

Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2034

REFERENDUM VERSION



Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan

Front cover picture (Figure 1) shows Rooksmead Pond, which is one of the spaces designated as Local Green Space by this Plan.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Planning Framework for Brickhill

The Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan') sets out a vision and planning framework for Brickhill up to the end of 2034. The vision translates into aims and a set of policies to guide future development.

The Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Brickhill Parish Council, supported by a Steering Group of local residents and parish councillors.

1.2 Status of the Neighbourhood Plan

Once 'made', the neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the area, together with the adopted local plan. Planning applications are required by Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The neighbourhood plan meets the Basic Conditions set out in planning legislation and also human rights law. It does not deal with excluded matters such as waste, mineral extraction, or nationally significant infrastructure.

1.3 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

The Parish Council will use the neighbourhood plan as a basis for making representations on planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed every two years and revised as appropriate. If there are significant issues that arise and affect Brickhill Parish, then Brickhill Parish Council could bring forward the review of the plan.

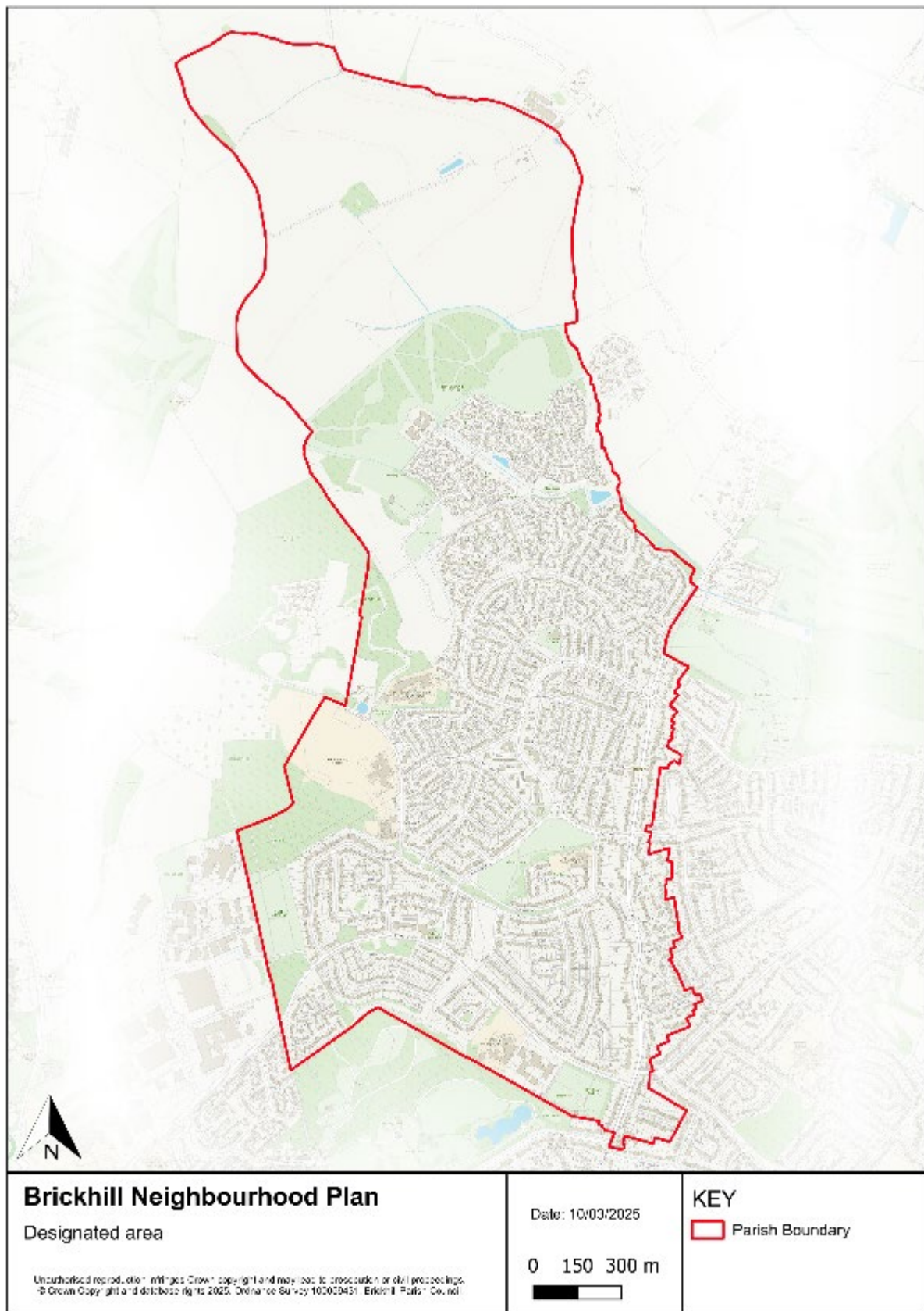


Figure 2: Brickhill Parish – Designated Neighbourhood Area

2. Aims of the Plan

2.1 A Vision for Brickhill

‘Brickhill will continue to be a place people want to live in, renowned for the quality of the environment and for the local facilities. Open spaces will be retained and improved for residents and nature. Sustainable forms of travel will be supported and enhanced. The housing needs of residents are considered if any developments occur.’

2.2 Planning Aims

- I. To enable sustainable and proportionate growth within Brickhill, to help create prosperity and meet the needs of the community.**
- II. To protect Brickhill’s environment and green spaces to support the health and well-being of current and future generations.**
- III. To ensure that development in Brickhill is well-designed, safe and sustainable.**
- IV. To support more sustainable live/work patterns and movement, including local food growing, walking, and cycling.**

2.3 Achieving the Aims

The aims underpin the policies and guidance in Chapters 5-9 of this Plan. The policies will be used in the development management process to inform decisions on planning applications.



Figure 3: Falcon Avenue - Local Green Space

3. Brickhill – Background

3.1 Development of Brickhill

Brickhill was formerly an area of farms and orchards, with just a scattering of houses along Kimbolton Road, and gatehouses for the Clapham Park convent. One of the farms was Brickhill Farm, from which Brickhill took its name.

Following World War II, momentum grew in Bedford to plan the growth of the town from a population of 58,000 to 75,000. Brickhill was chosen for large-scale housing development, construction starting in South Brickhill in 1959. North Brickhill was developed from 1966, finishing in the 1980s. As part of the development of Brickhill, schools, pubs, shops, churches, and other facilities were provided. A key feature of the planning of Brickhill was the creation of large areas of green open spaces.

The boundary of Brickhill to the north was also the town boundary. Beyond it lay agricultural fields. In 2002 permission was granted for a new development on the edge of Brickhill, in Ravensden parish. The Woodlands Park estate of 500 homes and the surrounding North Brickhill Country Park was built during the next 10 years. In 2015, following a Community Governance Review, the area became part of Brickhill parish, including farmland to the north and Highfield House, a Grade 2 listed property. A subsequent Community Governance Review resulted in the Ashmead Road football pitches, St Thomas More school and adjacent areas transferred from Clapham parish to Brickhill parish.

In May 2023 the government announced Route 1 as the planned route for East West Rail. It will pass through farmland in the northern part of Brickhill parish, close to Highfield House. As East West Rail is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), a formal decision on it will be made by Government outside the normal development plan/development management system. However, the Neighbourhood Plan will be a matter to be taken into account in a Local Impact Report which the planning authority has to prepare. The Secretary of State is obliged to have regard to any matters he considers are both important and relevant to the decision.

3.2 Strategic Context

Brickhill lies on the northern side of Bedford, with Bedford Midland railway station and Bedford town centre within 2km of the parish. The B660 from Bedford to Kimbolton runs north through the parish, while there is easy access to the A6 north to Rushden, the A421 east towards the A1 and the A428 west towards Milton Keynes and Northampton. Routes to the A6 south and towards the M1 south go via Bedford town. Bus services link Brickhill to the town centre and railway station, with other buses passing through Brickhill to Kimbolton in Cambridgeshire. Cycle and pedestrian routes are also used to connect to the town centre and other parts of Bedford.

3.3 Nature of the area

The older parts of Brickhill largely consist of housing estates, with many areas of green open spaces. The Avon Drive and Brickhill Drive shopping parades remain important focal points in the community. On the south-western edge of Brickhill lies the Victorian-era Bedford Park and also the Foster Hill Road cemetery; these connect to open spaces in Brickhill itself. On the north-western side of Brickhill are Brickhill allotments and the Park Wood Local Nature Reserve; these also connect to the areas of open space within Brickhill and to Clapham parish. The Woodlands Park estate, on the north of the previous urban area boundary, consists of 500 houses, and is surrounded by the North Brickhill Country Park and is adjacent to Clapham Park Wood, another nature reserve. To the north of the Country Park is arable land, up to the parish boundary.

Brickhill has evolved over the past sixty years. Some older parts have matured while the community as a whole has evolved as development has moved northwards. The early southern part from the Bedford Park boundary to Falcon Avenue and beyond could be distinguished as 'Old Brickhill' with its focus around the Brickhill Drive shopping precinct and the pond area opposite together with the earlier parts of the estate often referred to as the Birds. Other areas of Brickhill also have distinctive identities, such as around Waveney Green, leading on to North Brickhill and Woodlands Park.

3.4 Population

The 2021 census provides insights into the current population of Brickhill.

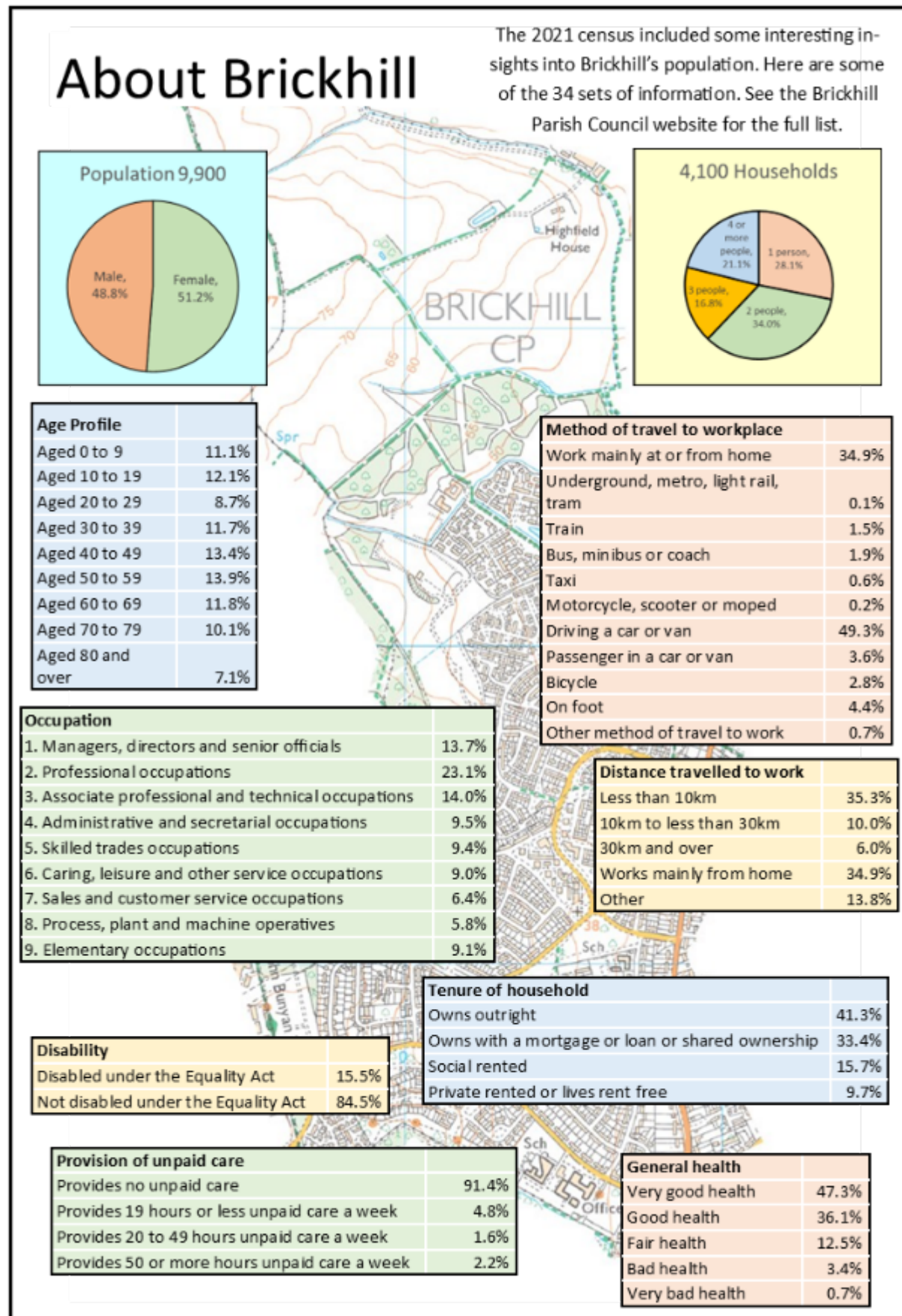


Figure 4: Brickhill 2021 census highlights

4. Community Engagement

4.1 Engagement Activities

Initially, residents were informed about the intention to create a Neighbourhood Plan in February 2020 through the 'Brickhill News', the parish council newsletter. Residents were invited to a public meeting to find out about Neighbourhood Plans and then asked for their views via an online survey. In 2023 residents were asked for their views about which sites could be identified as Local Green Space. Residents were informed via two editions of the parish council's 'Brickhill News' newsletter and were asked to take part in a questionnaire. In addition, a drop-in session was held in September 2023.



Figure 5: Article in 'Brickhill News', August 2023

4.2 Issues Identified

In the online survey, residents said that they liked:

- the green open spaces,
- the access to the countryside,
- the community feel,
- having access to the town,
- the local shops in Brickhill Drive and Avon Drive,
- local schools and parks.

Concerns were raised about:

- traffic volumes and speed,
- anti-social behaviour and crime,
- air and noise pollution,
- overdevelopment,
- the need to preserve Brickhill's green open spaces.

The comments received have informed the policies of this plan, which are grouped under the following headings:

- Sustainable Growth
- Local Environment
- Sustainable Design
- Transport and Paths



Figure 6: Robin Hill - Local Green Space

5. Sustainable Development

Purpose

To ensure that any development in Brickhill is sustainable and proportionate, to help create prosperity and meet the needs of the community.

Rationale and Evidence

The National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 (NPPF) provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. Chapter 5 of the NPPF deals with the supply of homes, mix and affordability. Chapter 6 of the NPPF deals with building a strong, competitive economy and the need to create conditions for businesses to invest, expand and adapt. Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities.

The adopted Local Plan for Bedford Borough is 'Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030' (Bedford Borough Council, 2020). The new Local Plan 2040 is as of March 2025 under examination. Local Plan 2030 identified no sites for housing development in Brickhill Parish. It is therefore unlikely that any large developments will take place within Brickhill while the Local Plan 2030 is in effect. There may be small infill developments such as has taken place in former BPHA garage blocks off Mallard Hill and Brickhill Drive, or the replacement of dwellings such as has happened in Kimbolton Road.

Policies 59S and 60 in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 set out criteria for considering housing mix in large scale and specialist developments. Policies 71, 81 and 83 in the local plan identify how employment and retail development will be considered at a local level. Policy 94 covers the provision of high-speed broadband to both employment and residential development.

The Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment produced for the Local Plan 2030 (Opinion Research Services, August 2018) and the Bedford Borough Local Housing Needs Assessments produced for the Local Plan 2040 (Opinion Research Services, May 2021) identified the need for housing for older people. The 2011 census showed that Brickhill ward had a higher proportion of older people than other wards of Bedford Borough (Older Persons' Accommodation Strategy 2018-2023, Bedford Borough Council). 29% of the population of Brickhill parish was 60 years old or older in the 2021 census.

Providing suitable accommodation for older people would provide enable older people to downsize and free-up larger properties which are more suitable for families, therefore making an efficient use of current housing stock.

A mix of 1 and particularly 2 bed homes would help cater for the needs of the older population, in the form of bungalows, built to mobility homes standards, possibly

flatted maisonettes and other mainstream housing. As well as various house types, a good housing mix should also incorporate various housing tenure options such as outright purchased properties, shared ownership, and other available options. However, there has been a noticeable loss of bungalows in Brickhill, due to them being converted into two storey family homes.

For a community to thrive it needs a mix of services and amenities which residents can use and benefit from. Not everyone has a car and having local shops enables a more sustainable lifestyle. Other facilities in the community, such as schools, sheltered accommodation, churches, community centres and the various groups and organisations that use them all add to the vitality of Brickhill.

Brickhill used to have a GP surgery, which community engagement suggests is greatly missed. There is no dental practice in Brickhill. Providing these services locally would be welcomed by many residents.

Brickhill does not have a large employment base, although the COVID-19 pandemic has led to more people working from home. Many home workers rely on having reliable high-speed internet connections. The existing local employment and retail centres should be protected as these provide jobs and services which are accessible at a very local level.



Figure 7: Brickhill Community Centre

BR-SG1: Local Employment

- 1. Development to create office and other work-space in Use Class E(g) will be supported on brownfield sites and expansion or redevelopment of existing commercial premises, subject to there being no significant adverse impacts on the amenities of local residents.**
- 2. Employment sites and premises should remain in employment use, unless it can be demonstrated that such use is no longer viable.**

Interpretation:

The policy supports employment in Use Class E. It does not relate to B2, B8 or other employment Use Classes. The local planning authority may choose to impose planning conditions on planning permissions where a change of use to Use Class E(g) is accepted, but change of use other uses in Class E, such as retail, could be harmful and contrary to other national and local policies.

Demonstrating that an employment use is no longer viable would normally involve making meaningful efforts to market the facility for sale or rental, at a realistic price, for a period of at least 12 months.

BR-SG2: Local Facilities

- 1. New community facilities will be supported in the following locations, subject to there being no significant adverse impacts on the amenities of local residents:**
 - a. in the Brickhill Drive neighbourhood centre;**
 - b. in the Avon Drive neighbourhood centre;**
 - c. the expansion or diversification of existing community facilities.**
- 2. Ground floor units used for retail or other community uses should remain in uses open to the public where possible and shopfronts should be retained.**

Interpretation:

The policy supports seeks to protect and support shops and other community facilities in and around the neighbourhood centres. This includes Use Class E, F1 and F2 facilities. The policy would support new health facilities.

Policy 99 of the Local Plan 2030 deals with the loss of existing community facilities.

The maps below illustrate the areas of the two neighbourhood centres.

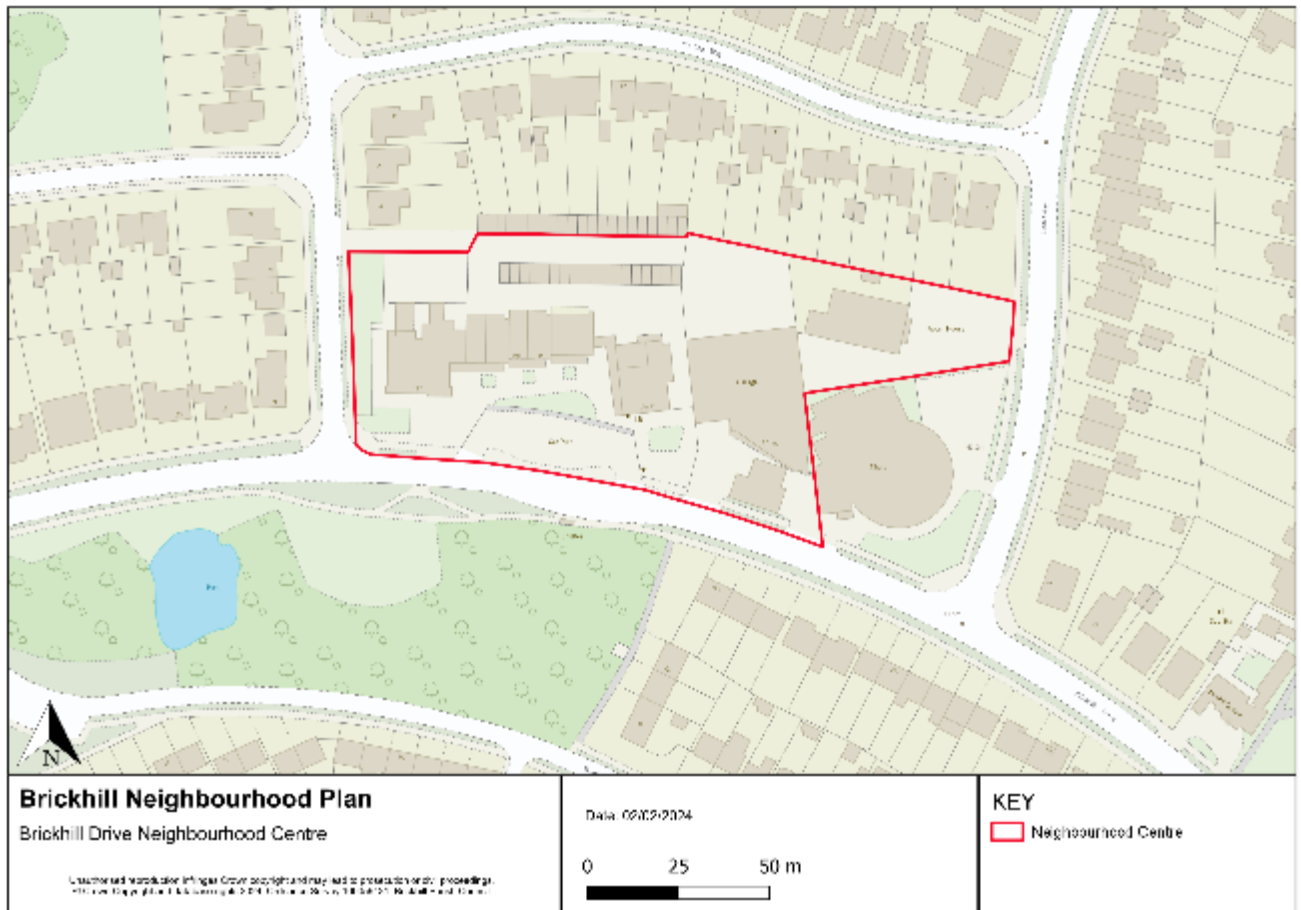


Figure 8: Brickhill Drive shops area



Figure 9: Brickhill Drive shops

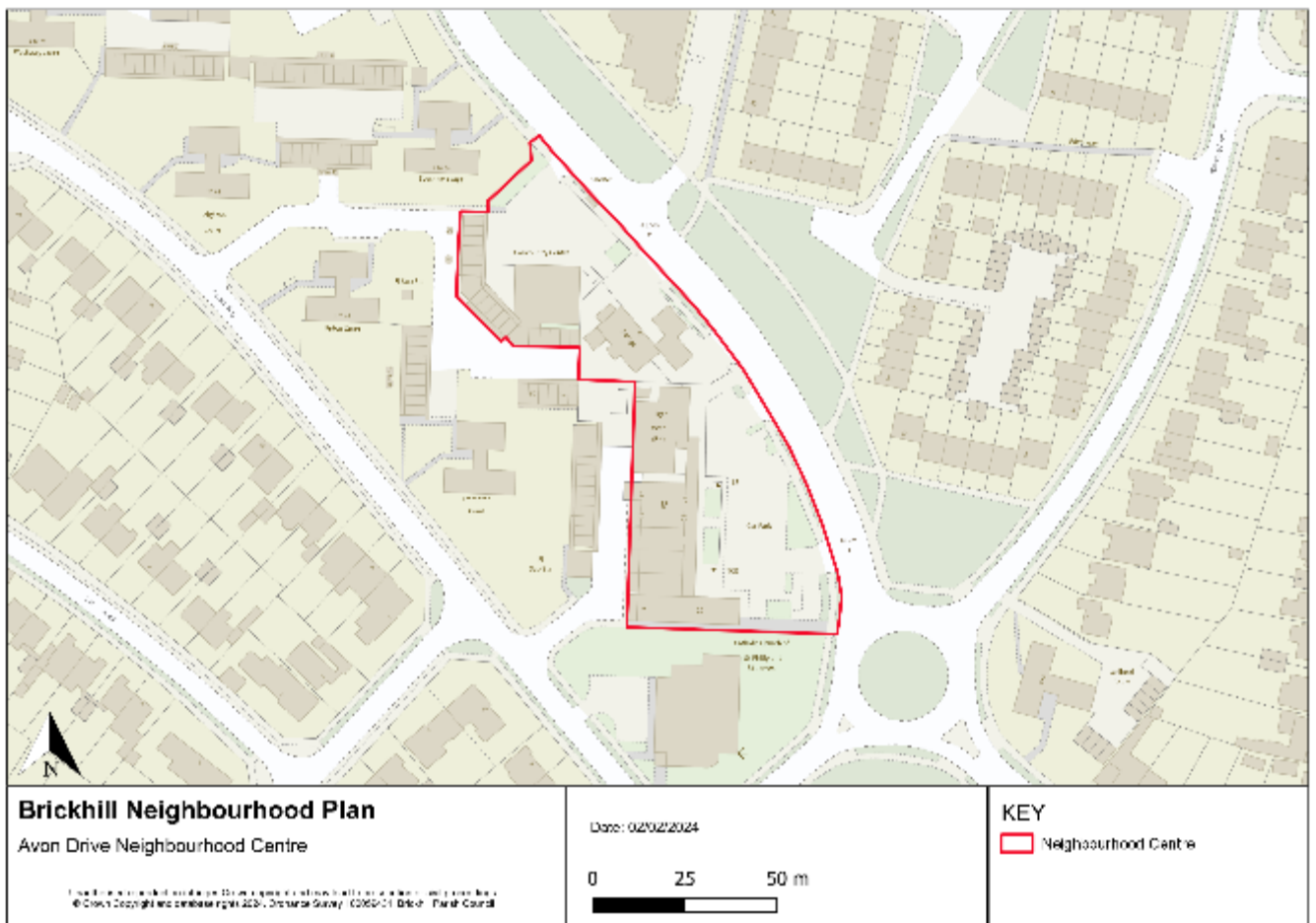


Figure 10: Avon Drive shops area



Figure 11: Avon Drive shops

BR-SG3: Residential Development

- 1. Residential development will be supported in the following locations:**
 - a. infill development in gaps within existing built frontages;**
 - b. redevelopment of existing residential properties.**
 - c. redevelopment of garage courts, where they are no longer required.**
- 2. Residential development should meet the needs of the parish, based on the latest evidence of housing need, including the need for smaller housing (1-2 bedrooms) housing suitable for the elderly, and multi-generational living.**
- 3. Development should retain and not lead to the loss of single storey housing and other housing suitable for the elderly.**
- 4. Residential development should include screened storage space for refuse bins and recycling bins.**

Interpretation

The policy supports smaller housing and housing suitable for the elderly.

Housing needs evidence could include specific evidence commissioned or prepared by the Parish Council or the local planning authority, for example to support a new Local Plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan may not apply national housing standards on room sizes, but attention is drawn to *Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard 2015*.

Bin storage areas are required to be screened from view. Locating the bin store in a discreet location away from road frontages would be helpful in complying with the policy.

The Neighbourhood Area has been identified as being of 'serious water stress' and developers are strongly advised to have discussions with Anglian Water Services at an early stage are suggested.

6. Local Environment

Purpose

To protect Brickhill's environment and green spaces to support the health and well-being of current and future generations.

Rationale and Evidence

Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. This includes protecting or enhancing protected landscapes, the character of the countryside and biodiversity.

Policies 28S, 29 and 30 of the Local Plan 2030 requires that all new development should be of a high design quality, contribute to the area's character and identity and respect the context within which it will sit. It provides for the protection, and where appropriate enhancement, of heritage assets and their settings, so that development integrates with the historic environment and character.

Local Plan policy 35S seeks to protect and enhance existing green infrastructure for the future benefit of the environment, people, and the economy. Policy 41S sets out how the historic environment and heritage assets will be considered and protected. Policies 42S and 43 identify how biodiversity in Bedford borough will be protected and enhanced. Policy 45 gives protection to those Local Green Spaces identified in the Bedford Local Plan.

Brickhill is fortunate to have many open green spaces. It is a noticeable feature of the area and many people choose to live in Brickhill because of its pleasant, open, aspects. An aim of this Neighbourhood Plan is to increase the protection of these public open spaces.

The North Brickhill Country Park has a heavy foot fall, with sport, dog walkers, walkers and families choosing to picnic on this area. The area is home to many deer, badgers, foxes and birdlife.

Protecting green spaces ensures that natural habitats remain intact, allowing biodiversity to thrive and contributing to the overall health of our environment. In addition, they offer invaluable recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. They are peaceful retreats where individuals can engage in physical activity. Access to green spaces has been linked to numerous physical and mental health benefits, including stress reduction, improved mood, and enhanced well-being. Green spaces, trees and vegetation help in mitigating the impacts of climate change, acting as natural carbon sinks. Green spaces and infrastructure play a vital role in enhancing the aesthetic appeal of our neighbourhoods and fostering a sense of pride and

identity within our community. These areas serve as green lungs within urban environments, contributing to the overall quality of life for residents.

Three important open green spaces were designated as Local Green Spaces (LGS) in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030: Waveney Green, North Brickhill County Park and Clapham Park Wood. The Clapham Park Wood site lies mostly in the parish of Clapham but is also partly in Brickhill Parish; it consists of historic woodland in Clapham parish and a more recent extension in Brickhill parish. In this Neighbourhood Plan an additional seven areas are designated as LGS. Reasons for the designation of the additional areas are included in Evidence Report for Local Green Spaces Version 1 (Brickhill Parish Council, March 2024), a separate document, along with the analyses of these spaces against the criteria (Paragraphs 106 and 107 of the NPPF December 2024).

National policy makes clear that LGS have similar protection to Green Belts. However, it should be noted that the purpose of LGS is to recognise and protect special community value, so is different to the five purposes for Green Belts.

St Philip and St James Church was designed by Burles Newton and Partner and opened in 1967. It has a Liturgical layout (square plan), bare brick internal walls (truth to materials), timber undulating ceiling and clerestory windows, and timber benches (Taking Stock, n.d.). There are two other churches: St Mark's (Church of England) whose first church/community building opened in 1977, and All Nations Church (formerly Brickhill Baptist Church) which moved to its Brickhill Drive site in 1965 from the town centre.

Clapham Park is a large Grade 2 house in Clapham parish. Built in 1872 for James Howard, the Liberal M.P. for Bedford. In addition to substantial grounds there were three lodges, located at entrances to the estate. One is in Clapham parish and is a Grade 2 listed building. The other two are in Brickhill at 228 Kimbolton Road and 2 Hawk Drive. All three were designed by the John Usher of Bedford (British Listed Buildings, n.d.; Bedfordshire Archives, n.d.). One of the lanes giving access to Clapham Park followed the line of the current path through the middle of what is now Falcon Avenue and Hawk Drive. Known locally as 'bumpy lane' it continues to Clapham along Carriage Drive.

In 2006-7, prior to the creation of the North Brickhill Country Park and the Woodlands Park estate, archaeological excavations found 'an area of dispersed prehistoric activity'. The decision was made to preserve the deposits in site, excluding the area from development and placing a cap of material over them. This area in question is referred to as 'Archaeological Zone 3' and is shown on Figure 14. See document 'Land at North Brickhill Bedford Bedfordshire, Scheme for Archaeological Resource Management' (Albion Archaeology, n.d.) for more information.



Figure 12: Former Clapham Park lodge, 228 Kimbolton Road, photographed in 1889

Brickhill Parish Council has 140 allotments at Foster's Brow. These are popular and there is a waiting list of residents awaiting vacant plots. Adjacent to the allotments is the community orchard that is part of the Park Wood Local Nature Reserve. The orchard holds many rare varieties that were grown by the Laxton family in their Bedford orchards.



Figure 13: Brickhill allotments

The Grade 2 agricultural fields in the northern part of the parish are arable, usually cereal or oil-seed rape. The Highfield Farm pig unit is immediately across the parish boundary, with some functions related to the unit taking place within Brickhill parish.

Policy 24 of the Local Plan 2030 led to permission for the construction of 165 dwellings off Graze Hill, Ravensden parish, plus an extension to the North Brickhill Country Park. There will be footpath and cycle links to the existing country park and to the Woodlands Park estate in Brickhill.

There are footpaths and bridleways linking Brickhill to the adjacent countryside. Retaining access to the countryside is important for the well-being of residents. Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 91 addresses access to the countryside.

BR-LE1: Green Environment

- 1. Development should seek to have no significant harmful impact on the area's nature, ecology, trees and should achieve biodiversity net gain.**
- 2. Development should avoid habitat damage where possible, or:**
 - a. minimise habitat damage; and**
 - b. take opportunities to restore damaged or lost habitat; or**
 - c. as a last resort, compensate for habitat damage.**
- 3. Development should avoid harm and should take opportunities to enhance the green and open character, amenity, accessibility and recreational value of:**
 - a. North Brickhill Country Park**
 - b. Waveney Green**
 - c. Park Wood local nature reserve**
 - d. Brickhill Allotments**
 - e. Clapham Park wood**
 - f. other local parks.**
- 4. Development should avoid significant harm to or loss of:**
 - a. local community food growing areas, including the community orchard and allotments**
 - b. the best and most versatile agricultural land as defined in Defra's Agricultural Land Classification unless it can be proven that an individual site does not fall within Grades 1 or 2.**
- 5. A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and a Local Habitat Map is to be identified in Bedfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Opportunities to support the priorities set out in the Strategy should be taken wherever possible.**

Interpretation

Clause 3 of the policy could include development within the sites related to their use and conservation or development of adjacent or nearby sites.

Incorporating existing landscape features, trees, landform and green infrastructure into redevelopment is an important part of avoiding habitat damage and maintaining biodiversity.

Clause 3 could apply to development adjacent to or near to the spaces in question (which could affect their outlook, amenity and accessibility, for example). It could

also apply to development within the space, for example structures associated with the management or use of the Country Park.

Design features to support wildlife could include bat and bird boxes, wildlife connectivity via grass verges, footpath edges and gaps in fences, and use of wildflowers in landscaping.

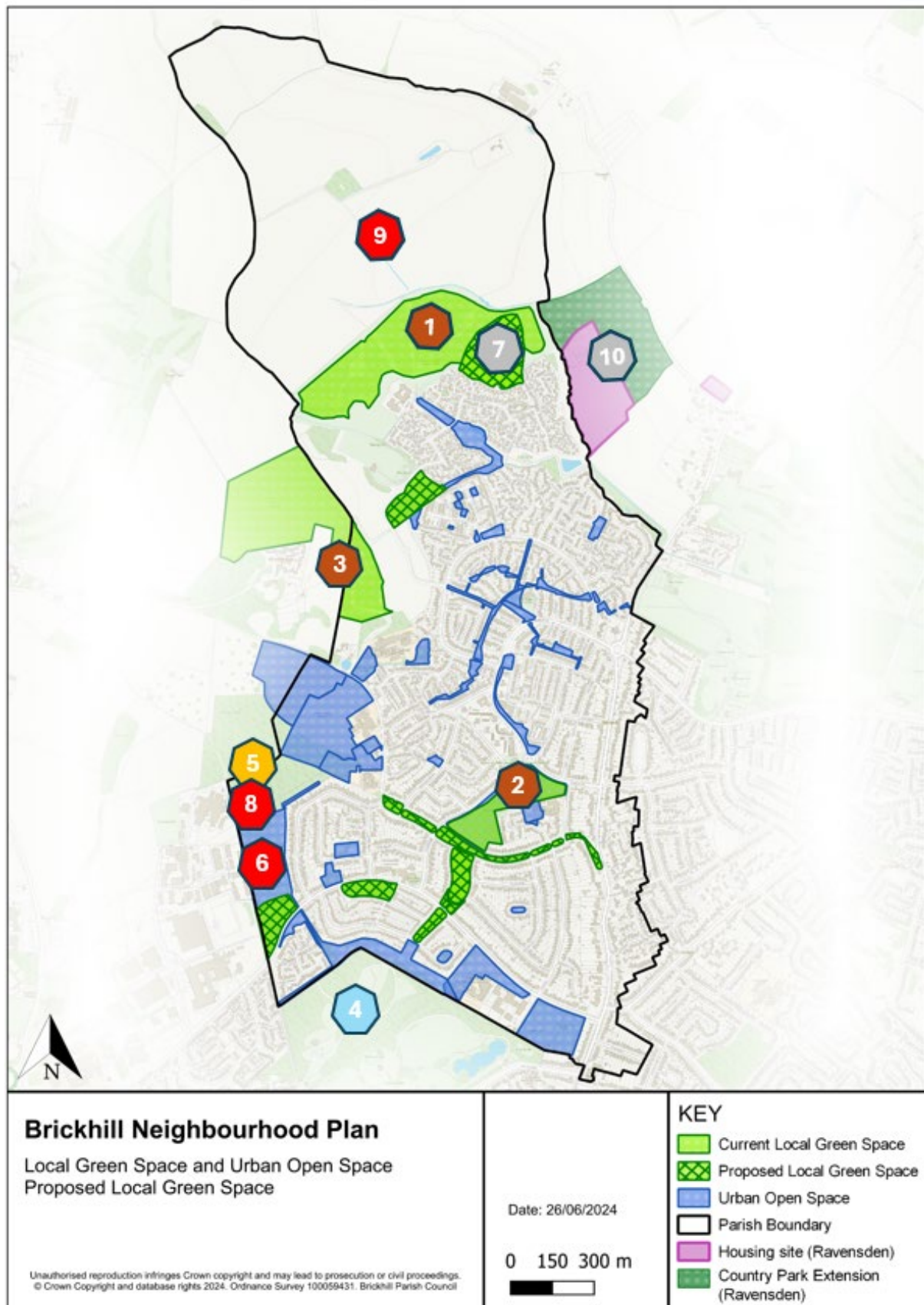


Figure 14: Key sites in and around Brickhill parish

Key	
	North Brickhill Country Park – existing Local Green Space
	Waveney Green – existing Local Green Space
	Clapham Park Wood, County Wildlife Site – existing Local Green Space
	Foster Hill Road cemetery, County Wildlife Site
	Park Wood Local Nature Reserve
	Brickhill allotments
	Archaeology site
	Community orchard
	Agricultural farmland
	Graze Hill development, Ravensden parish
	Urban Open Space
	Proposed additional Local Green Space

BR-LE2: Local Green Space

1. The following spaces are designated as Local Green Space:

- LGS1 – Falcon Avenue**
- LGS2 – Brickhill Drive (Pond Site)**
- LGS3 – Brickhill Drive/Foster’s Brow**
- LGS4 – Meadow off Crispin Drive**
- LGS5 – Robin Hill**
- LGS6 – Merlin Gardens**
- LGS7 – Carron Road kick-about space**

2. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.

Interpretation

The plans below show each of the seven sites designated as Local Green Space.



Figure 15: LGS1 - Falcon Avenue

Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan



Figure 16: LCS2 - Brickhill Drive (pond site)

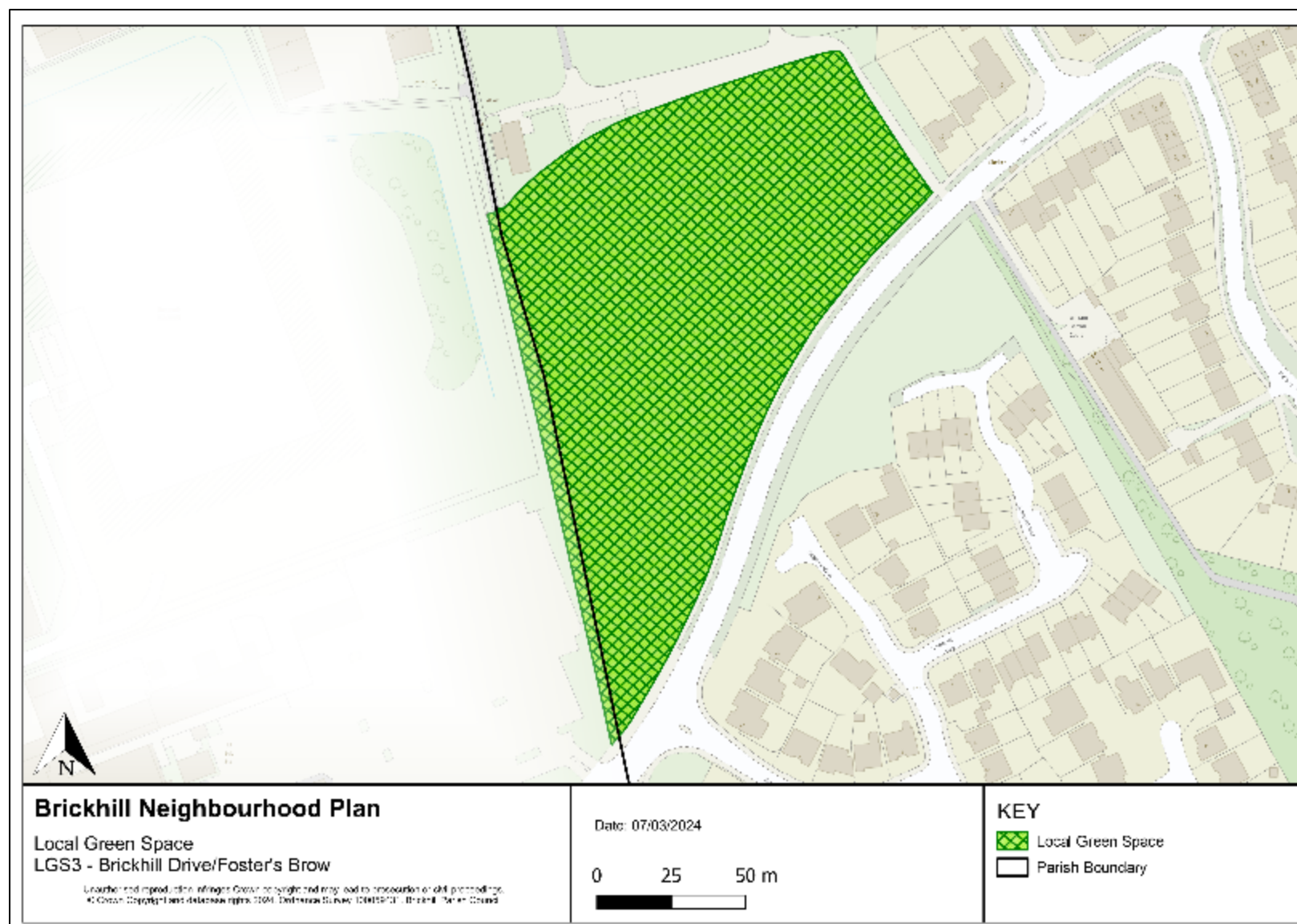


Figure 17: LGS3 - Brickhill Drive/Foster's Brow

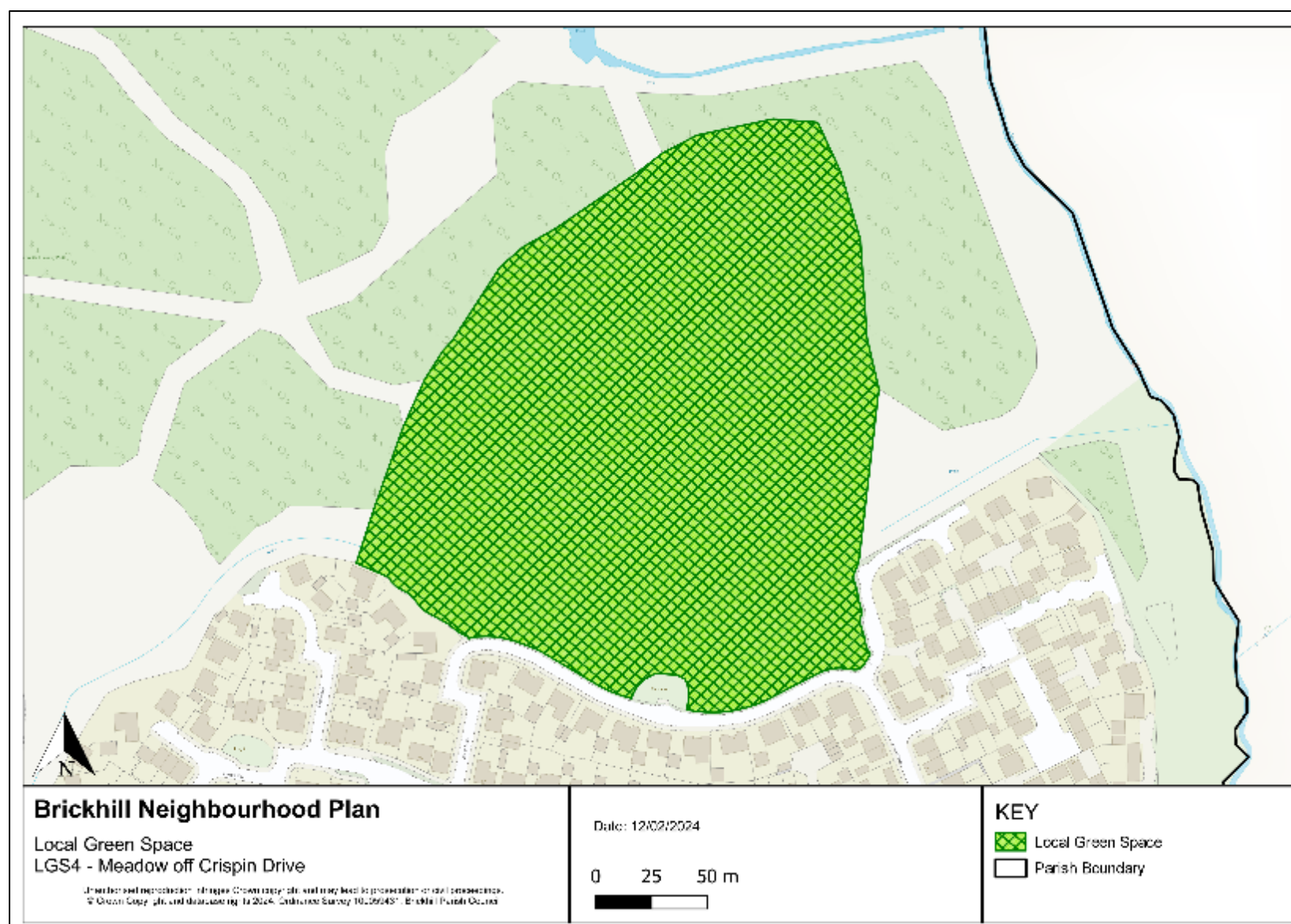


Figure 18 – LGS4 - Meadow off Crispin Drive

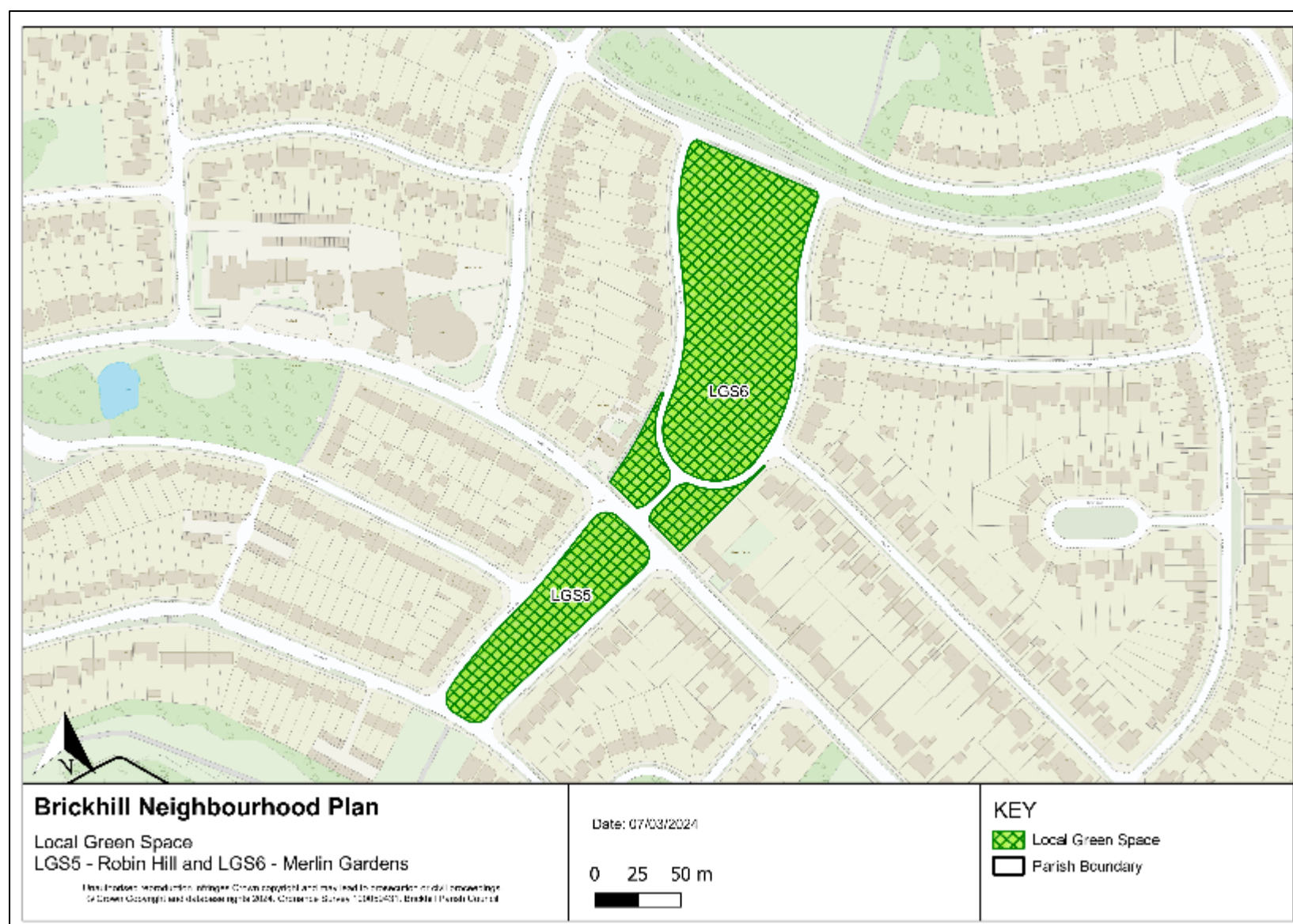


Figure 19 – LGS5 Robin Hill and LGS6 Merlin Gardens

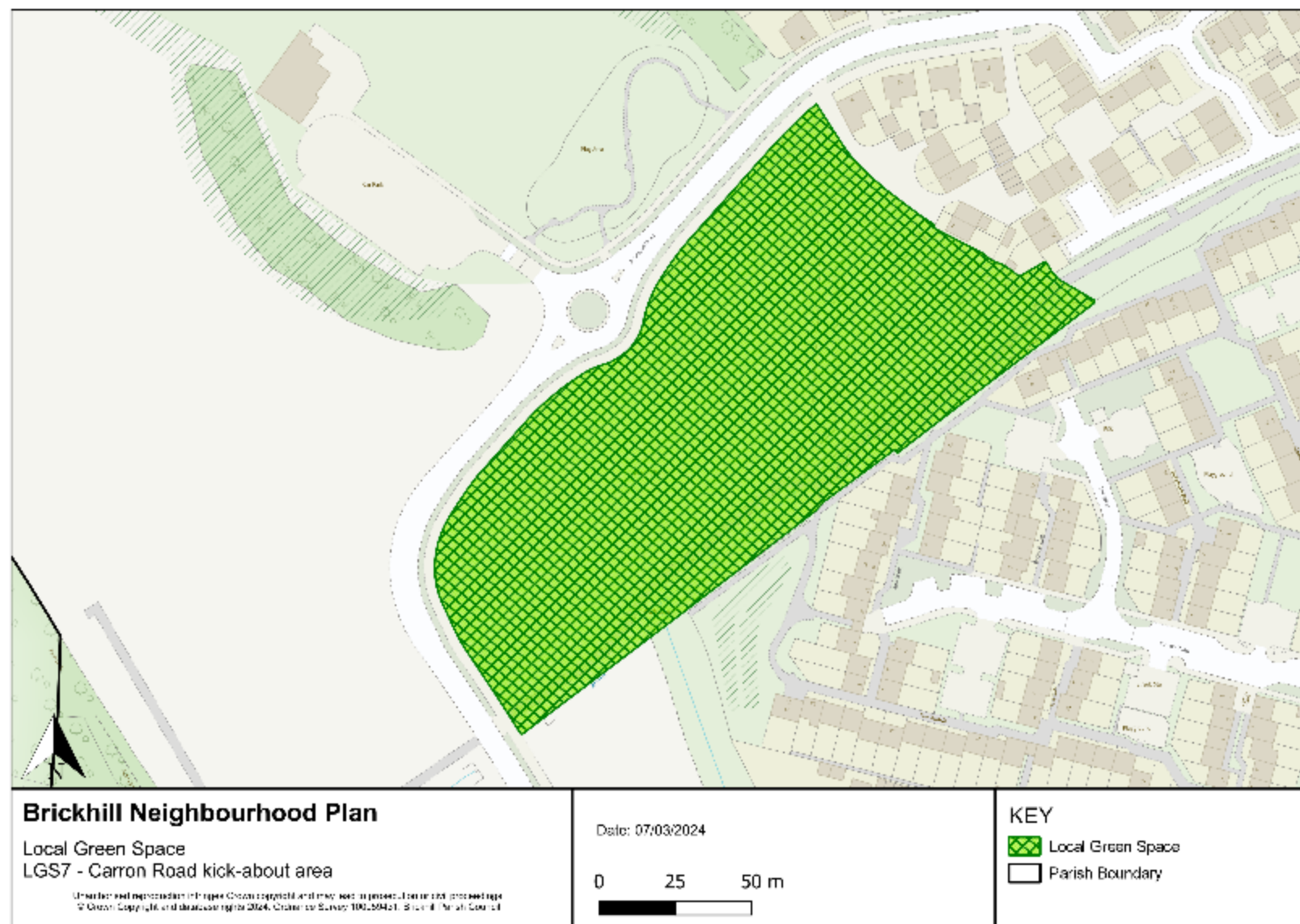


Figure 20 – LGS7 - Carron Road kick-about space

BR-LE3: Local Heritage

- 1. Development must not harm the route of the historic lane in Falcon Avenue, leading via Hawk Drive to Clapham Park House, including the avoidance of adverse impacts on trees and landscape features.**
- 2. Development should have no adverse impact on, and should take opportunities to enhance, the significance and settings of the following non-designated heritage assets:**
 - a. The two Clapham Park lodges in Brickhill at 228 Kimbolton Road and 2 Hawk Drive**
 - b. St Philip and St James Church.**
- 3. Development should take account of potential impacts on the archaeological remains within the North Brickhill Country Park.**

Interpretation

The policy identifies non-designated heritage assets, including a post-war church.

Highfield House, the only listed building in Brickhill Parish, is not addressed in the policy, but is already protected by national legislation, policy and guidance and Local Plan policy.

Applications for development impacting heritage assets should be accompanied by a professional heritage assessment.

The Clapham Park lodges and St Philip and St James Church are shown on Figure 21.

In complying with Clause 3, where archaeological remains may be affected by proposed development, their presence or absence should be assessed in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan policy 41S, and where found to be present, they should be conserved or investigated in a manner appropriate to their significance.

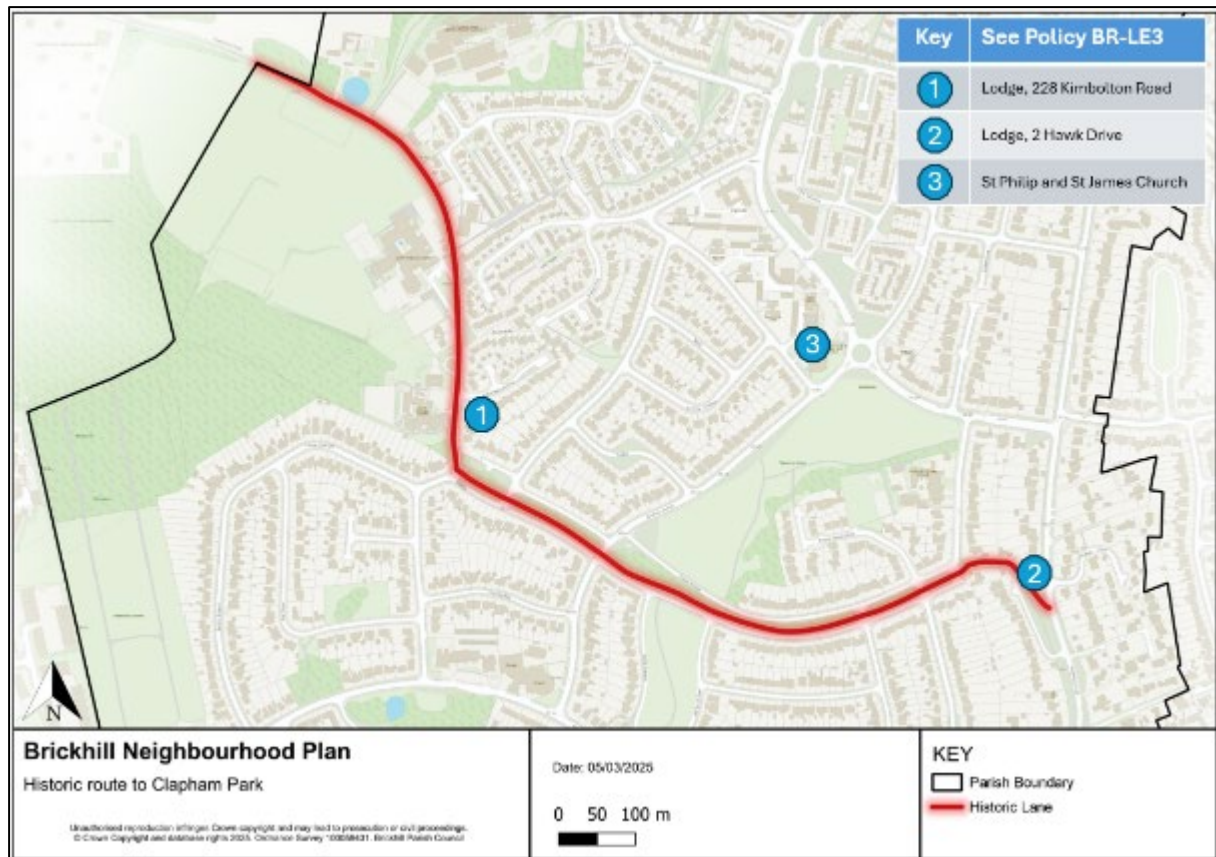


Figure 21: Historic lane leading to Clapham Park



Figure 22: St Philip and St James Church

7. Sustainable Design

Purpose

To ensure that development in Brickhill is well-designed, safe and sustainable.

Rationale and Evidence

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 identifies good design as a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 131 highlights the importance of design as a key aspect of sustainable development. This is reinforced by the National Design Guide 2021.

The Department for Transport's Manual for Streets 1 and Manual for Streets 2 provide best practice guidance for street design within developments.

Policies 28S, 29 and 30 of the Local Plan 2030 requires that all new development should be of a high design quality, contribute to the area's character and identity and respect the context within which it will sit. Policy 29 also sets out requirements for the promotion of accessibility, public spaces, measures to effect community safety and the integration of functional needs including refuse and recycling storage and collection, and car and cycle parking. Policies 38 and 39 require developments to provide suitable landscaping and to protect existing trees.

Good design creates distinctive, functional and sustainable places for residents to live, work and enjoy. All development proposals will be expected to achieve a high standard of design and should be underpinned by a thorough analysis of the site and its surrounding area. New developments should be well integrated and positively related to their surroundings.

The Climate Change Act (2008) establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels. All new developments should optimise the potential for sustainable design. They should be located and designed to maximise the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes and should ensure appropriate consideration is given to orientation, landscaping, SUDS, energy, water use, and potential for pollution. Policy 51S of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 identifies a strategic approach for addressing climate change. Policies 52, 53 and 54 address issues covering water demand, development layout and energy efficiency.

A well-established standard for considering the design and sustainability of housing is 'Building for a Healthy Life' (Urban Design Group, 2020). This has informed the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan.

A coordinated approach should be taken to the use of materials and the design and siting of street furniture, boundary treatments, lighting, signage and public art, all of which contribute towards place making. Trees and other planting appropriate to the scale of development and space available should be incorporated in order to soften the streetscape and reduce the visual impact of car parking. It is important that the choice of landscaping and materials used within the public realm are durable and functional in order to accommodate both every day and infrequent uses, such as the movement of vehicles and people. Consideration must also be given to the cost, practicalities, and responsibilities for the maintenance of landscaping and materials in the long term.

The design of new developments is expected to address community safety concerns, for example by providing clear boundaries between public and private space and ensuring that the fronts of buildings and their principal entrances face onto the street or public space to increase pedestrian activity. Buildings and layouts should also be designed to maximise opportunities for natural surveillance and provide good quality lighting and sensible landscaping.

It is important that all new development is designed to be inclusive with the needs of all users considered from the outset. Special consideration should be given to the needs of people with disabilities.

See Bedford Borough Local Transport Plan 2021 (LTP3) and Local Plan 2030 section 9.2.2 Development Layout & Accessibility, policy 53 - Development layout and accessibility.

BR-SD1: Place and Context

- 1. Development should complement the local context in terms of the predominant scale, height, massing, set-back from the road, spacing of buildings and any pattern of front and rear gardens.**
- 2. Development should create safe environments, including by providing active frontages with doors and windows to overlook roads and spaces, to provide natural surveillance.**
- 3. Landscape design should be an integral part of design and layout of development, to create attractive and functional public spaces and garden spaces, whilst also meeting the requirements of the Green Environment Policy (BR-LE1).**
- 4. The design and layout of development should create an attractive and convenient environment for pedestrians and cyclists, linking to any surrounding paths.**
- 5. Development adjacent to or affecting public and green spaces should not harm their character, amenity, accessibility or community value.**

Interpretation

Compliance with the policy would require analysis of the local context, so that development can respond positively to key townscape and landscape characteristics. Development that fails to reflect key characteristics is unlikely to meet the requirements of the policy. Use of architects and other design professionals is encouraged.

Interpretation of 'predominant' in Clause 1 relates to the general townscape qualities in the area. For example, the presence of a taller landmark would not affect the 'predominant' height and scale of buildings.

Tokenistic planting of left-over bits of land would not create high quality landscape design, which should be an integral part of the design and layout of the scheme.

The National Design Guide 2021 and 'Building for a Healthy Life' standard may be useful in securing compliance with this and the next policy.

Bedfordshire Police have two Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCOs) and these could be a useful early contact for developers, especially around 'Secured by Design'.

BR-SD2: Green Design

- 1. Development should balance its carbon and other environmental impacts by incorporating positive green features in its design and landscaping, taking account of the Green Guidance Note in this Plan.**
- 2. Hard surfaces should be permeable to allow surface water to drain away.**
- 3. Materials should be of high quality and be durable, to complement the local context, and support will be given to the use of local materials, low-embodied-energy materials, or recycled materials.**
- 4. Innovative or creative green design solutions will be supported.**

Interpretation

Hard surfaces could include domestic drives and paths, parking and servicing areas and urban spaces.

The policy requires careful selection of materials, with reference to the local context and environmental considerations. The predominant local house building style is brick with plain clay tiles.

8. Transport and Movement

Purpose

To support more sustainable live/work patterns and movement, including walking and cycling.

Rationale and Evidence

The NPPF December 2024 sets an expectation that the design of developments should prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements, followed by access to high quality public transport (so far as possible) and to reflect the importance of creating well-designed places.

Policy 31 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 seeks to reduce the impact on access to the public highway and encourage the provision for access by public transport, cyclists and pedestrians. Policy 87 of the Local Plan requires new developments to contribute to the improvement of the public transport network from an early stage of the occupation of any development. Policies 88 and 89 require planning applications to demonstrate that the social and environmental impact of traffic has been considered and require the provision of electric charging points throughout Bedford Borough.

There is an existing network of cycle routes which link Brickhill to the town centre and other parts of the urban area. To encourage cycling, any developments should aim to make it easier and safer for residents to cycle by connecting to or improving existing routes.

There are also many footpaths in Brickhill and developments should be designed in the first instance to encourage residents to use the footpath network, for ease of access to shops, schools, work or leisure.

BR-TM1: Sustainable Transport

- 1. Development that is likely to generate additional journeys should be supported by balanced transport provision, including sustainable forms of transport and walking, proportionate to the scale and nature of the development.**
- 2. Parking should be designed as an integral part of design, layout and landscaping, so as not to dominate public streets and public spaces.**
- 3. Development should take opportunities to enhance pedestrian connectivity, including by providing safe, attractive and convenient links to surrounding public transport routes.**
- 4. Electric Charging points should be provided in convenient locations for parking areas in employment sites.**
- 5. Secure, covered storage for cycles and other personal vehicles should be provided for all development that creates new employment floorspace and all new dwellings.**

Interpretation

The policy should be applied in proportion to the scale and complexity of development.

Schemes that focus only on car provision are unlikely to meet the requirements of the policy.

The local planning authority has a Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document.

BR-TM2: Rights of Way

- 1. Development should have no significant adverse impacts on footways, cycleways and bridleways including on their route, accessibility, amenity, safety and setting.**
- 2. Development should take opportunities to enhance or link to existing footpaths and cycleways.**

Interpretation

Development that encloses footpaths and prevented natural surveillance would be unlikely to meet the requirements of the policy.

9. Green Guidance Note

9.1 Purpose of this Guidance Note

This is a guidance note for developers on green design. It is an informal note, so includes non-planning matters. However, use of the guidance may help in achieving compliance with the policies of the neighbourhood plan, in particular those relating to design and landscape.

9.2 Planning Principles

Mixed-use neighbourhoods (which include residential properties, employment and community facilities in easy walking distance) can help to reduce the need for journeys. Such neighbourhood are sometimes referred to as '15 minute neighbourhoods'.

Layouts should prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement, convenience and safety. This includes convenient links to public transport.

Retention and reuse of buildings preserves the energy embodied in their materials and construction and avoids landfill.

Flexible work practices, including home working, can help to create more sustainable live/work patterns. Many meetings can be held through digital media.

Design of development should take account of microclimate, including sun, shading and wind.

Development should be designed to minimise pollution, including air, water and noise pollution.

9.3 Green Building Design

Carbon neutral development is a key goal. Ways of building green can include:

- use of efficient heating and cooling systems, or design to reduce dependency on heating and cooling systems
- superior insulation properties and airtightness
- natural ventilation and air flow (for warmer months) to help avoid over-heating
- use of local, low-embodied energy, recycled and recyclable materials
- living (green) walls or roofs
- orientation to maximise passive solar gain
- rainwater capture, storage, and reuse (grey water)

- use of LED or other low wattage lighting
- space for natural drying clothes
- bins for recycling
- flexible spaces and layouts to accommodate changing demands.

9.4 Biodiversity

Development should achieve a biodiversity net gain.

In terms of impacts on habitats, the following hierarchy should be used:

- Avoid habitat damage
- Minimise habitat damage
- Restore damaged or lost habitat
- Compensate for habitat loss or damage (as a last resort).

Existing landscape features, landform and green infrastructure should be retained and be incorporated into redevelopment and enhanced as far as possible.

Design features to support wildlife include:

- Bat boxes and bird boxes (owl, raptors, house sparrow, house martin, swift, woodpecker)
- Hedgehog gaps in fences
- Badger routes
- Wildlife connectivity via grass verges and footpath edges
- Meadow edge grasses and wildflowers, bee friendly desirable.

9.5 Public Realm and Green Landscape Design

The public realm and green infrastructure should be designed to support movement, recreation, social interaction, play and exercise.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should be incorporated into the landscape design. This includes green spaces for residential developments.

Hard surfacing should be kept to a minimum area and be water permeable.

Use of traditional hedges for boundary treatments creates a greener environment and enhances the historic and rural character of the area.

Native species should be used in planting.

9.6 Green Energy

Local green energy schemes can include small wind turbines, ground heat pumps, photovoltaics, biomass and other technologies. There has to be awareness of the impact of such schemes on historic and rural character, so the location and design of such facilities needs careful consideration.

10. Acknowledgements and contact details

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For any queries, please contact:

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Email: clerk@brickhillparishcouncil.gov.uk
<https://brickhillparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Appendix A: Supporting Documents

These are the documents referred to in the Neighbourhood Plan version 3.6. A separate document with current URLs for each document will be submitted with the Neighbourhood Plan and available on the Brickhill Parish Council website, www.brickhillparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Albion Archaeology (2004), 'Land at North Brickhill Bedford Bedfordshire, Scheme for Archaeological Resource Management', 5th May 2004.

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Bedford Borough Council (2021) 'Bedford Borough Local Transport Plan 2021 (LTP3)'.

Bedford Borough Council (n.d.), 'Older Persons' Accommodation Strategy 2018-2023'.

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Brickhill Parish Council (2024), 'Evidence Report for Local Green Spaces Version 1'.

Brickhill Parish Council (2024), 'Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan.

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Opinion Research Services (2018), 'Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update 2016, Report of Findings and Addendum Report, August 2018'. Borough Local Housing Needs Assessment, Report of Findings'. Produced for Bedford Borough Council. It is listed as a Supporting Document for Local Plan 2030.

Opinion Research Services (2021), 'Bedford Borough Local Housing Needs Assessment, Report of Findings'. Produced for Bedford Borough Council. It is listed as a Supporting Document for Local Plan 2040.

Taking Stock (n.d.), 'Bedford – St Philip and St James'.

Urban Design Group (2020), 'Building for a Healthy Life'.