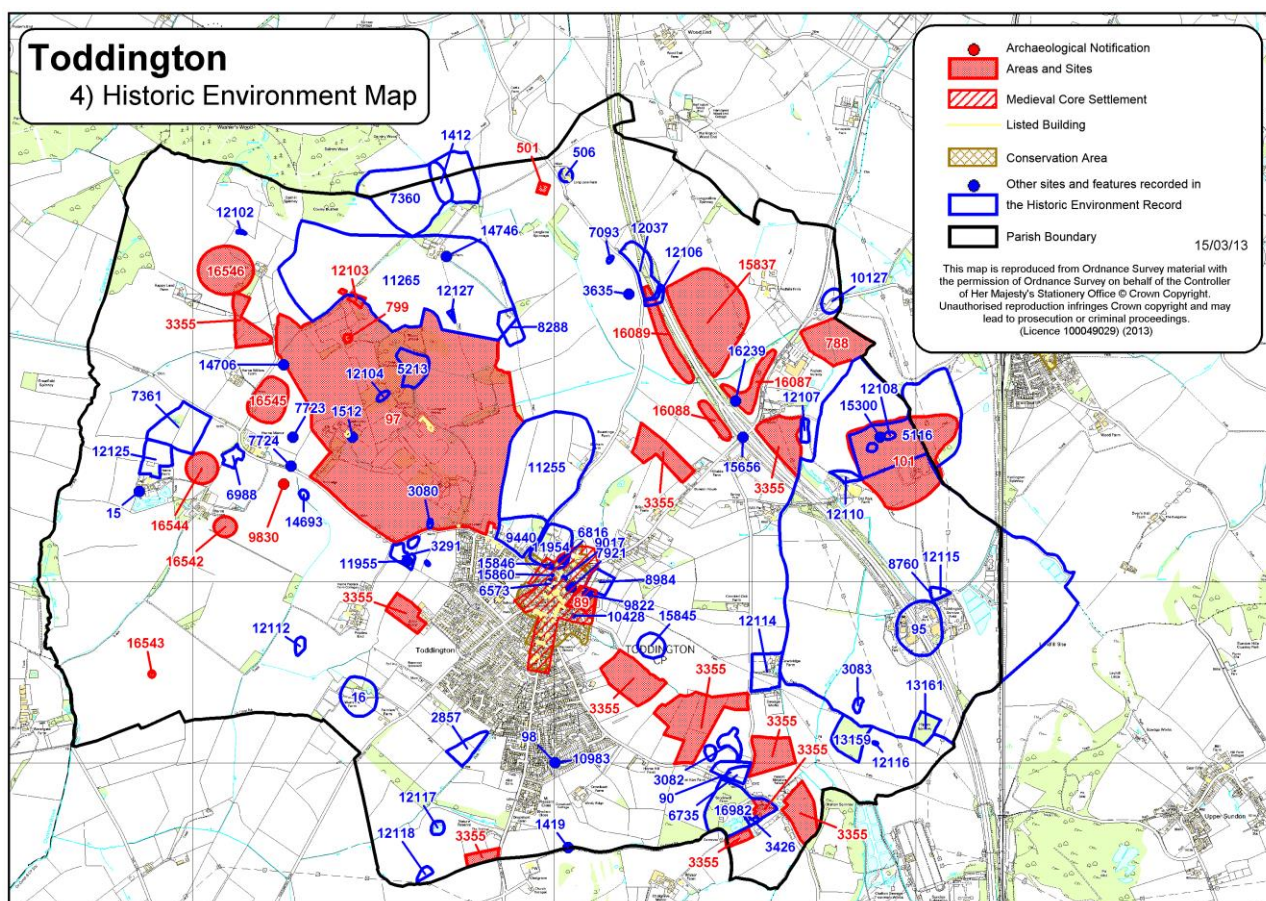


In addition to the historic sites and features, Toddington has its own piece of folklore in a local Shrove Tuesday custom focused on Conger Hill, when the ringing of a bell would signal all the village children to run to the mound, lay down and put their ears to the ground to hear the sizzle of a witch cooking her pancakes inside it!

**Conger Hill Motte**



When planning green infrastructure networks, taking account of historic environment assets helps to protect features such as earthworks and other archaeological features, hedgerows and access routes, and can help shape the character of green infrastructure and reinforce/enhance local sense of place.

*Policy recommendation:*
*It is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan takes account of assets of historic environment value, seeks to protect them and their context and raises awareness of the historic environment's value.*

## 5.4 Open Space, Access and Recreation

**Figure 5** shows the positions of all open spaces and recreation sites within the parish.  Not all of them are freely accessible to the public (i.e. without charge or restriction, for example the golf course) but they all contribute to the wider recreational opportunities and green infrastructure in general.  **Table 2** lists the sites and describes their status in terms of accessibility to the general public.  To be considered publicly accessible, people must have access across the whole (or majority) of a site (and not be restricted to footpaths) and entry to the site must be free (although car parking can be charged for).
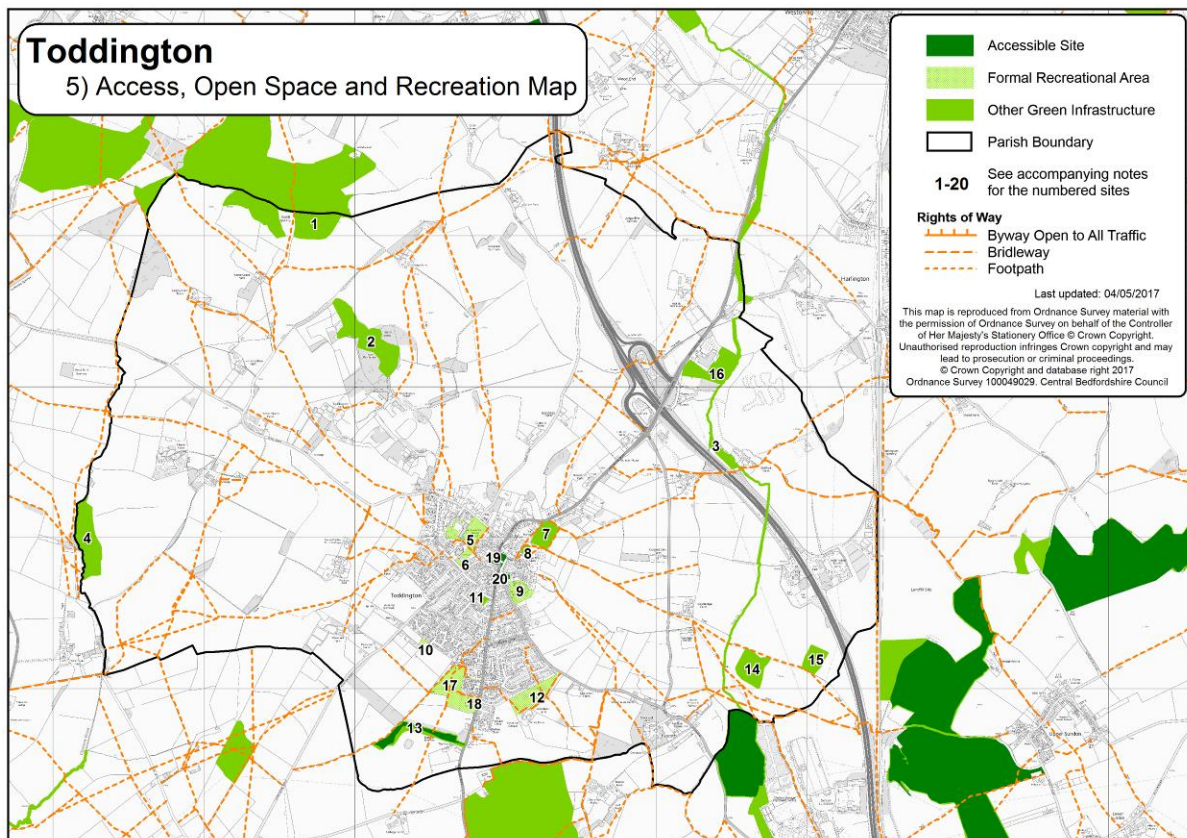
## Table 2 – Open Spaces and Recreation Sites

| Site | Name | Publicly accessible? |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Washer's and Daintry Woods CWS | No (limited access via public footpaths) |
| 2 | Toddington Manor Lakes CWS | No |
| 3 | River Flit CWS | No |
| 4 | Tebworth Marsh SSSI | No |
| 5 | School grounds | No |
| 6 | School grounds | No |
| 7 | Cemetery | Yes (for specific purposes). |
| 8 | Conger Hill Motte | No (limited access via public rights of way). |
| 9 | Luton Road recreation ground | Yes |
| 10 | Russell Road play area | Yes |
| 11 | Former Bedford Arms Public House Gardens | No |
| 12 | Crowbush Farm Recreation Ground | Yes |
| 13 | Dropshort Marsh NR (part of SSSI) | Yes |
| 14 | Woodcock Wood CWS | No (adjacent public rights of way). |
| 15 | Hipsey Spinney CWS | No (adjacent public rights of way). |
| 16 | Poplars Nursery CWS (Wadelows NR) | Yes* |
| 17 | Glebe Recreation Ground | Yes |
| 18 | Glebe Allotments | No – allotment holders only |
| 19 | Village Greens | Yes |
| 20 | Village Pond | Yes |

Within the parish most open spaces are either distributed around the periphery of the parish or within the settlement of Toddington, with the latter being largely around the periphery of the village. There is virtually no accessible greenspace within the village.

The consultation work carried out in 2013 showed that many people use the greenspaces and access routes within the village and the parish, with the Glebe and Pond being highlighted as particularly well-used. This was further borne out in the Recreational Survey. The Central Bedfordshire Council Community Planning consultation carried out in November 2016 also demonstrated the value placed on these assets (Draft Community Plan – Toddington, 2016).

### 5.4.1 Quantity of Greenspace:
As **Figure 5** shows, Toddington has a reasonable number of greenspaces of different types. As mentioned above, there is very little accessible greenspace within the village, and while the Central Bedfordshire Leisure Strategy suggests there is a small surplus of Large Formal Recreation Areas it highlights a significant deficit of Large Informal Recreation Areas (8.2ha) and also deficits in Small Amenity Spaces (1.7ha), Children's Play Areas (0.23ha) and allotments (0.47ha). This brings additional importance to the rights of way network and other valued green spaces without formal designation or access rights, particularly in and on the periphery of the village.

### 5.4.2 Accessibility of Greenspace:
It is important that everyone has access to greenspace for a wide range of reasons relating to health and wellbeing. The simplest method of accessing physical accessibility to a site is by drawing a catchment around it on a map to illustrate the area from which it can be reached within a specific travelling time. In the parish/village context, the most appropriate method of travel is walking (or cycling) as distances are relatively small and it is not desirable to promote access by car for congestion and pollution reasons.

According to the Central Bedfordshire Leisure Strategy (2014), Toddington has a good network of large formal recreation areas within 480 metres (10 minute walk). However, Toddington is deficient in access to informal recreation areas within the settlement. The Strategy refers to "Areas without access or with limited access to informal recreation areas". It is predicted that by 2022, Toddington will have a deficiency of small amenity spaces which will be greater than 2 hectares.

A more recent exercise carried out as part of this plan has been designed to take a basic snapshot of physical access across the parish and identify those areas where there are gaps in basic provision. **Figure 5a** below takes the sites considered 'accessible' above and draws a 300m radius around it. 300m (5 minute walk) has been selected as it is more indicative of basic provision. All accessible sites had a catchment mapped unless they were under 0.2ha (and considered to be too small to be an effective greenspace).

As **Figure 5a** illustrates, general accessibility to greenspace in the village of Toddington is only moderate, with the bulk of the north and west of the village outside the 300m catchment of an accessible greenspace. While such issues can be partly offset in 'urban fringe' locations by access to the wider countryside, not all of these areas of 'deficit' have such routes nearby, and there are large parts of the centre of the village without adequate access to greenspace.

Although the wider parish is not well served either, there are relatively few people living across this area, and efforts should be focused on addressing issues in the village. It is noted that opportunities for creating greenspace within the village will be limited but should still be sought where possible.

**Figure 5a**
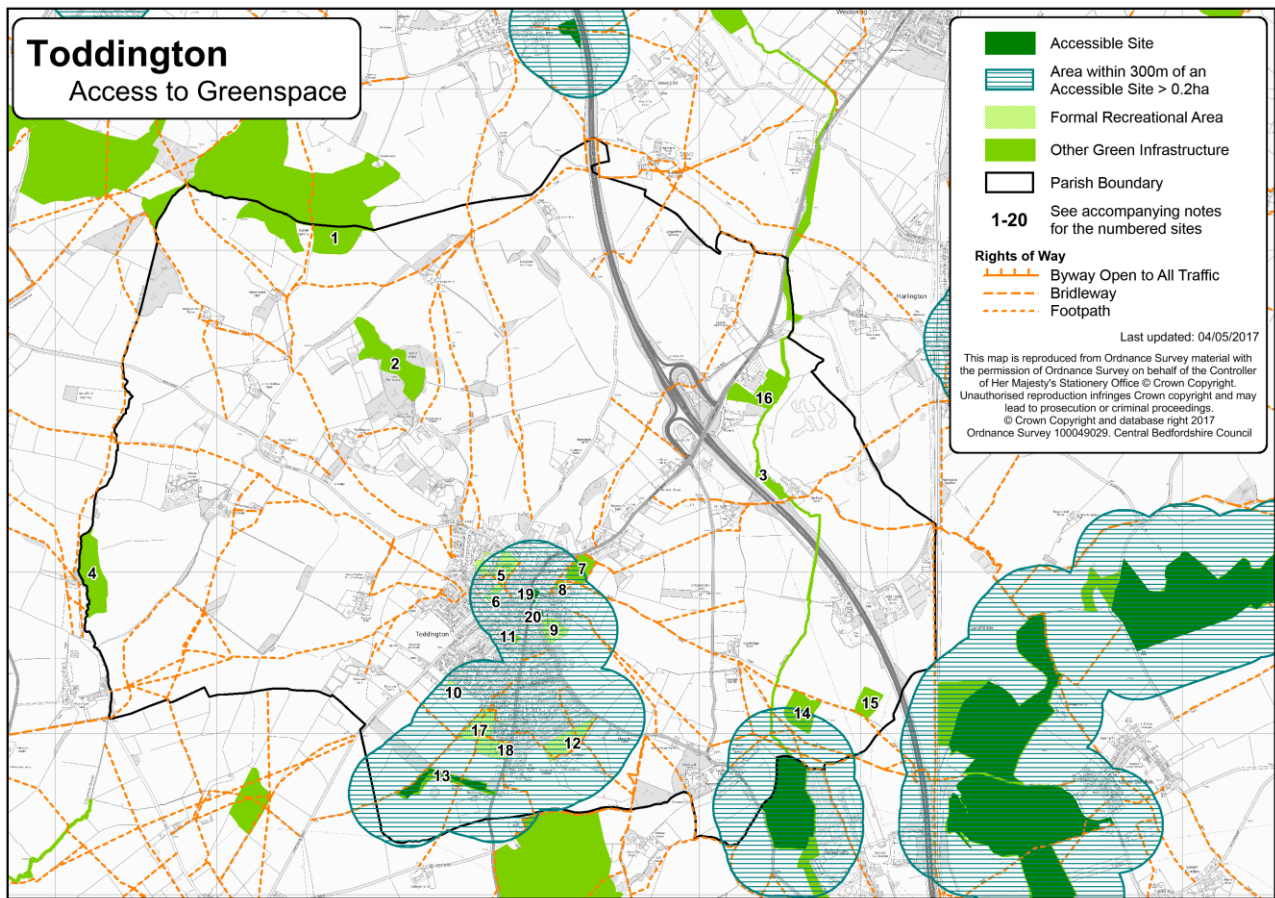


**It will be important to ensure that any new development in or around the village contributes to the identified access deficiencies.**

In addition to accessible spaces, access routes connecting them to people, and with each other, are a critical element of the Green Infrastructure network, and can also form the basis of habitat or landscape corridors. Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are the most important element in providing access to open spaces, alongside permissive paths and other routes. Non-PRoW can be more temporary, and while agreements vary in length they can be withdrawn and that access lost. Therefore the focus here is on the PRoW.

The parish of Toddington is relatively well-served in terms of access routes, with the village being the focus of many of these. The Recreation Survey results (part of the 2016 Project Prioritisation Survey summarised in **Appendix 2**) show that they form a major element of Toddington's wider recreational infrastructure, with "Footpaths and Bridleways" being the second most important "recreational facility" after parks.

While there are very few 'dead end' routes, connectivity is identified as an issue because the majority routes radiate out from the village with relatively poor connectivity between them. This limits the amount of opportunities for 'circular' routes, which are inherently more attractive to users than 'there and back' walks and rides. Although the M1 potentially creates a significant barrier to access and cuts across several PRoW, there are opportunities for crossing it via footbridges along its length (within the parish). This is important in providing access to sites such as Sundon Hills Country Park and the wider Chilterns countryside. When residents were asked to consider which improvements to recreational facilities they would prioritise in the Recreation Survey, access-related improvements were the fifth most important improvement identified (from a very broad range of suggestions).

There are two long distance walking routes within walking distance of the village: the Icknield Way and the Greensand Ridge Walk, while the relatively recently created Greensand Ridge Cycle Route is also within cycling reach to the north of the parish.

### 5.4.3 Quality Assessment and the Recreational Survey

Quantity, distribution and accessibility are important elements of any assessment of green spaces, the other key component is quality. Issues in a lack of greenspaces can, to an extent, be offset by improving the quality and functionality of existing greenspaces. This is particularly important within settlements where the opportunities to create new green spaces may be limited by the availability and cost of land.

The Central Bedfordshire Leisure Strategy notes that the Large Formal Recreation Areas are "good quality sites…well maintained and offering basic recreational infrastructure", but that Small Amenity Spaces are "relatively functionless….tucked away in housing estates with few recreational amenities". More limited fieldwork as part of the Local Greenspace Assessment confirmed the 'basic but well-maintained' summary, but also noted generally low levels of information about green spaces, including poor or absent signage. One example of this is the 'entrance' signage at the Russell Road Play Area, which is only visible from the inside of the site!

The Recreation Survey asked people to specifically identify the facilities they currently use and the improvements they felt were most needed. The survey was broad in scope, with 'recreation' covering a range of social activities (including shopping and other leisure activities) so it is especially significant that "parks, recs and play areas" accounted for over 60% of responses in terms of facilities used, and green spaces of the various types accounted for 6 of the top 10.

The survey also asked people to identify the improvements to recreational infrastructure they felt were most important, and unsurprisingly (given the importance of green spaces in terms of existing use) featured highly in terms of suggested improvements. "Parks and Greenspaces" were the most important type of improvement when the wide range of suggestions were grouped. But this should also be considered unsurprising in the context of the Leisure Strategy findings noted above.

### 5.4.4 Local Green Space assessment

The National Planning Policy Framework (2011) introduced the Local Green Space designation as "a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities". Paragraph 77 of the NPPF sets out the criteria that green space must meet in order to be designated as 'Local Green Space':

"The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife
- Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land".

In addition to these criteria, National Planning Practice Guidance states:

"Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented".

Other existing designations, such as Green Belt or Conservation Area status, do not necessarily preclude or support designation as Local Green Space, but it is necessary to consider whether the additional designation is necessary and would serve a useful purpose. With regard to Toddington, some sites within the Green Belt are recommended for designation. The guidance provided by Locality on "Neighbourhood Planning Local Green Spaces" (2018) notes that "Local Greenspace Designation could be useful in the Green Belt" because Green Belt status does not recognise the landscape quality or community value of the land. LGS designation would also ensure that should the Green Belt ever be modified in the area, the additional value of these sites is protected through LGS designation.

The draft Central Bedfordshire Local Plan makes provision for Local Green Spaces to be designated through a Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore this GI Plan includes an assessment of green spaces for consideration as LGS, and provides **recommendations** for those that should be **designated through the Neighbourhood Plan**.

The methodology used is contained within the wider Parish GI Planning methodology contained within **Appendix 1,** and the Assessment Report for Toddington is contained within **Appendix 4.**

A two-stage process was applied, with a desk-top study narrowing down the list of green spaces to a shortlist that were further assessed, including site visits. The following sites are proposed for designation as Local Green Space through the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Luton Road Recreation Ground
- Russell Road Play Area
- Glebe Recreation Ground
- Glebe Allotments
- Village Greens
- Village Pond

These sites are illustrated in **Figure 6 (GI Network)** below in **Section 6**.

The fact that there are relatively few sites proposed for Local Green Space designation is a reflection on the extent of the Green Belt and the lack of accessible green spaces identified above. It is important therefore not to misinterpret this and underestimate the issues around a lack of accessible green spaces. While the Green Belt performs an important role in protecting areas from development, it has no role or influence in providing accessible green space.

*5.4.5 Policy recommendations:*

- *To link existing access routes, creating networks of circular routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists at different scales.*
- *To create A-B routes where this would facilitate reductions in car use*
- *To ensure that any new development enhances access route connectivity and makes provision for linking to existing networks.*
- *To identify opportunities for delivering new greenspaces for the village to address existing deficits, particularly to the west and north, through development or other opportunities. This could include a phased approach where a vision is created for a large informal greenspace and development contributes appropriately towards this over a period of time.*

- *To improve the quality and functionality of existing smaller greenspaces through provision of facilities and/or landscape improvements*
- *To improve the quality of information about the location and function of greenspaces*
- *To create greenspace within the village centre where any opportunity arises (e.g. redevelopment of sites which either include a greenspace element or could do)*
- *To designate the proposed sites listed above as Local Green Spaces*
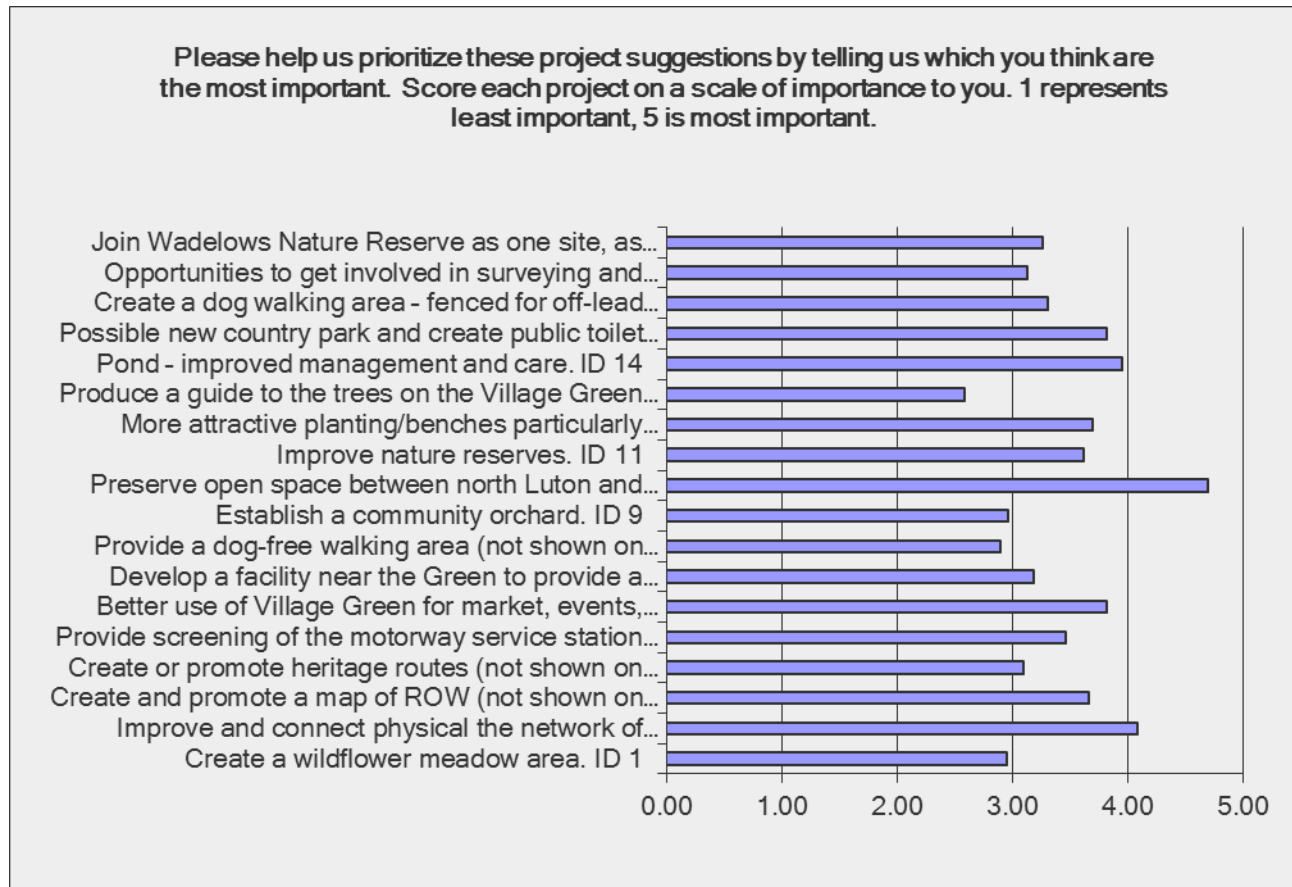
## 6. Project Prioritisation

The list project list was created from the project suggestions originally submitted by stakeholders and the community in 2013. The survey asked consultees to prioritise these project suggestions by telling us which they think are the most important, scoring each project on a scale of 0 – 5, with 0 representing the least important, 5 the most important.

| Project |
| --- |
| Create a wildflower meadow area |
| Improve and connect physical the network of footpaths. Cycle-ways and bridleways (including improved disabled access) |
| Create and promote a map of pathways and bridleways showing connections (not shown on map) |
| Create or promote heritage routes (not shown on map) |
| Provide screening of the motorway service station with woodland. Incorporate a village planting day. |
| Better use of Village Green for market, events, concerts etc. |
| Develop a facility near the Green to provide a community facility, housing a museum, coffee shop, information centre etc. |
| Provide a dog-free walking area (not shown on map) |
| Establish a community orchard |
| Preserve open space between north Luton and Toddington, shown on map |
| Improve nature reserves |
| More attractive planting/benches particularly around the village centre |
| Produce a guide to the trees on the Village Green i.e. species, memorial trees etc |
| Pond – improved management and care |
| Possible new country park and create public toilet facilities (not shown on map) |
| Create a dog walking area – fenced for off-lead activities (not shown on map) |
| Provide more opportunities and activities for local community to get involved in surveying and monitoring to help improve biodiversity (not shown on map) |
| Join Central Bedfordshire Council land and Wadelows Nature Reserve as one site, as shown on map |

The results of the survey are illustrated below.

6.1 Prioritisation of aspirations

It is possible to use the responses to the project prioritisation survey to provide an *indication* of community priorities for delivery.



**Please help us prioritize these project suggestions by telling us which you think are the most important. Score each project on a scale of importance to you. 1 represents least important, 5 is most important.**

The list below shows the projects that had the most people agree that they should be taken forward, using rating average of 3.5 as the cut-off. This gives a list of 7 projects. None of these projects had a significant number of people saying that they should not go ahead (not one project had more objections than support). In order of priority these projects are (two scored the same so are joint 4th);

1. Preserve open space between Toddington and Luton.
2. Improve and connect physical network of rights of way. Improving access for horse riders and cyclists as well as pedestrians.
3. Pond – improved management and care
4=. Better use of village green for market, events, concerts etc
4=. Possible new country park and toilet facilities.
6. A map and information to show the network of paths in the area
7. Improve nature reserves

**Recommendations:**
- It is noted that **Priority 1** is more akin to a policy than a specific project, and this is reflected in the Policy Recommendations under the Landscape chapter above.
- It is recommended that **Priority 2** is developed via a 'Local' Rights of Way Improvement Plan, creating an action plan covering a range of smaller projects that collectively meet this strategic need.
- It is noted that additional work has been carried out towards **Priority 3** during the plan production period and it is recommended that this is supported in the longer term, including the establishment of a volunteer group to assist (either independently or working with the P3 group.

- While an attractive proposition, it is unlikely that a new Country Park (**Priority 4=**)will be created in the parish – there is no strategic need identified within the CBC Leisure Strategy (Sundon Hills Country Park is nearby).  Substantial development would be required to create anything approaching this scale.  It is noted above (Open Space, Recreation and Access Policy) that a **phased approach could be taken to develop more strategic informal green spaces**.  However, it is also recommended that better use of the village centre and its facilities (cafes, pubs, libraries) and provision of information will support wider recreational use of the countryside.  It was very much noted during the consultation work for this Plan that village centre facilities provide parking, shops, information and other facilities, and the rights of way network supports access to varied and attractive countryside.
- The other **Priority 4=** is a recommendation to the Parish Council.
- **Priority 6** should be developed as a project, incorporating existing circular walk leaflets.  Because of the lack of accessible green spaces within the village, there is a need to better promote where the existing ones are and what they can be used for, therefore any leaflet and associated resources should also illustrate green spaces within the village to help people better understand where they are and what they can do there.  This project can also support the suggestion of better highlighting village services that support wider recreation (pubs, cafes, library), and could lead to sponsorship, and this is therefore incorporated into the wider project.
- Further research is required into the types of improvement people envisaged on nature reserves (**Priority 7**) as part of ongoing dialogue, particularly involving the Wildlife Trust.  It appears that the intention of those who originally put this project forward was to stop potential development near Dropshort Marsh NR and extend the site for nature conservation.  It is therefore recommended that this project is re-named "Protect and extend/enhance nature reserves" and covers all nature reserves and SSSIs.

6.2 Action Plan

The priority projects have been listed below in an Action Plan, identifying possible lead organisations and other partners, likely timescales and broad funding options.  The project titles have been amended in line with the above recommendations.

All of the projects identified (and resulting projects from further planning work identified as the necessary next step) would be appropriate recipients of Community Infrastructure Levy funds, which the Parish Council will have an increased amount of as a result of having a Neighbourhood Plan adopted.

It is recommended that this Action Plan is **reviewed annually** by the Parish Council.

**Action Plan**

| Project | Possible lead | Possible Partners | Timescale | Funding* | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Improve and connect physical the network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes.<br><br>Stage 1: Develop a Local Rights of Way Improvement Plan<br><br>Stage 2: Implementation | Greensand Trust | P3 Sustrans CBC (Rights of Way/ Highways) TPC Landowners and tenants | Develop 'Local Rights of Way Improvement Plan' in 2017, implementation ongoing. | Initial planning activity funded through CBC P3.<br><br>Ongoing – funding on project-by-project basis | Underway |
| 2) Pond: Improved management and care | Toddington PC | Greensand Trust, P3, local volunteers | Ongoing | Small amount of ongoing maintenance funding required. | Some funding was directed to the Pond in 2016, with advice provided by the Greensand Trust. |
| 3) Create and promote a map of green spaces, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways in the village and connecting to the wider countryside, promoting the use of village facilities. | Greensand Trust | P3 | 2017/18 | CBC P3 | Underway |
| 4) Better use of Village Green for market, events, concerts etc. | TPC | Local groups and businesses | Ongoing | Self-financing | Passed to TPC as a recommendation. |
| 5) Protect and Enhance/Extend Nature Reserves. | Wildlife Trust | TPC, CBC, Greensand Ridge NIA, landowners and tenants. | Ongoing | Funding to be identified when opportunities arise, on project by project basis. | Ongoing. |

## 7. The Toddington Green Infrastructure Network

The projects and policy recommendations above provide a clear vision for the future enhancement of Toddington's green infrastructure. This proposed network is illustrated in **Figure 6** below as the Toddington Green Infrastructure Network. It shows how existing GI assets could potentially be enhanced and better connected to create an attractive and varied network of places and links for the benefit of people and wildlife.

It must be noted that the map is *indicative* with regard to aspirations. One of the key aspirations of creating a more joined up access network, with circular routes around the village, is illustrated by broad concentric rings, but this *does not imply* specific routes will be developed along these lines. Any future development of the access network would need to involve landowners and tenants, and this is one of the reasons for creating an initial stage (Improvement Plan) as a stand-alone project above.
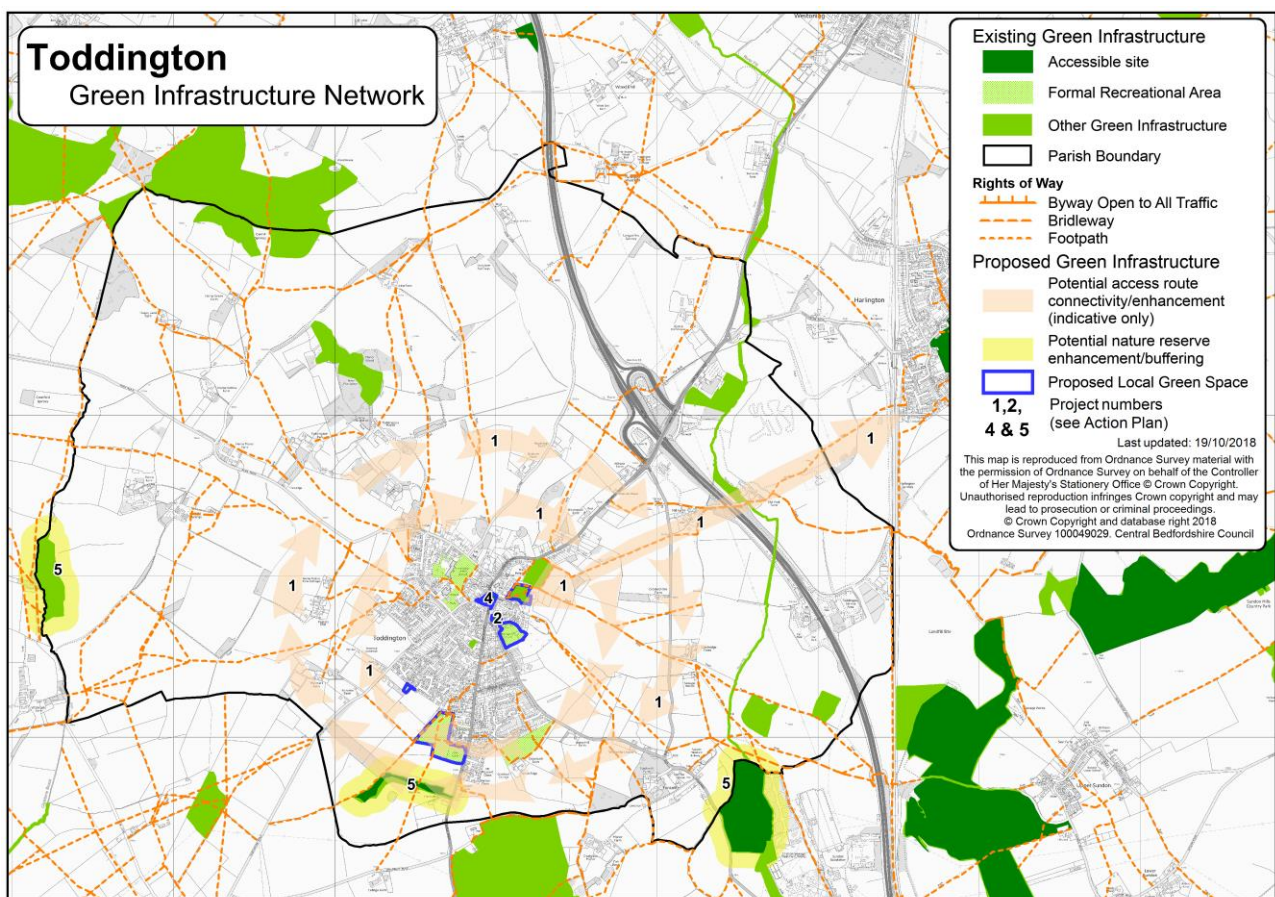


The Network Map also illustrates those sites proposed as Local Green Spaces.

# 8. Policy Guidance for the Neighbourhood Plan

The following are recommendations for policies to be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan, as identified in the thematic chapters above:

1. *To support the development of Toddington's Green Infrastructure Network and ensure it is not compromised by development;*
2. *To recognise the special landscape value and settlement identity of Toddington and its parish, and seek to protect the integrity of the settlement, particularly to the south, where nearby settlements are expanding significantly.*
3. *To take account of existing and potential biodiversity value, seek to protect, buffer and enhance existing biodiversity assets, and link areas of biodiversity value to create more robust networks.*
4. *To protect areas of permanent pasture from development, particularly when they have no specific designation, and that landowners have access to information on the value of this land and how to ensure that they are protected.*
5. *To take account of assets of historic environment value, seek to protect them and their context, and raises awareness of the historic environment's value.*
6. *To link existing access routes, creating networks of circular routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists at different scales.*
7. *To create A-B routes where this would facilitate reductions in car use.*
8. *To ensure that any new development enhances access route connectivity and makes provision for linking to existing networks.*
9. *To identify opportunities for delivering new greenspaces for the village to address existing deficits, particularly to the west and north, through development or other opportunities. This could include a phased approach where a vision is created for a large informal greenspace and development contributes appropriately towards this over a period of time.*
10. *To improve the quality and functionality of existing smaller greenspaces through provision of facilities and/or landscape improvements*
11. *To improve the quality of information about the location and function of greenspaces*
12. *To create greenspace within the village centre where any opportunity arises (e.g. redevelopment of sites which either include a greenspace element or could do)*
13. *To designate the following proposed sites as Local Green Spaces*

- Luton Road Recreation Ground
- Conger Hill Motte
- Russell Road Play Area
- Glebe Recreation Ground
- Glebe Allotments
- Village Greens
- Village Pond

## 9. Acknowledgements

The Greensand Trust would like to thank the following for their assistance and support in the production of the Green Infrastructure Plan:

Central Bedfordshire Council (Rights of Way, Countryside Access, Planning), Toddington Parish Council, Toddington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Toddington P3, The Bedfordshire & Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre, Sally Chapman (Chapman Planning) and the community of Toddington.

# Appendices

**Appendix 1: Parish GI Planning Methodology** (including Local Green Space Assessment Methodology)

See separate document

**Appendix 2: Consultation Summary**

See separate document

**Appendix 3: Historic Environment Features (Key to Figure 4)**

| Number | Feature |
|--------|---------|
| 15 | ANGLO-SAXON POTTERY, Herne Farm |
| 16 | SKELETONS ROMAN & ?MEDIEVAL COINS Warmark |
| 89 | Motte & bailey castle, Conger Hill |
| 90 | ROMAN & ANGLO-SAXON FINDS Fancott |
| 95 | ROMAN POTTERY KILN Foxburrow |
| 97 | LANDSCAPED GROUNDS & EARTHWORKS, Toddington Manor |
| 98 | ANGLO-SAXON COIN |
| 101 | ?Roman villa, Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Sheepwalk Hill |
| 501 | MOAT & CROPMARKS |
| 506 | RABBIT BURROW |
| 788 | WADLOWES MANOR |
| 799 | COCK PIT |
| 1412 | ROMAN BRONZE ELEPHANT Lodge Farm |
| 1419 | ROMAN INTAGLIO |
| 1512 | BRONZE AGE SCRAP |
| 2857 | ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY,Frenchman s Highway |
| 3080 | NEOLITHIC & PALAEOLITHIC FINDS |
| 3082 | SAND & GRAVEL PITS |
| 3083 | GRAVEL PIT |
| 3291 | NEOLITHIC & PALAEOLITHIC FINDS |
| 3355 | RIDGE & FURROW |
| 3426 | ?MOAT Feoffee Farm Fancott |
| 3635 | EARTHWORK |
| 5116 | DEER PARK |
| 5213 | WATERMILL & MILL POND N of Toddington Manor |
| 6573 | ROMAN COINS |
| 6735 | BRICKFIELD KILN AND CLAY PIT  Fancott |
| 6816 | ROMAN COIN 'PUZZLE GARDEN' |
| 6988 | 'DOVEHOUSE CLOSE' Herne |

| Number | Feature |
| --- | --- |
| 7093 | RABBIT BURROW |
| 7360 | BRICK KILN |
| 7361 | CLAY PIT |
| 7723 | FLINT |
| 7724 | POST-MEDIEVAL BUILDING DEBRIS |
| 7921 | HOSPITAL OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST (site of) |
| 8288 | RABBIT BURROWS & PITS |
| 8760 | DEER PARK |
| 8984 | TODDINGTON CEMETERY |
| 9017 | BAPTIST CHURCHYARD |
| 9440 | TODDINGTON RECTORY GROUNDS |
| 9822 | MEDIEVAL POTTERY |
| 9830 | ?IRON AGE OCCUPATION |
| 10127 | GALLOWS |
| 10428 | BURIAL 16 Conger Lane |
| 10983 | ROMAN POTTERY E of Toddington |
| 11255 | ROMAN CREMATIONS 'Rectory Glebe' |
| 11265 | TODDINGTON WARREN |
| 11954 | ANGLO-SAXON FINDS 'William Harbett's Estate |
| 11955 | ROMAN ?HYPOCAUST Town Close |
| 12037 | GRAVEL PIT |
| 12102 | SAND PIT |
| 12103 | PONDS |
| 12104 | BLACK POND |
| 12106 | NUPPINGS GREEN |
| 12107 | QUARRY |
| 12108 | SAND PITS |
| 12110 | QUARRY |
| 12112 | GRAVEL PIT |
| 12114 | EARTHWORKS Cowbridge |
| 12115 | ?QUARRY |
| 12116 | PIT & LINEAR EARTHWORK |
| 12117 | MBD12117 |
| 12118 | QUARRY |
| 12125 | GRAVEL PIT |
| 12127 | SAND PIT |
| 13159 | WOODCOCK WOOD Ancient Woodland |
| 13161 | HIPSEY SPINNEY |
| 14693 | CROPMARKS |
| 14706 | ?FIELD SYSTEM |
| 14746 | RECTANGULAR CROPMARKS Lodge Farm |
| 15300 | FLINT FLAKES |
| 15656 | THREE PIER BRIDGE at Junction 12 of the M1 |
| 15837 | CROPMARKS Iron Age activity & Neolithic/Bronze Ag |
| 15845 | PREH. FLINTS, S.E. of Toddington |

| Number | Feature |
| --- | --- |
| 15846 | MES FLINT, Station Road Allotments |
| 15860 | MESOLITHIC FLINT, II Station Road |
| 16087 | NEOLITHIC/BRONZE AGE FLINT SCATTER, Poplars Nursey |
| 16088 | NEOLITHIC/BRONZE AGE FLINT SCATTER, W of M1 Junction 12 |
| 16089 | NEOLITHIC/BRONZE AGE FLINTS & MEDIEVAL POTTERY, Redhills Farm, W of M1 |
| 16239 | MEDIEVAL POTTERY, Land of Toddington |
| 16542 | ?CROPMARKS, E of Herne Grange |
| 16543 | CROPMARKS (?ring ditch/?windmill site), S of Froghole |
| 16544 | ?CROPMARKS, N of Herne Grange |
| 16545 | CROPMARKS, SE of Herne Willow Farm |
| 16546 | CROPMARKS, W of Herne Green Farm |
| 16981 | TODDINGTON MEDIEVAL TOWN |
| 16982 | FANCOTT MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT |

**Appendix 4: Local Green Space Assessment**

See separate document.