

# Grove Arboretum



EMMER GREEN, READING

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**July 2021**

# Keep Emmer Green

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The closure of Reading Golf Club offers the people of Reading a fantastic opportunity to make environmental provision for the future of the town.

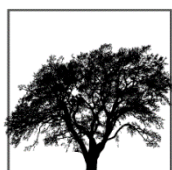
While Reading Borough Council considers the club's second application to develop a huge housing estate on this beautiful tract of land, the team at Keep Emmer Green (KEG) has been working on an alternative plan and a more fitting legacy for a Golf Club with over 100 years of history. Thanks in part to the generosity of its 1,600 plus subscribers KEG has been able to engage the services of local business Sara's Gardens run by Sara Kopp.

Sara is a vastly experienced and acclaimed landscape architect, and she has pulled together an exciting array of ideas, centred on an arboretum while offering environmental benefits to all age groups and needs. This document is based upon her report, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her enthusiastic support.

The land that is now within the bounds of Reading Golf Course has always been open land, with several public rights of way. Before the golf course came into existence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the land belonged to a variety of landowners, one of which was the nearby farm - now known as Old Grove House.

This is extremely timely as of the 24<sup>th</sup> June the Chilterns AONB is under discussion to expand its borders eastwards; the first border change since 1965. This proposal would neatly fit the requirement to protect 30% of the UK by 2030.

This is the start of the conversation, not the end, and we hope that this gives the community a starting point for an ambitious vision that would benefit many thousands of residents across the borough in the coming years.



# Our Six Pillars

By 2030 Reading will be a borough rich in wildlife, accessible to and valued by its residents, better connected to the wider landscape including through its urban areas. The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity will be integral to the actions of the Council and others and the decline in biodiversity will have been reversed.

Important wildlife sites and habitats will be protected, maintained, restored and enhanced and new wildlife habitats will be created – both for nature itself and for the benefits it provides to the people of Reading – capable of withstanding the climate emergency, and helping to mitigate the effects of a changing climate.



This document aims to provide a narrative as to the possibilities of the site, building from the foundations of retaining green accessible space with a new arboretum for Reading and Berkshire.

A new arboretum is not created every day. Due to the amount of time it takes for planting and growing, the establishment of an arboretum is an investment in the area's future as well as its present. Swinley Forest was planted after the first world war and Harcourt Arboretum was established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We would not be working from a blank slate – the area is already beautiful with many hundreds of mature trees.

## The Benefits of Open Space

During the preparation of this document, a report was released by Groundwork that linked to the meaning of what we see the site being able to deliver.

Groundwork is an organisation established in 1981 as a radical experiment to bring together communities, businesses and government in a joint effort to improve the quality of life and promote sustainable development. Their passion is to create a future where every neighbourhood is vibrant and green, every community is strong and able to shape its own destiny and no-one is held back by their background or circumstances. They recognise as we do that natural spaces in our towns and cities have lots of benefits: for our mental and physical health, for communities and for the local economy.

The Out of Bounds – equity in access to urban nature 2021 report by Groundwork following in-depth discussions with representatives of 23 organisations in the nature and social justice sectors shows that:

- People from all walks of life value access to nature but not everyone is able to benefit to the same extent.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has made these inequalities more pronounced
- People from low income households or areas and disabled people are among the groups currently missing out.
- Inadequate provision of parks and green spaces is one of the reasons, but people also experience complex barriers when it comes to accessibility, relevance and feeling safe.
- Equitable access to public space is a right, so everyone managing natural spaces should be working to address this inequity.

Based on this evidence, the contributors have three calls for action:

- The need to reimagine urban nature to ensure that it meets the needs and desires of communities today.
- The need to rebalance power in the management of green and blue spaces and build better partnerships.
- The need to integrate urban nature solutions fully into efforts to tackle health inequalities, climate change and biodiversity loss.

The evidence from the Groundwork report is an accurate representation of the need for nature based future proofing that the proposals offer as well as of the challenges faced by those living in the Caversham and Emmer Green area.

## Why Emmer Green?

There are more children in the 0–4 age group than in other areas of Reading and these children could grow up with a life-changing community space on their doorstep. This is a community that needs the value that the arboretum and accompanying proposals would bring to it now and into the future.

Currently, if residents of Emmer Green, Caversham and Reading do travel, they might visit places such as Swinley Forest, Cliveden, Harcourt Arboretum, Westonbirt Arboretum and Kew Gardens in London; the nearest of which is at least 15 miles away and a 30 minute drive. Often such locations are remote and inaccessible, especially for those without access to a private car, whereas Grove Arboretum is within walking distance for visitors from Reading, Caversham and Emmer Green, as well as being relatively accessible for visitors arriving from further afield.

Due to recent Government legislation the Council cannot easily prevent conversion of office space and retail to residential, which has the potential to create an influx of residents to the area without access to proper green spaces. While the Council has little say in these conversions, they do have the power to provide green spaces to the new residents. Residents have already raised some ideas in their objections to the current planning applications on the golf course, some of which have also helped to shape this document.

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- *Green space has been proven to help wellbeing and health generally and is directly linked to the reduction of anxiety and depression.*
- *Surely the experience of Corona Virus has shown the overwhelming need for areas of open space for walking and sporting activities.*
- *By all means convert the golf course into another green facility, sports ground or community recreational wildlife reserve. A green healthy planet campaign which we all desire means protecting spaces such as these.*
- *I thought the idea for climate change was to plant more trees not to take healthy trees away.*
- *There are no quality facilities on this side of the river-no swimming pools, running tracks or nature reserves.*
- *We need green space to exercise and park space to escape the stresses of life and the workplace.*
- *The place is very precious to us and for our coming generations.*
- *We need to protect the few green spaces we have left. We need it for peoples' mental health as well as to reduce air pollution.*
- *This area is really nature at its best and most beautiful.*

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- *If the golf course is being closed there would be a great opportunity to make a beautiful new public park and recreation area.*
- *What an opportunity it would be to keep the area green for generations to come.*
- *The land could be developed by a forward looking council who really care about the environment and the mental and physical health of the population*
- *We will not be thanked by the younger generations for increasing local pollution and failing to protect this piece of countryside*

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# ARBORETUM HIGHLIGHTS



The first new arboretum in Berkshire for over 100 years.



Improving access to nature and education for local community groups, Scouts and others.



A new café and restaurant serving the community



Creating numerous employment opportunities and work studios to reduce rush hour congestion.



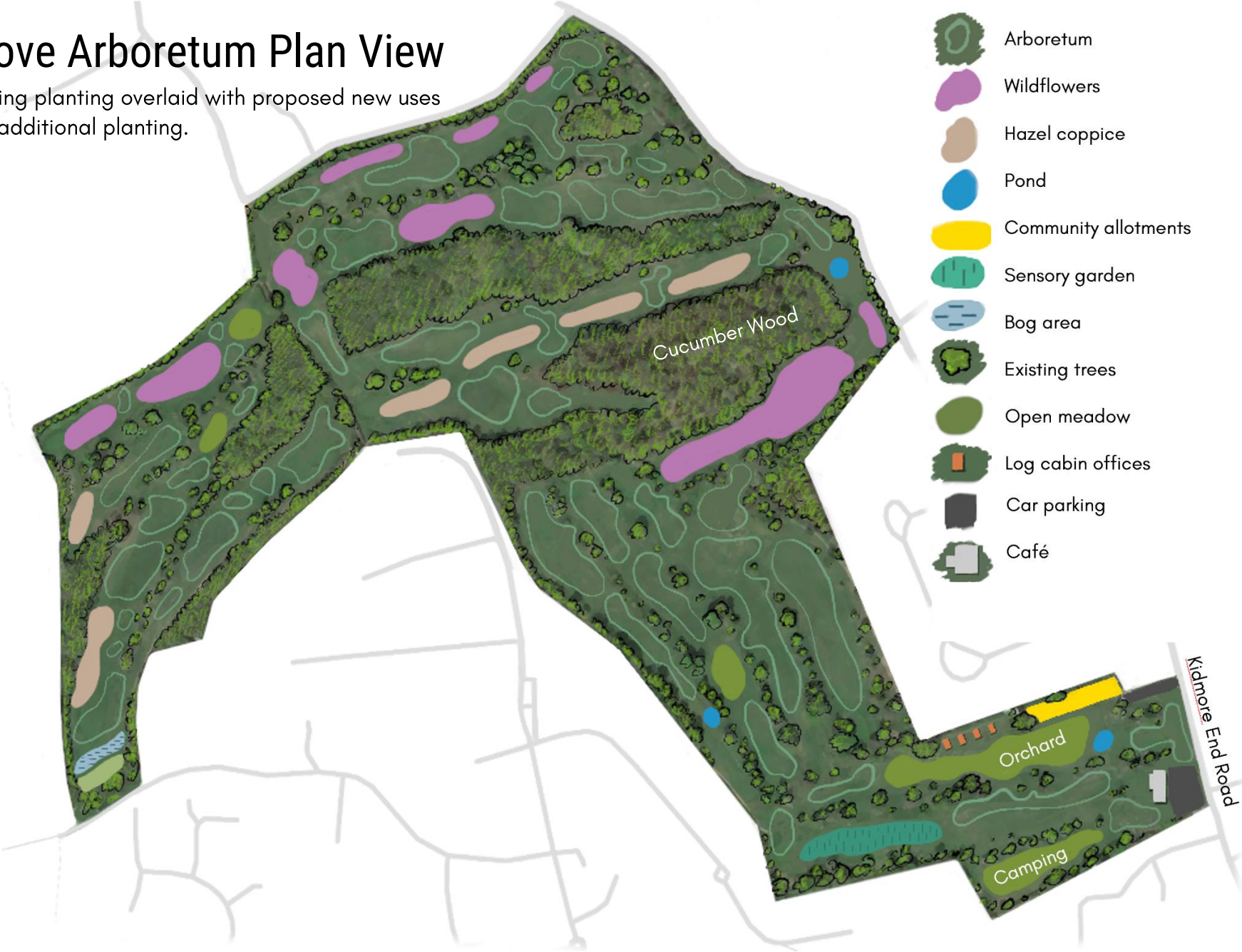
Creation of miles of new rights of way, connecting existing paths. A new green link from Hemdean road to Kidmore End Road with an appropriate all weather surface.



100 acres of open green public space, protecting existing planting, reducing existing drainage problems in the area and enhancing biodiversity

# Grove Arboretum Plan View

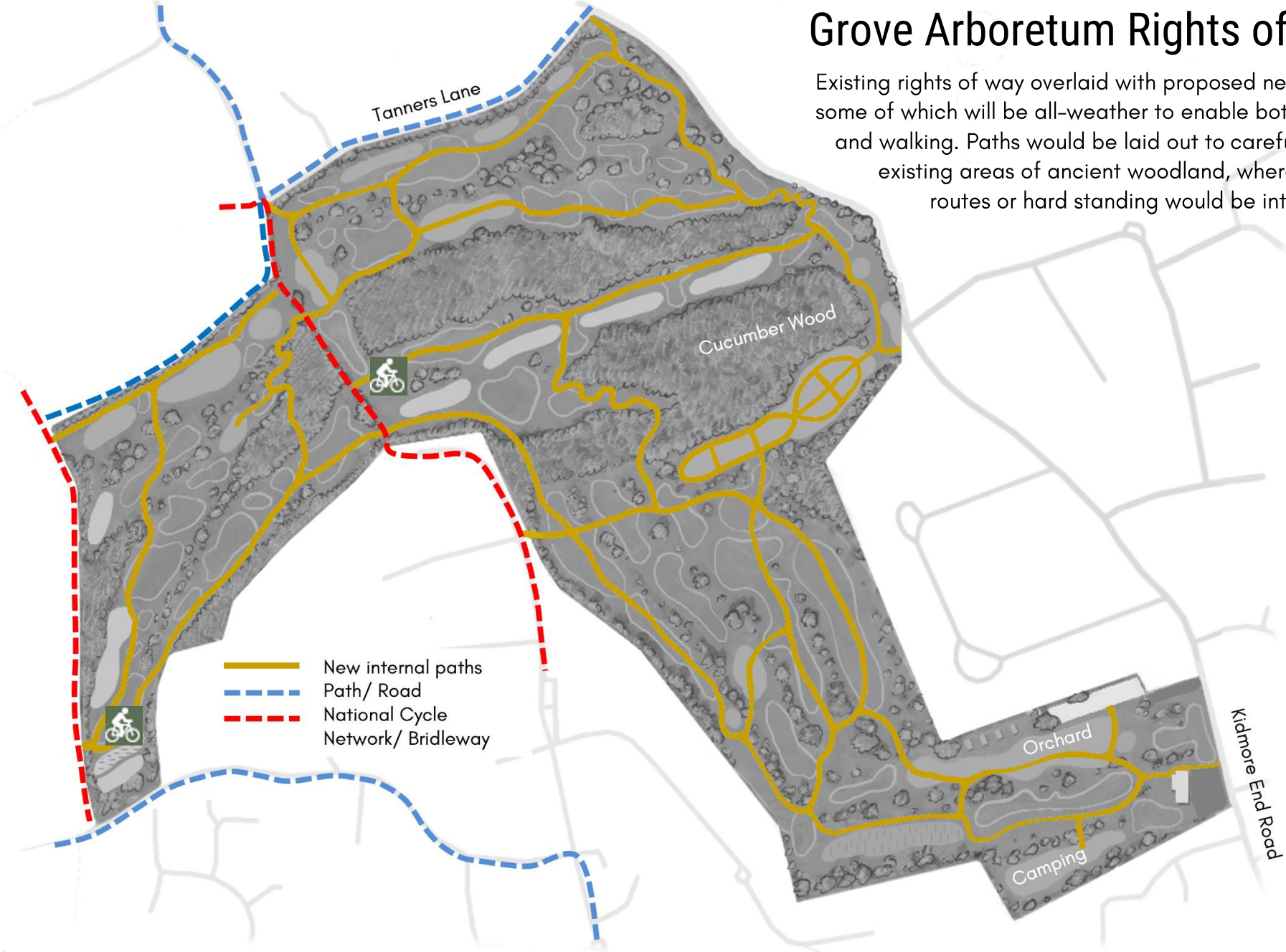
Existing planting overlaid with proposed new uses and additional planting.





# Grove Arboretum Rights of Way

Existing rights of way overlaid with proposed new routes, some of which will be all-weather to enable both cycling and walking. Paths would be laid out to carefully avoid existing areas of ancient woodland, where no new routes or hard standing would be introduced.



# Environment

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At the heart of the vision is the Arboretum. It will include a range of trees that are compatible with climate change challenges to ensure that future generations are able to benefit from a green and healthy environment. There are already over five hundred trees on site with Tree Protection Orders and these magnificent trees would benefit from the protection afforded by an arboretum setting.

Arboretums provide a haven for trees and shrubs. They are a showcase of native and selected non-native species where public admission is welcomed and encouraged. Arboretums are places of beauty and refuge for a community's inhabitants. They are a place of education and insight to learn about tree science and the place of trees and shrubs in local ecosystems and to discover their effect on the well-being of residents in the community.

Trees are the largest and oldest single living element of our built and natural environment. The benefits of trees have never had so much significance in terms of contribution towards humans and their built-up urban areas. Evaporation, shade and heat reflection can greatly reduce the temperature in towns. Tree lined avenues, parks and woodland all provide sheltered, stimulating and attractive locations to walk and cycle reducing road traffic and improving our well-being. The planting and care of trees can draw a community together. Providing an outdoor classroom in which to study, play and explore. They provide habitat, shelter and diversity of an area and support a wide variety of mammals, birds and insects. The arboretum forms the anchor for our proposals around which a multitude of additional benefits can be developed that contribute environmental, health, education, economic and cultural outcomes for the wider Reading area.

## Collaboration

Collaboration with local and national academic and botanical establishments such as Kew Gardens, Reading University and Oxford Arboretum would put Reading on the map and draw interest from visitors from a range of areas. There has not been a new arboretum created in over 100 years in Berkshire; when would be a better time, if not now.

## Floodwater Management

Vernal ponds around the arboretum that help to alleviate flooding would be established and work alongside water features that would provide habitat benefits for wildlife and also provide interest to visitors to the site. Flooding impacts are expected to significantly worsen over the coming years, so having open land to manage flood

water impacts will become increasingly important. Pond features would maintain existing hydrogeological flows while providing benefits to surrounding areas downstream of floodwater and provide capacity for future ongoing flood management.

*"I wholeheartedly support KEG's proposal to transform a former monocultural grassland golf course into an Arboretum, that will support both wildlife and people. I envisage that this planned Arboretum will provide the community in our borough with opportunities for outdoor recreation, relaxation, green prescribing, play and learning - supporting both our physical and mental health. KEG's vision for volunteering and making use of the space as a health asset is impressive. We envisage that the local community will be able to take an active role in environmental stewardship, with volunteering opportunities including tree planting. It's a win-win for people and nature. With our country facing a triple crisis of nature loss, climate change and poor health, projects like this have the potential to deliver multiple positive outcomes. Should this proposal be successful, Nature Nurture commits to supporting KEG engage the local community and maximise their potential to address health inequalities."*

Natalie Ganpatsingh, Director - Nature Nurture CIC, Trustee of the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, Nature Lead for Reading 2050 vision 'City of Park & Rivers', Health Lead for Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy, Nature Lead for Dr. William Bird's company Intelligent Health

## Increase in Bio-Diversity

The UK has destroyed 97% of its wildflower meadows due to intensive farming and this important habitat supporting a myriad of bees, beetles, butterflies and grasshoppers would be established where appropriate throughout the site in line with the Council's own Biodiversity Action Plans and national schemes by Plant-life and the Royal Horticultural Society. Planting would be a truly community based affair bringing people and cultures together to create a truly special environment created by the community for the community.

## Orchard

The creation of a traditional orchard on site would create a focal point, a crucial habitat for flora and fauna and a place for education and skills development to ensure that where possible, Berkshire varieties of heritage fruit are not lost forever. Orchards provide vital green spaces in our cities and towns, where people are encouraged to interact with nature either through becoming custodians of the trees or by simply being around them and enjoying their shade, beauty and fruit. Orchards invite nature into the urban environment and provide a refuge in which it can flourish; in our schools, housing estates, parks and commons, improving human wellbeing and making our cities more pleasant places in which to live. Some areas of our cities have become 'no grow zones' or 'food deserts': where fresh, quality fruit and vegetables are hard to find. Sedate lifestyles and poor diets have led to rising rates of diabetes and obesity. Fresh, nutritious fruit and the activity involved in growing and harvesting has to be part of the solution.

## A Green Link

The conservation of the habitats on site allow for a healthy ecological network to establish from Reading Borough Council into South Oxfordshire and vice versa which is essential to ensure the levels of diversity of habitats that species need to sustain their populations. The improvements to soil health and the mycelium networks that depend on it as well as numerous fungi, moss and lichen will be an extremely valuable result of the regeneration of the different habitats.

The site is a vital green lung, providing cleaner air to the area and the establishment of the arboretum and other habitats would further increase the air quality and aesthetic quality thus creating a space of tranquility and calm where visitors would be able to improve their mental wellbeing, spiritual wellbeing and physical wellbeing by taking part in on-site socially focussed, meditative and sensory groups as well as exercise groups designed around their needs.

*“The proposed Arboretum, which includes office, recreation and education facilities, would be a good positive alternative to the housing development. It should provide significant net gain for biodiversity and be a net sink of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Much of the area should stay ‘green’ - whether as an arboretum, a park, or a nature reserve.”*

Reading Friends of the Earth

Every green space has its own value, character and potential and Grove Arboretum will provide a rich tapestry of community enrichment. Whilst there are wonderful green spaces nearby, namely Bug’s Bottom and Clayfield Copse, this site would offer universal access that lends itself to a wider range of activities for the community that go beyond dog walking and rambling.

## Sensory Garden

A sensory garden ideally located by the local school and residential home which provides immediate access to the space for the youngest and oldest in the community is one example of such an activity.

## Eastern extension of the AONB

Kidmore End District Council has recognized in their local development plan that the unique landscape of the AONB does not stop at the border of the AONB and is also characterized in both the South Oxfordshire part of the site as well as in Reading where no hard border exists. AONB status takes many years, however KEG would work with others to extend the AONB to cover all of the arboretum to ensure longer term protection. As of the 24<sup>th</sup> June the Government has announced that they are looking at an eastern extension of the AONB – the first since 1965.

# Health & Fitness

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Across the arboretum we would join up existing rights of way to create a green bypass from Hemdean Road, Bugs Bottom all the way through to Kidmore End Road and on to Clayfield Copse, incorporating the best of semi-rural living north of the river Thames. For the benefit of local families and schools, these tracks will be durable and all-weather to enable cycling throughout the year, linking up with national cycle route #5.

## Trim Trails

A Trim Trail is an obstacle course composed of different pieces of apparatus laid out to form a series of fun-filled physical challenges. It is a great way of giving non-structured access to outdoor sports equipment for all different ages and abilities.

# Volunteering

Volunteering would be key in supporting the arboretum project and is good for physical and mental health. There is a wonderful symbiosis between what the arboretum gets from the volunteers, and what the volunteers get from the arboretum. As well as the time outside and the physical activity involved in volunteer days, woodland management tasks provide meaningful activity for people to take part in, which is also good for mental wellbeing.

Links would be established with local ethical and sustainability groups with models of ethical inspiration, education and collaboration that create an environment of community participation, learning and support. Covid 19 unleashed huge amounts of community engagement and support – harnessing the collective strength and ambition of communities to come together around a common objective. This site provides a similar opportunity that can unite communities and cultures in support of a common goal.

*"I'm autistic, this means I have different needs than neurotypical people, these include being hypersensitive to sensory input (sounds, bright visuals etc) when I am in areas of high sensory input I can get sensory overload. Because of this I avoid going too far away from home as I need to be able to get back to my safe-space quickly. This means I end up not being able to do much of anything as there isn't really any autism-friendly spaces in close proximity to my home. This is why having a local community space that is inclusive would be life changing. I also have a passion for the theatre but typically, indoor theatres are not Autism-friendly, due to being small enclosed spaces with huge numbers of people very close to me and over-stimulating sound and lights. An open-air theatre would allow people like me to enjoy theatre again!*

*I'm also a carer for my mother who is wheelchair-bound, our village doesn't really have any wheelchair - accessible places to go for a walk (or wheel rather) or to enjoy some kind of activity (like theatre and more), this is another reason why this proposed inclusive community space would be lifechanging for her too, a woman who barely leaves the house due to this problem. She loves nature but has been unable to enjoy it in years and loves theatre but can't go to most usual theatres easily. This community space proposal from KEG would be life-changing for so many in our community and would allow people with special needs and disabilities to join in with community activities they are usually excluded from."*

Local Resident, aged 27

## NHS

There would be outdoor health activities developed supporting specific groups identified by the NHS such as diabetes and heart disease sufferers, those with hearing or vision impairment or those of any age needing the benefits of company, physical movement and mental stimulation.

“Forest bathing” (so called for immersing yourself in woodland rather than literal bathing) is the practice of walking through nature in a mindful way, using your senses to derive a whole range of benefits for your physical, mental, emotional, and social health. It improves heart and lung health, and is known to increase focus, concentration and memory. Certain trees like conifers also emit oils and compounds to safeguard themselves from microbes and pathogens. These molecules known as Phytoncides are good for our immunity too. Breathing in the forest air boosts the level of natural killer (NK) cells in our blood. NK cells are used in our body to fight infections, cancers and tumours. This site can be a pioneer in UK Forest Bathing research and understanding.

# Culture

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With its very varied landscape this site allows for the discreet staging of outdoor theatre productions, cinema and/or literary readings without disturbing the peace and tranquillity of nearby areas of the site. There are areas of the landscape that form an ideal natural amphitheatre which would allow casual seating on blankets with picnics etc. These productions would be occasional, temporary and seasonally focused. The staging and any additional structures would be easily assembled and taken down.

Local clubs will be invited to use the café/restaurant premises for Bridge Circles, Chess and other similar pursuits. We can also see the opportunity for the demonstration of local crafts and indoor and outdoor language classes.

*"I have Epilepsy and Fibromyalgia which has left me wheelchair dependent. I am incredibly restricted in where I can go as the world is still designed mostly for able-bodied people. Wheelchair-accessibility is not as widely in place as it should be, this leaves me unable to simply enjoy a walk in nature or to easily visit the theatre.*

*I can't go very far away from home because in the case I have a seizure I need to be able to get home as quickly and privately as possible, so I don't feel comfortable going much further than my immediate community area of Caversham Park Village and Emmer Green, and within that area there isn't much to do when you have the difficulties I have, so I don't go anywhere or do anything. To have a community space like the one KEG have proposed would breathe life back into me again, I would be able to enjoy a walk (wheel) with family in a beautiful example of nature and engage in activities with family and friends again.*

*The suggestion of an open air theatre within my immediate local area is especially exciting, it would be utterly transformative for me to have a disability- inclusive space like that, to be able to leave my four walls and enjoy art and culture again, something I have been unable to do for years. And to be able to have all of this whilst still within safe distance of my home should I have a seizure would be amazing. I am sure there are so many others in our community that would get the same joy out of it too!"*

Local Resident of Caversham Park Village, aged 60

Light shows celebrating the different cultures in our town, such as Christmas, Diwali and Eid, are also a possibility together with bespoke art installations running through the site perhaps following the various trails we envisage. We could also see the creation of an annual picnic or festival of food.



Pre-event surveys of our communities would allow delivery of events shaped by the community for the community, including local stakeholders which could include organisations such as the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL).

The possibilities are virtually endless but certainly events such as a Tree Week, Wildflower Meadow Day, Orchard Day and Planting Days instantly spring to mind.

# Economy

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Reading is a central hub for employment, with people commuting to Reading from outside the area, including from Emmer Green, though very few employment opportunities exist in Caversham and Emmer Green itself.

We have an unmissable chance to create long term employment in Emmer Green and build the local green economy with a focus on green transport, seasonal activities for the community, on-site workshop hire space for local artists and crafts people and corporate workspace (hireable for hours, days or longer depending on the need). This flexible provision reflects changing work/life priorities post-covid enabling outdoor work and leisure opportunities in the same location, whilst enhancing access to nature and reducing commuting and congestion as more people and companies adopt flexible working patterns, all centred around the arboretum, community hub and café.

## Work Studios

Located near the restaurant and other facilities, work studios would be suitable for local professionals who need a space near their own house with good internet connections, as well as local craftspeople who require a workshop. These would be temporary buildings with a high quality finish and would ensure year round patronage of the restaurant.

## Café, Restaurant & Community Support

There are very few cafés, restaurants or even licensed venues in Emmer Green, and none with outdoor seating aimed at family provision. A welcoming café and restaurant with green roof and viewing areas to the arboretum would provide locally sourced seasonal and nutritious whole food to visitors and provide a social hub for different groups ranging from families, new parents, the elderly, as well as a quiet and relaxing location for Special Educational Needs groups. The menu would offer a range of meals and pricing to ensure that every visitor was catered for and would provide a peaceful and wholesome venue that could be open for local people into the evening.

There is potential for the café to utilise the most up to date energy efficient technology and practices such as a ground sourced heat pump, rain-water collection and improved insulation.

A community fridge could be based adjacent to the café. Community Fridges are spaces where anyone can access free, quality food that would otherwise go to waste, connect with others, learn about the environmental impact of food, and share

knowledge and skills. This would reduce both food waste- as it would be stocked with surplus food nearing use-by date which is freely available for the local community thus reducing food poverty and income deprivation-based inequality, which like other areas of Reading is also required in Emmer Green.

## Carbon Offsetting

Reading has very ambitious plans for continued economic growth which will, by default, almost certainly be high density but Reading has little available land for developers to mitigate the environmental impacts of growth. The land offers valuable carbon offsetting potential for those seeking to invest in Reading as well to local companies who could carry out team building environmental challenges such as tree planting, vernal pond digging, green wall planting and green roof planting.

While the council has no say on the undoubted widescale conversion of retail and commercial property to residential, it can have a say on providing those new residents with sufficient outdoor amenity and leisure space.

## Children's playground

While the nearby playground on Emmer Green Common is appropriate for small children, there are no nearby spaces for older children. Due to the scale of the area, there would be little issue in dedicating a small area of the land to a larger playground that could also be used by nearby schools. This could be funded by local donations and potentially pay for itself through an ongoing ticketing system ensuring that it remains relevant and well maintained.



# Education

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As children move into adolescence they become more disconnected from nature. After the age of nine, levels of nature connection drop dramatically and do not recover for around 20 years. Other studies show that when teenagers prioritise a connection with nature, they're less likely to suffer from mental health issues.

A study of 30,000 adolescents in Canada found that those who agreed that it was important to feel connected with nature were also 25% less likely to experience mental health issues. The same study also found the number of adolescents who think nature connection is important falls by 30% between age 9 and 15.

Teenagers would be an important part of the user group of the site with the availability of cycling, trim trail / green gym and running track. In addition, cooking workshops, rites of passage events such as red tents for young women and art and music workshops could take place. Volunteer work experience schemes could involve these young people in the creation of different habitats and this work could be done in conjunction with local environmental and conservation groups.

*"We do have a massive waiting list so definitely a demand. Plus we need a new hall as ours is almost at end of life and needs rebuilding. So that could be factored into use of the site, ideally with an outdoors adventure/ campsite that could be hired by the local community and wider for use then that would be a greater asset to the community IMO rather than housing"*

Local Scouts Group

The camping facilities and proximity to the Chilterns makes for a wonderful start or finish to a Duke of Edinburgh expedition for young people and would remove the need to travel away from the area. Opening the eyes of young people to the natural beauty on their doorstep and providing access to it could pay dividends to communities in the longer time scale in terms of mental well-being, reduction in anti-social behaviours and a sense of belonging.

Local scout and brownie packs utilizing these camping facilities would introduce the young people of Reading to the benefits of spending time in nature in a local environment. Children need nature. There is much concern about the generations of children that have grown up with an awareness of environmental problems but little connection to nature. Nature is a great respite from stress and too much time indoors. Camp environments can help children to develop positive values and strength of character which benefits the whole community. Initial research suggest significant demand from local youth groups for accessible local camping locations that can benefit supervised local youth groups. The beauty of the site is its scale and this allows

the space to be used sustainably and sensitively for a wide variety of events and activities in harmony with the biodiversity on site.



*"I am an Art and Photography teacher at Highdown and fully support the Arboretum vision. To be able to take students to a local area of natural beauty to photograph and draw would be a fantastic opportunity and would give equal benefit to disadvantaged students who miss out on visits to places further afield.*

*To have an art installation within walking distance of several local schools, would be amazing and inspire students"*

Local Teacher

# Funding

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The funding journey is entirely contingent upon whether the land is found suitable for development – agricultural land prices are an order of magnitude lower than those for land with planning permission. When planning is decided in the community's favour, KEG will work to build up a detailed business case for the Arboretum.

Converting a golf course in to an arboretum has precedent, and as recently as June 2021 Exeter county council working with Devon Wildlife Trust have announced that they will convert an old course in to a wild arboretum, with overwhelming support from local residents.

KEG can benefit from early movers in this space and work with other organisations and Arboretums to understand their funding journey.

- To date, KEG has existed as a simple community group with the single ambition of preventing development of housing on the golf course. Moving on to this alternative plan the group understands the need to adopt a constitution and to be incorporated as a 'not for profit' or CIO company. This status will allow KEG to make application for funding be it by way of grant, donation or public subscription.
- At Government level KEG are looking at the UK Community Ownership and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- KEG are also very aware of the strength of feeling amongst the people of Emmer Green and community donation and subscription will also play a significant part.

## Finance Sources

This is a strong period of grants in the environmental space, and due to the proximity of the land to Emmer Green and Caversham and the wider Reading conurbation would be in a good position to apply for many of these. There are several available funding options.

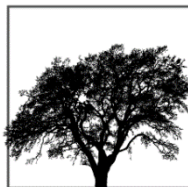
- HM Government – Levelling Up Fund
  - £4.8bn fund for capital investment projects of up to £20m.
  - Reading is category 2 of three in terms of priority.
  - Application would be under heading "Cultural Investment"
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
  - £1.5bn p.a. to replace EU similar funding source.

- Targeting regeneration.
- Grant Funding options
  - National Lottery Community Fund-Bringing People Together
  - Maximum Value £300,000
- Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund
  - Maximum Value £100,000

In addition to grants, we have already described numerous ongoing sources of funding

- Work studios
- The café and restaurant
- Corporate Sponsorship
- Art installations
- Theatrical events
- 'Friends of' membership
- Equipment rental
- On-site carbon offsetting
- Space rental

It is quite clear that a well-managed and maintained 100 acre park and Arboretum could in fact be a net contributor to the council and community; in the short term as it will be able to pull in funding from a variety of sources, and in the long term as Emmer Green and Caversham and the wider area of Reading will be marked out as a progressive and pleasant place to live and do business, benefitting many thousands of residents both now and in to the future.



## SARA'S GARDENS

I've always been passionate about nature and the great outdoors; My earliest childhood memories are of staring into cherry blossom and watching bumble bees and butterflies. I have always appreciated nature.

My earliest commissions included working as head gardener at The Deanery Garden in Sonning. This only served to feed my hunger for nature, and for developing truly inspirational gardens.

The gardens that I co-create with the owners are influenced by Gertrude Jekyll's designs, who came to national prominence for her outstanding designs in the early 20th century using structural designs to form rooms in which each had their own place, but with synergy moving through the garden often to complement the houses designed by Edward Lutyens.

I studied Landscape Architecture at Kingston University where I embraced sustainability in land management, whilst at the same time managing contracts on large gardens estates with my grounds maintenance staff. This enabled me to quickly introduce this knowledge into my designs.

[sarasgardens.uk](http://sarasgardens.uk)



## SARA KOPP NCH, BA LA, MPGCA

As well as delivering gardens of quality for high net wealth clients and those on more modest budgets. I am a qualified carer and have developed a number of horticultural therapy and community projects in recent years.

My career has taken me on a journey – through gardening and horticulture, to being headhunted to be Head of Countryside Management for Berkshire College of Agriculture, managing a care home, to running horticulture-based community projects. My passion for horticulture has never dwindled. Landscape architecture and land management working alongside nature.



# Educational Activities

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## 1. Terrestrial Field Study Experiences

- Seed dispersal methods of trees and plants in the arboretum.
- Native trees: including a comparison of coniferous and deciduous trees.
- Forest Ecosystem Study: including soil analysis, ratio of tree species, classification of wildlife and other organisms, viewing how organisms get the energy they need for survival. The carrying capacity of the forest for its various species will be determined along with the overall health of the arboretum based on findings of the field study.

## 2. Aquatic Field Study Experiences

- Aquatic Ecosystem Study: includes water quality testing, classification of organisms found, determining how organisms get the energy they need for survival. The carrying capacity of the water body for its various species will be determined along with the overall health of the arboretum based on findings of the field study.
- Pond Life Study: a simple study of the life above and below the pond surface.

## 3. Horticultural Work Placement (secondary school) Partnership

- This involves offering students practical experience in the care of plant collections and public garden landscapes.

## 4. Pollinators

- Human Reliance on Pollination: investigate why humans rely on pollination, biology of pollination, modes of pollination, animals involved in pollination and finally why we should protect pollinators.
- Bees and Pollination: looks at what bees pollinate, how they pollinate, their economic value, what threatens bees and the impact of their decline.

## 5. Nature Walk

- Arboretum Trail Walk: could include exploratory activities designed to investigate nature such as “I Spy” or “Scavenger Hunts”.

## 6. Plant Study

- Investigates the importance of plants in an ecosystem as well as classifying plants native to the forests/meadows of the arboretum.

## 7. Animal Study

- Animal Differences: investigate the differences between animal groups, their roles in an arboretum ecosystem with an emphasis on wildlife native to the arboretum.
- Animal Tracks and Signs
- Animal Senses: using your senses to explore the arboretum including games and activities to understand how different animals use their senses.

## 8. Trees

- Importance of Trees: exploring the importance of trees in an ecosystem, looking at tree life cycles including fruits and seeds.
- Importance of Trees to Humans: exploring their importance biologically, economically and spiritually.

## 9. Bird Studies

- Unique Nature of Birds: find where they live, what they eat, how they behave, the mechanics of flight, their role in the ecosystem.

## 10. Ecosystem Food Chain Games

## 11. Soil Studies

- Testing Soil Samples: gather soil samples from unique areas in the arboretum, compare characteristics and explain the differences.

## 12. Habitat Studies

- What is a Habitat?: why is habitat such a significant ecological concept, learn 4 basic needs of living things.

## 13. Mastering Maps

- Map-making Techniques: learn map-making techniques and the use of a compass, create a map of one section of the arboretum, using a compass and map complete a scavenger hunt.
14. **Orienteering**
- Map Reading: learn the fundamentals of compass use and map reading, use a special arboretum map to complete a walking orienteering course.
15. **Your Ecological Footprint**
- Learn about the past/present use of natural resources, complete activities to figure out your ecological footprint, and ways to cut your individual impact.
16. **Renewable Energy**
- Learn about kinds of renewable energy, how we benefit from each, practical applications of renewable energy and the benefits/pitfalls of renewable sources.
17. **Early Settlers of the Area**
- History of the area and who may have lived there
18. **Photography**
- Instruction on the photographing of nature.

