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Date: 17/12/2025
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Dear Emma,

Bramford to Twinstead Community Benefit Fund consultation

I would like to thank you and your colleagues for taking the time to meet with me recently and explain the background to the current consultation on community benefits, for the Bramford to Twinstead project.

Notwithstanding your engagement with parishes and communities along the route, I would like to take this opportunity to set out some key strategic concerns that the Council has in relation to the operation of community benefits for this project.

As you know, Suffolk County Council has actively engaged with government and others, including National Grid, on the issue of community benefits for several years now¹. The provision of community benefits is a recognition that host communities are bearing a load, in that they are living with substantial new infrastructure and change, on behalf of the rest of the population.

However, it is not sufficient to just hand out community benefits. Benefits will only be accepted and supported if the process by which they are delivered is genuinely participatory, creating the opportunity for a productive dialogue between project promoters and communities. The current consultation is a step in this direction, but it is essential that National Grid ensure that they gather a wide range of views from all parts of the relevant communities. Furthermore, it is essential that the governance, processes, and implementation of community benefits, has the confidence and

¹ See **Communities, Environment Economy and Skills** at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects-including-nsips/energy-infrastructure-policy>

participation all groups within the community, regardless of their social and economic status.

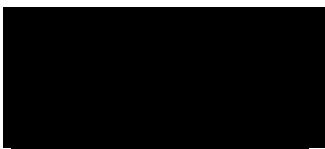
The Council considers that this places a duty of care on both National Grid and the relevant town and parish councils to ensure that this is the case. Likewise, this duty of care also falls on the County Council. Therefore, the County Council considers that National Grid and the relevant parish councils, should consider local needs and benefits in relation to the following areas:

- Fuel poverty and energy resilience of homes, and community buildings
- Transport and access to social and economic opportunities for those living in rural areas
- The opportunities for community benefits to enhance the quality of access and support the natural and historic environment of the parishes.
- The resilience of communities in relation to aging populations, and to the impacts of a changing climate in terms of, for example, flooding.

If National Grid have not already done so, the Council recommends that they review the detailed socio-economic data on parishes held by the Suffolk Observatory, <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/> and consider this in relation to Suffolk's Hidden Needs <https://www.suffolkcf.org.uk/suffolks-hidden-needs/>

The Council appends further detail in response to the project's Community Benefits Survey on potential measures which could be undertaken for social, economic and environmental enhancement. The Council is willing to engage further on these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Rout

Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform, Environment and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

Appendix: Community Benefit Survey Responses

Q1: Which of the following themes do you believe should be supported through community benefit funds in your community?

Public Health

1. Protecting the environment and ensuring access to green spaces
2. Improving community spaces and saving energy
3. Helping with the cost of living and employability
4. Encouraging physical health and activity
5. Supporting mental health and wellbeing
6. Other: Transport/Community Transport and Energy efficient Homes.

Socioeconomics and Skills

1. Providing education and Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) opportunities
2. Helping with the cost of living and employability
3. Skills development for energy and infrastructure related careers

Landscape

1. All of the above are important and worth having.
2. From a landscape perspective **protecting the environment, restoring the landscape character and habitat connectivity and ensuring access to green spaces** would be the top priority. I would argue that this would also **support mental health and wellbeing**. So, you get two for one. Anything that can be done **to help with the cost of living** should also have high priority, and I consider that host communities for large infrastructure projects should have a financial benefit, as they are providing a service, if not bringing a sacrifice, to wider society.
3. If there is a neighbourhood plan with identified community actions, this could be a starting point. I think parish level engagement would be needed to shape meaningful projects, if they are not yet formulated, and facilitating and bringing stakeholders together could be part of the benefit.
4. It could include things like creating a forest element in the school, have a community woodland, lift the biodiversity on the playing field, replace roadside and community trees, improve the PRoW network connectivity to enable doorstep recreation.

5. LNRS (Local Nature Recovery Strategy) and the revised Ancient Woodland (AW) Register would be a good starting point for more biodiversity driven projects.

Water Environment

1. Providing education and Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) opportunities
2. Protecting the environment and ensuring access to green spaces
3. Improving community spaces and saving energy
4. Helping with the cost of living and employability
5. Encouraging physical health and activity
6. Supporting mental health and wellbeing
7. Other: Flood & Water Management Initiatives

Q2: Please provide further details if required:

Public Health

Not Applicable.

Socioeconomics and Skills

Community benefit funds should deliver outcomes that strengthen Suffolk's ability to benefit from the significant investment associated with Bramford to Twinstead and other energy infrastructure projects. This means creating a lasting legacy of skills, education, and employment opportunities for local people and businesses. Interventions should lead to measurable improvements in access to STEM education, technical training, and employability support, ensuring residents can secure high-quality jobs in energy and infrastructure sectors. They should also address barriers for underrepresented groups. These benefits should be delivered in collaboration with other NSIP promoters in the region to avoid duplication, manage cumulative labour market impacts, and maximise shared investment in skills and supply chain development.

Landscape

From a landscape perspective **protecting the environment, restoring the landscape character and habitat connectivity and ensuring access to green spaces** would be the top priority. I would argue that this would also **support mental health and wellbeing**. Anything that can be done **to help with the cost of living** should also have high priority.

Water Environment

It is our belief that projects which support sustainable flood and water initiatives should also be eligible to access community funding. This can either be projects which seek to manage flood risk in the relevant affected areas or projects which support water scarcity concerns which are prevalent throughout Suffolk and most of East Anglia. Not only do these projects offer direct, tangible benefits to the communities who live in these areas (e.g. flood risk reduction to residential properties) but they also often come with wider environmental, social and economic benefits which permeate throughout the wider areas. Through projects like Reclaim the Rain, Suffolk County Council has been able to demonstrate that engagement with communities on projects like these can lead to locally popular, effective outcomes and we would encourage the same approach in this community fund.

Furthermore, we believe that it is important that existing flood risk in these relevant communities is considered when allocating funds. As Lead Local Flood Authority, Suffolk County Council has undertaken a large number of investigations into areas where significant flooding has occurred. The proposed Bramford to Twinstead order limits are adjacent to the town of Hadleigh which has recently been the subject of significant flooding, and therefore we would strongly recommend that this fund can be used to support flood risk betterment in this area.

Q3: Do you have any views on the types of projects or programmes that would be most beneficial to your community?

Public Health

The following projects would be beneficial to our communities who live in the area of the Bramford to Twinstead Corridor:

1. Upgrading community buildings for energy efficiency reduces carbon emissions and lowers running costs, making them more sustainable for the future.
2. Warm, accessible spaces help tackle fuel poverty and provide safe environments for vulnerable residents during winter months.

3. Community-based mental health initiatives reduce isolation and improve resilience, particularly for older people and carers.
4. Peer support and wellbeing programmes complement NHS services, easing pressure on primary care and improving early intervention.
5. Investing in mental health strengthens social cohesion and supports economic productivity by reducing absenteeism and improving quality of life.
6. Enhancing green spaces promotes physical activity and mental wellbeing, reducing long-term health inequalities.
7. Local employability support, especially for young people and older workers; Food hubs and cost-of-living support networks; Small business/start-up grants, especially for green and digital sectors.

Socioeconomics and Skills

The most beneficial programmes will be those that result in clear, measurable outcomes in skills, employability, and educational attainment. This means initiatives that increase the number of local people gaining relevant qualifications, entering apprenticeships, and securing sustainable employment in sectors linked to energy and infrastructure. Programmes should also strengthen links between schools, colleges, and employers, ensuring that education provision reflects industry needs and supports young people to make informed career choices. To maximise impact, these programmes should be developed in partnership with the Regional Skills Coordination Function at Suffolk County Council as well as other NSIP promoters operating in the region, creating a coordinated skills pipeline and reducing competition for labour across projects.

Public Rights of Way

The list of potential projects below is intended as examples of projects which would improve access to green spaces. An estimate of the cost of each project is included and should be taken as are indicative estimates, not necessarily reflecting the final cost of these projects.

1. W-530/432/008 – Surface levelling before application and compaction of clean granite mot type 1 at between 50-100mm depth depending on requirements across a 750m section of Footpath at defined widths between 1.5m and 2.0m - **£7,500**
2. W-530/289/034 – Surface levelling before application and compaction of clean granite mot type 1 at 50-100mm for 5m supported by wooden edge boarding at 1.5m width and replacement of stile for Marlow metal gate - **£3,000**
3. W-530/318/020 – Surface levelling before installation of a 25m section of boardwalk at 1200mm width including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled

sleeper ground beams followed by replacement of the current structure for a new standard specification footbridge at 8000mm span and 1200mm width including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled sleeper ground beams and installation of a further 15m section of standard specification boardwalk at 1200mm width including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled sleeper ground beams. Boardwalk sections and footbridge to be abutted or joined through surfacing either side of the footbridge depending on site requirements to ensure level passage. - **£12,500**

4. W-530/318/023 – Installation of edge protection using heavy duty wooden edge boards or recycled sleepers and angle iron stakes on the northern edge of the Footpath before application and compaction of clean granite mot type 1 at a depth of between 50-100mm and width as listed in the definitive statement for a total of 5m – **£2,500**
5. W-530/171/015 & W-530/406/018 – Application and compaction of planings along Byway at 25-50mm as required at a width of 3m - **£5,000**
6. W-530/113/004 – Installation of 2 x boardwalk passing places (1 per boardwalk) using the standard specification including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled sleeper ground beams at a minimum span of 2m and width of 0.8m. Also, extension of each boardwalk by a maximum of 10m each (20m total) using the standard specification including anti-slip wire set on recycled sleeper ground beams at the same width as the boardwalk in situ - **£7,500**
7. W-530/372/017 – Replace stile with metal medium mobility kissing gate or metal Marlow gate including clean granite mot type 1 surfacing - **£1,500**
8. Requisition clay for community use at Flatford – If clay is being removed during works, allocate some for backfilling behind revetments.
9. **Assington Footpath 4 (Improvements)** [see figure 1 in Appendix]
 - -Installation of 2 x boardwalk passing places (1 per boardwalk) using the standard specification including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled sleeper ground beams at a minimum span of 2m and width of 0.8m.
 - -Extension of each boardwalk by installing a maximum of 10m each (20m total) using the standard specification including anti-slip wire set on recycled sleeper ground beams at the same width as the boardwalk in situ.
10. **Bures St Mary Footpath 15 & Nayland with Wissington Footpath 18 (Improvements)** [see figure 2 in Appendix]
 - -Application and compaction of planings along Byway at between 25-50mm as required at a width of 3m for 750m.
11. **Hadleigh Footpath 34 (Improvements)** [see figure 3 in Appendix]
 - Surface levelling followed by application and compaction of clean granite mot type 1 at between 50-100mm for 5m supported by wooden edge boarding at 1.5m width.
 - Replacement of stile for Marlow metal gate.

12. Hintlesham Footpath 20 (Improvements) [see figure 4 in Appendix]

- Surface levelling before installation of a 25m standard specification boardwalk at 1200mm width including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled sleeper ground beams.
- Replacement of the current structure with a new standard specification footbridge at 8000mm span and 1200mm width including anti-slip wire (weld mesh). Structure to abjoin boardwalk either side or be suitably joined through surfacing to ensure level transfer.
- Surface levelling before installation of a 15m standard specification boardwalk at 1200mm width including anti-slip wire (weld mesh) set on recycled sleeper ground beams.
- Works delivered under suitable Environment Agency bespoke flood risk activity permit including supporting documentation.

13. Hintlesham Footpath 23 (Improvements) [see figure 5 in Appendix]

- Installation of edge protection using heavy duty wooden edge boards or sleepers and angle-iron stakes on the northern edge of the Footpath before application and compaction of clean granite mot type 1 at a depth of 50-100mm and width as listed in definitive statement for a total of 5m.

14. Little Cornard Footpath 17 (Improvements) [see figure 6 in Appendix]

- Replace stile with medium mobility kissing gate or Marlow metal gate including accompanying clean granite mot type 1 at 50mm depth.

15. Polstead Footpath 8 (Improvements) [see figure 7 in Appendix]

- Surface levelling followed by application and compaction of clean granite mot type 1 at between 50-100mm across the width of the Footpath which varies between 1500mm and 2100mm.
- Access to be agreed with landowner.

Landscape

1. If there is a neighbourhood plan with identified community actions, this could be a starting point. I think parish level engagement would be needed to shape meaningful projects, if they are not yet formulated, and facilitating and bring stakeholders together could be part of the benefit.
2. It could include things like creating a forest element in the school, a community woodland, lift the biodiversity on the playing field, replace roadside and community trees, improve the PRoW network connectivity to enable doorstep recreation.
3. LNRS (Local Nature Recovery Strategy) and the revised Ancient Woodland (AW) Register would be a good starting point for more biodiversity driven projects.

Highways:

1. Local footway improvements such as filling gaps between sections of footways, widening, uncontrolled crossing points, links to PRoW.
2. Improvements to cycling facilities
3. Improvements and maintenance of road markings, road studs and signs on key construction routes where these assist traffic movements or improve road safety
4. Selective creation of traffic regulations to control HGV movements or for road safety.
5. Additional routine maintenance such as pothole and verge repairs where deterioration accelerated by construction traffic or where used by diverted local traffic.
6. Improvements to public transport facilities such as bus stops.
7. Drainage improvements where this effects construction route or diversion route
8. Localized widening of pinch points or provision of passing places
9. Selective removal of vegetation where the carriageway width of visibility is restricted
10. Improvements to rights of way particularly those used as diversion routes for DCO closures or where they provide an alternative to local roads which are used for construction traffic (including workers).
11. Promotion of green lanes or rights of way routes to encourage tourism and recreational use by walkers and cyclist, particularly towards the end of the construction phase to encourage the return of users put off during that phase.
12. The maintenance costs for projects which affect the local road network should be considered from the outset. The promoter should avoid passing these costs onto the Highways Authority.

Natural Environment

1. Parish Biodiversity Audits (possibly including Citizen Science project)
2. Community Nature Recovery engagement (Community / School workshops and co-development of NR plans/projects), STEM education support & delivery, 'Seed to Tree' education programme, and local provenance tree nursery creation within primary schools, connecting to wider initiatives, and other mitigation schemes that add value)
3. Land acquisition (on behalf of parishes) to facilitate Nature Recovery and create new community owned/ volunteer managed assets for biodiversity, education, access, wellbeing etc
4. Habitat/woodland creation (in line with co-created Community Nature Recovery plans, and LNRS) with EDI community access provision with Health & Wellbeing engagement activities programmes

5. Medium-long-term maintenance support (including local volunteer recruitment and skills training, machinery provision/loans, technical advice & support)

Water Environment

Projects that look to store potentially damaging flood water in imaginative ways that offer wider benefits to communities – biodiversity and landscape enhancement, recreational opportunities, new sources of water for businesses and agriculture. There are local groups in the area which are active in the types of projects described above which should be considered as suitable recipients of funding. Furthermore, the Flood & Water Management Team at Suffolk County Council manages a forward programme of flood resilience projects.

Q4: Do you have any other ideas about community benefits that you want to share with us?

Public Health

Transport Active Travel and access to community transport. More generally, rurality compounded by limited public transport is a common issue for communities in Babergh and along the route. This means that grant funding that delivers more local activity (e.g. Fit Villages), outreach services (Coffee Caravan, Be Well Bus, Mobile library, banking hubs) or community transport schemes would all address local needs.

Energy Efficient Homes: Reducing fuel poverty and training people in the community to become Ambassadors as seen in the case study called Yorkshire Energy Doctor (YED CIC) which assists households in North and East Yorkshire by providing advice, home visits, and community outreach to reduce fuel poverty. In the past year, they helped 239 patients with chronic health issues access energy support and trained local organisations, benefitting over 4,000 residents.

Socioeconomics and Skills

Community benefits should aim to create a lasting legacy that goes beyond the construction phase of Bramford to Twinstead. This means building a stronger local skills base, increasing participation from underrepresented groups, and supporting pathways into long-term careers in clean energy and infrastructure. Benefits should also encourage collaboration between multiple infrastructure projects to manage cumulative impacts and ensure that investment in training and education is coordinated.

Landscape

Not at the moment.

Water Environment

It could also fund local water reuse initiatives like large-scale rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling pilots, thereby conserving precious mains water, enhancing water security during droughts, and fostering a community-wide culture of water stewardship. This integrated approach would deliver high value returns by improving flood resilience, increasing local biodiversity, and securing long-term economic and environmental benefits. With Suffolk County Council currently drafting new guidance on achieving integrated water management, this fund offers a timely opportunity to trial innovative projects under the emerging framework.

Figure 1 – Assington Footpath

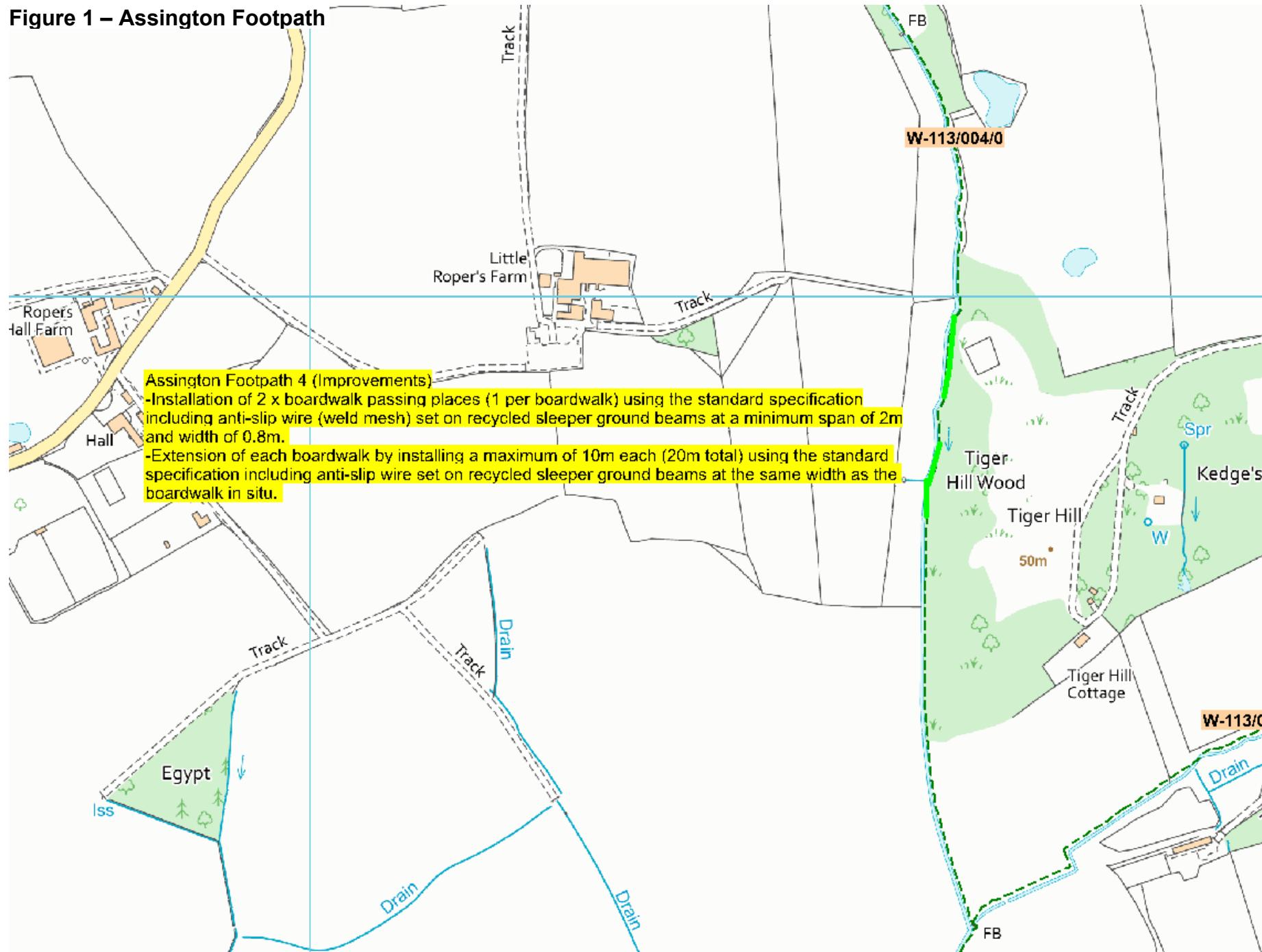


Figure 2 – Bures St Mary Footpath 15 & Nayland with Wissington Footpath 18

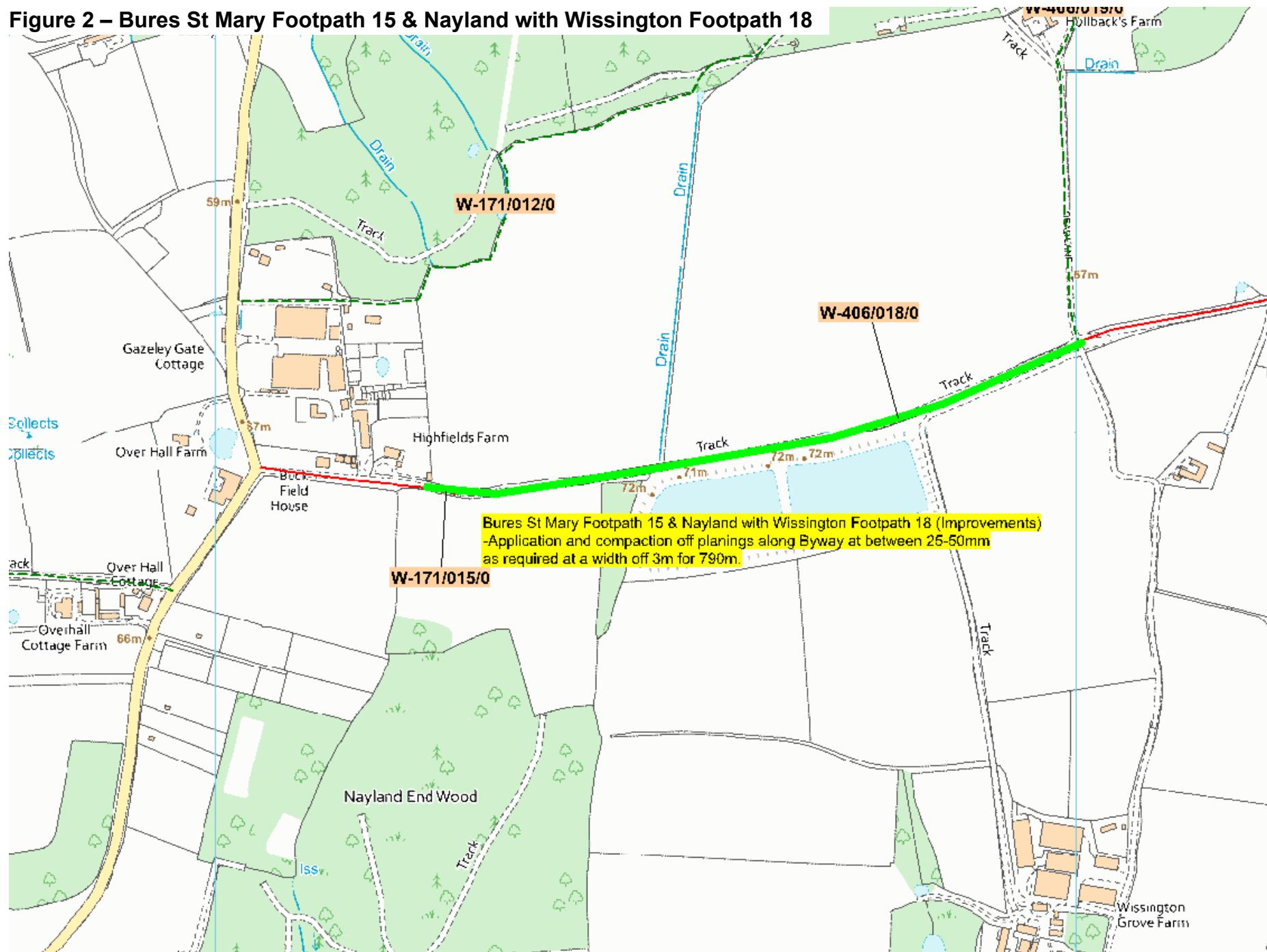


Figure 3 – Hadleigh Footpath 34

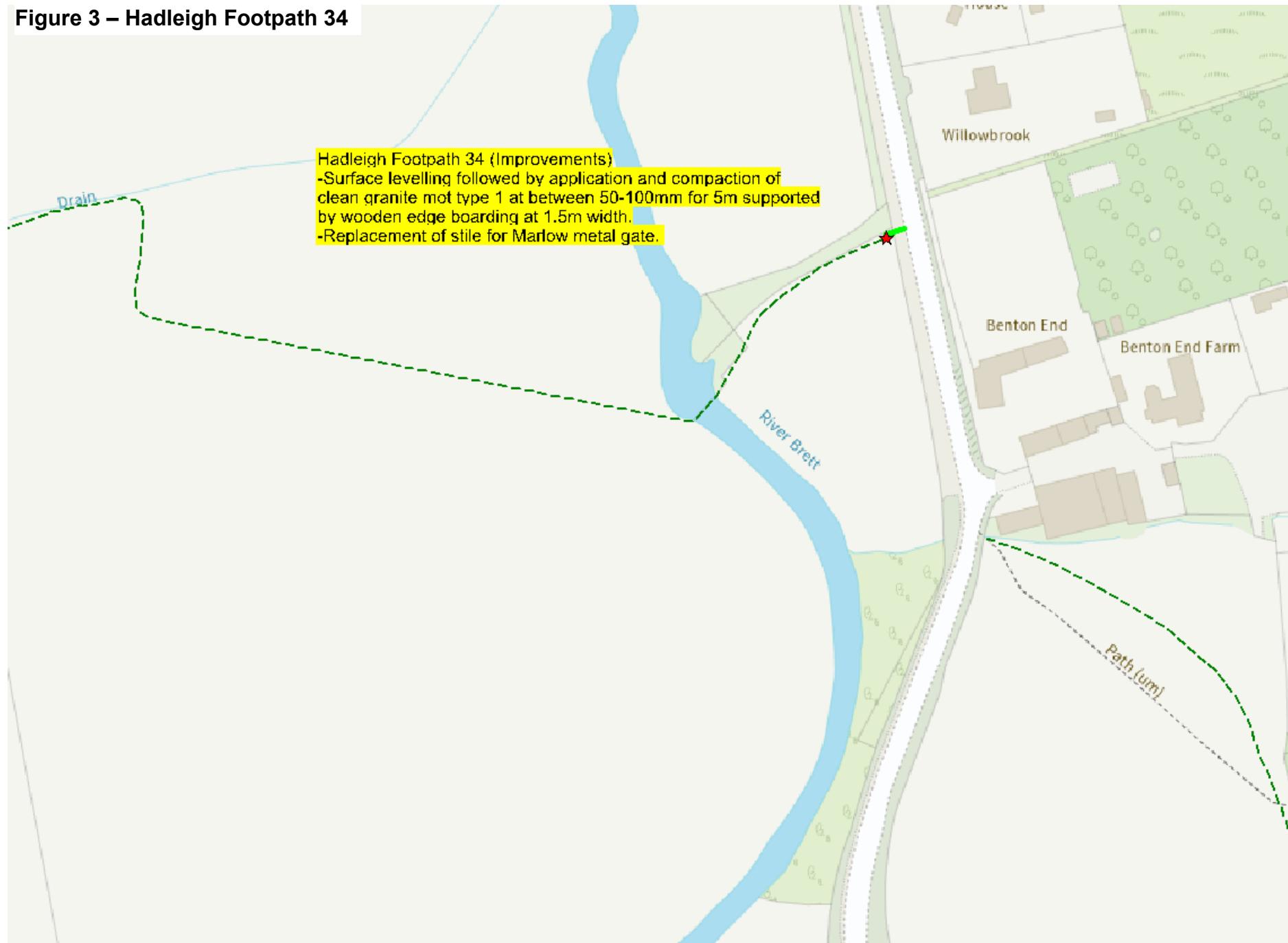


Figure 4 – Hintlesham Footpath 20

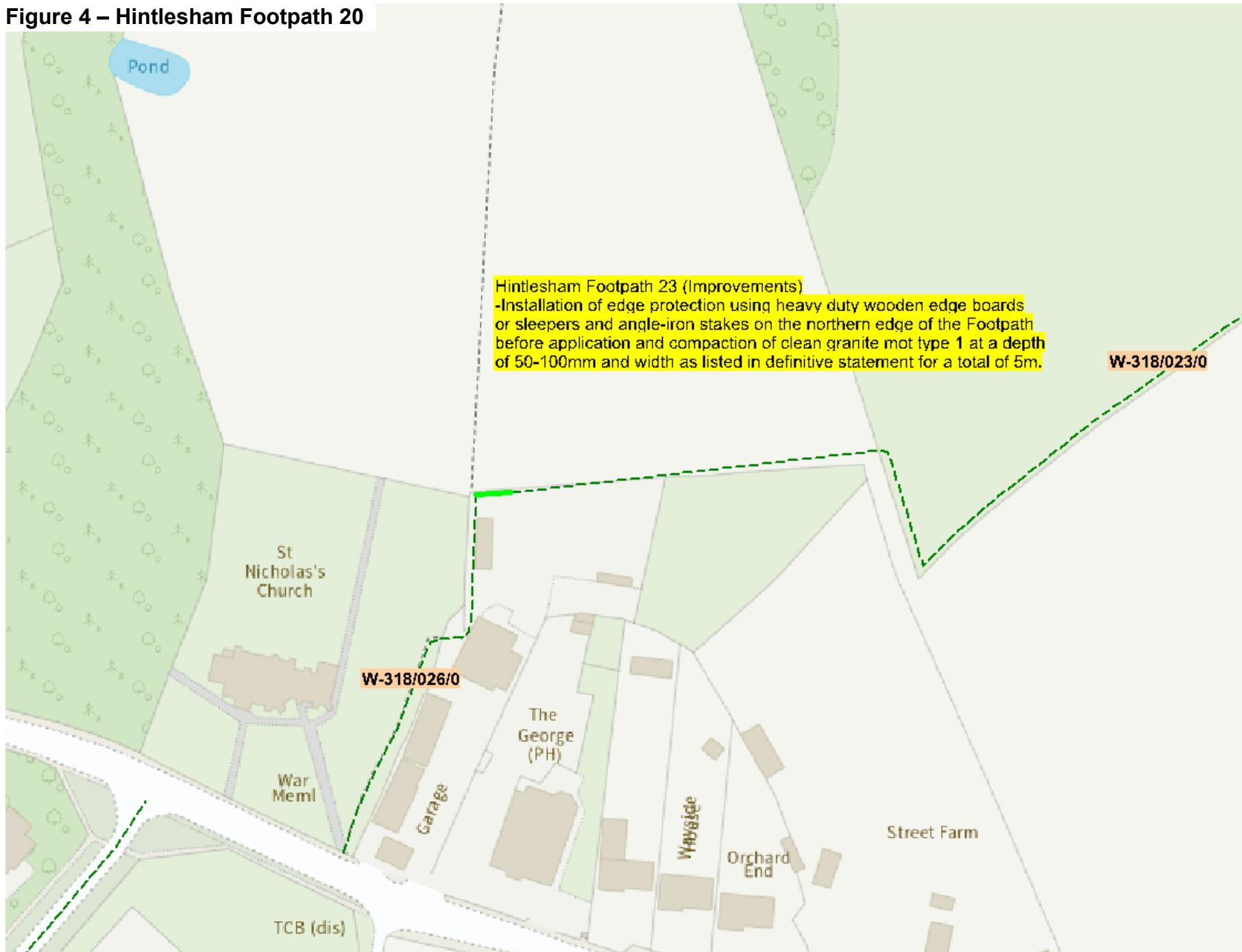


Figure 5 – Hintlesham Footpath 23

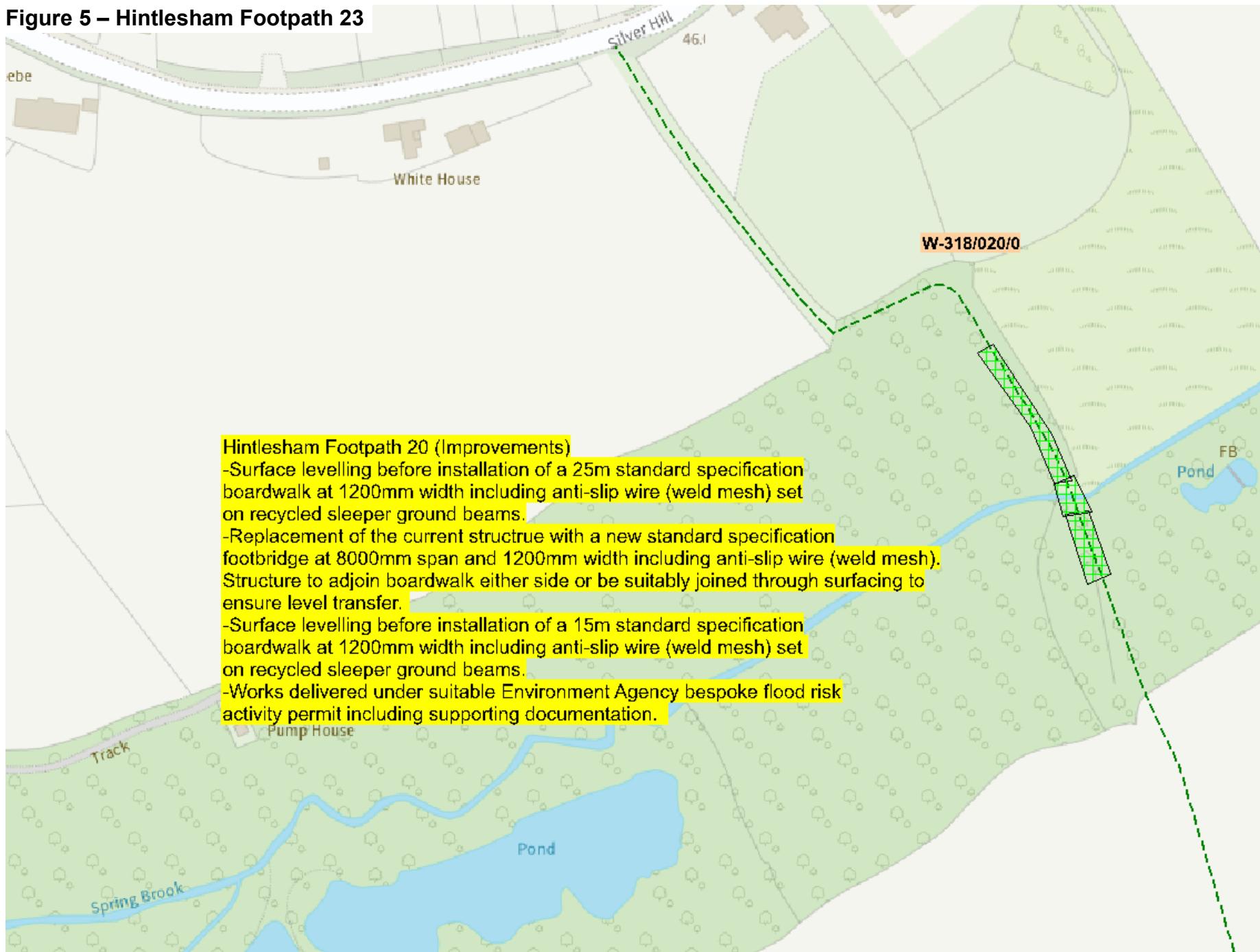


Figure 6 – Little Cornard Footpath 17

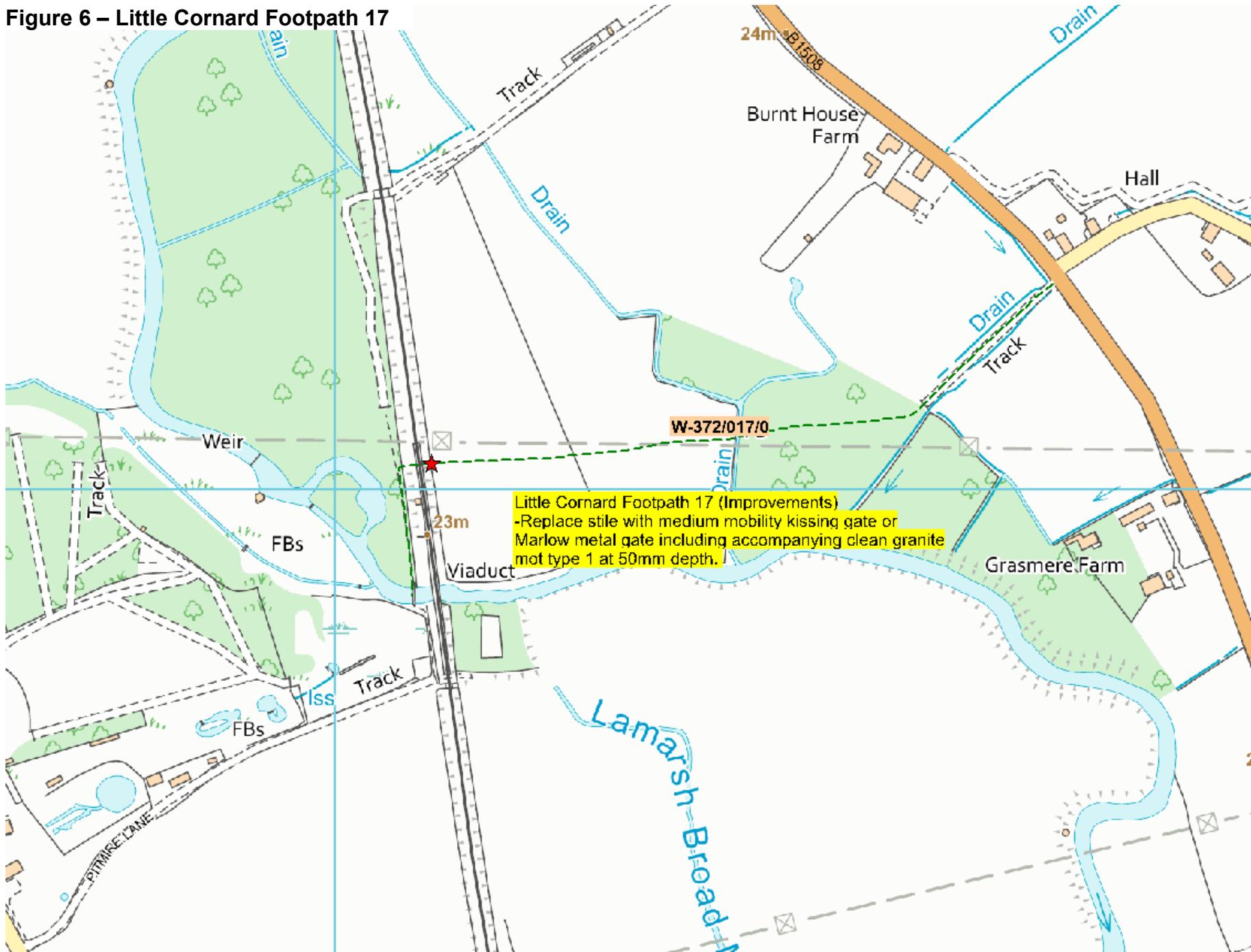


Figure 7 – Polstead Footpath 8

