



Community Hub Proposal

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Front cover: Triple spur tree in Ancient Woodland Maggot’s Grove in April 2026

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Introduction

A previous report entitled [Chalk and River Landscape Conservation – Witney mapped areas v.11](#) made the case for a way of integrating proposed developments to the west and east of Dry Lane, now bordering the newly-established Burford Road RVNR (Road Verge Nature Reserve) as of 12 June 2026, into the wider chalk/limestone natural and historical landscape which surrounds them.

Only by understanding the features, habitats and wildlife, including the Maggots Grove designated ancient woodland and wildflower meadows in close proximity as one example, can thoughtful planning and design of green spaces, footpaths and trails be exercised to dovetail with existing formal and informal access points.

Likewise, the recent discoveries from archaeological test trenches underline the historical importance of the area under consideration which, if handled professionally and sympathetically, can contribute to an educational and recreational experience for residents and passing visitors on how much the special landscape has to offer.

Purpose

This document aims to build on the previous outline [Community Hub Location Proposal](#) for the location of a Community Hub that benefits the four local communities where the two proposed developments intersect on Dry Lane, with a more detailed design and visualisation of how such a facility can be not only a welcome rest stop for walkers and cyclists and showcase for its historical and natural setting, but also be a testament to environmental biodiversity and sustainability employing renewable energy sources and building-integrated photovoltaics (BIPV), such as solar roof tiles and transparent solar windows.

It is hoped that the exterior and interior conceptual designs that follow, inspired by the history of the area and native tree species, can inform the important decisions to be made to create the legacy of a Community Hub enjoyed for generations to come.

Community Hub Location Proposal

Published: 13 July 2026

The following is a suggestion as to the possible location of a Community Hub that benefits from

- ✚ Ease of access from Dry Lane—anticipating a reduction in speed limit by Highways from existing national 60mph to 20-30mph
- ✚ Extensive views across stunning chalk grassland meadows below to the north of the site, proximity to adjoining ancient woodland hedgerow leading to the designated Ancient Woodland of Maggots Grove to the west and onto the Windrush valley below
- ✚ Ease of access across Dry Lane to the west where Maggots Grove is less than 100m away
- ✚ Access to all four circular walks linking the four communities for walkers, cyclists and day visitors
- ✚ Access to existing high level chalk ridgeway that meets a junction of footpaths and bostalls descending to the valley floor
- ✚ Being a buffer zone where housing development can blend in with the natural landscape, especially if a small tranche of fields were converted to wildflowers known to former farmer's crops (linseed, cornflowers, corn cockles, native poppies) that would mirror the grassland meadows below that boast alfalfa, sainfoin and crimson clover— all of the above representing the third crop rotation fallow cycle

If the site were to showcase artefacts from any archaeology performed to the west of Dry Lane, then a rest stop location with drinks and refreshments would benefit from a small car park for deliveries and staff with circular tethering cycle posts to encourage active exercise.

These images from Apr 2026 give an idea of the landscape and terrain involved. Firstly an approach from the east along the ridgeway path at a high level would be open all year round.



High-level ridgeway path
view to Ancient
Woodland Maggots
Grove with wildflower
meadow downslope to
ancient woodland
hedgerow with Spindle,
Guelder Rose and Wild
Bullace indicator species.

Figure 1 Approach from east along high level ridgeway

The main site would have extensive, inviting views over the landscape and valley below.



Figure 2 Site location from Dry Lane with views North and East



Access would be from four directions,
including a new proposed link circular path
skirting inside the hedges on the Burford
Road and Dry Lane (east side), currently
signposted as private land.

**Figure 3 New footpath South to Burford
Road from Dry Lane**

The site could make use of the existing bridleway path from Dry Lane descending to the Windrush as the start of two circular paths going west (left) to Crawley—badger setts and wetland rushes/drains— or east (right) to Witney wetlands where a field of ragged robin, buttercups and horsetails are to be found.



Figure 4 Bridleway from Dry Lane down to the Windrush

A wild flower meadow to complement the existing one in Fig 15, could replace some of the rape seed field bordering the meadow and provide wildflower seasonal walks for photographers in front and to the east of the Community Hub, similar to the sample below.

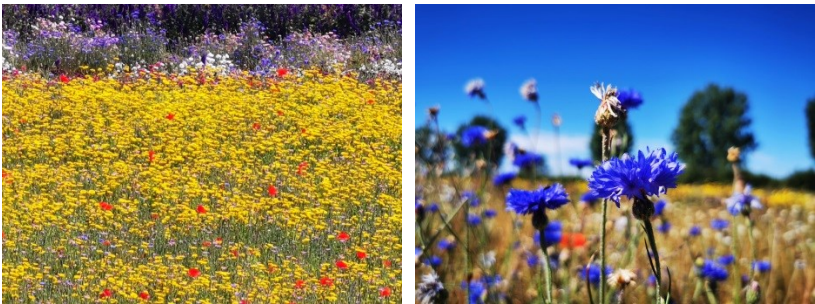


Figure 5 Sample wildflower seasonal walks with BAP Priority Species

Note: The Biodiversity Action Plan cites the cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) as a "Priority Species" under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework due to its rapid decline.

It also calls out specific taxonomic groups, here below with local references highlighted in red that have been sighted in this landscape.

UK BAP Priority Species Taxonomic Groups

Birds: Including **turtle dove** (Kingfisher Meadows KFM), **skylark** (Maggots Grove), corn crane, grey partridge, **house sparrow** (KFM), and various warblers.

Terrestrial Mammals: Including the **brown hare** (wildflower meadow to east), hedgehog, **water vole** (Windrush 2021-22), and various **bat** species (Pipistrelle in KFM)

Marine & Fish: Including salmon, various shark species, and marine mammals.

Invertebrates: Including moths (e.g., Straw Belle), butterflies, and stag beetles.

Plants & Fungi: Vascular plants, non-vascular plants, and **lichen** (Maggots Grove).



Figure 6 Updated wildlife sightings with BAP Priority Species

Finally, here is the same map with the proposed site of the Community Hub and wildflower fields to adjoin the existing wildflower meadow to make the most of the unique historical and natural terrain through considered conservation integrated with new communities who can appreciate the special environment they have moved into and the custodianship that passes into their hands and the generations that follow.



Figure 7 Proposed site of Community Hub and Wildflower Field Walk

Community Hub — Design Inspiration

The design draws on both the history and natural landscapes of the area.

The history of the textile industry is steeped into the Windrush and other valleys of the Cotswolds and while the Witney blanket achieved fame far beyond these shores into North America and beyond, it must be remembered that it was the clear chalk stream waters, native trees and meadows and, of course, the Cotswold Lions sheep breed that made it all possible.

While mills powered the industrialisation latterly, leats that diverted water had been known in this valley since Roman times, with yellow dye being provided since 1000BC from the yellow mignonette (*Reseda lutea* and *luteola*) flowers growing on both sides of the valley.

The humble native Spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) gave its straight white stems to the product that now bears its name which twists the raw woollen fibres into yarn. The vast open meadows on our gentle slopes saw tuckers hanging the finished blankets out to dry, rushing to take them down before the rain came and re-hanging them on tenterhooks until they were dry.

Their use dates from Neolithic times (6000-9000 years ago) when fibres were hand spun on using a notched stick and weighted whorl at one end.



Figure 8 Spindle fruits and Wild Bullace blossom and berries

Both Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and Spindle are ancient woodland indicator species. They are joined by Wild Bullace (*Prunus domestica subsp. insititia*) that may have been introduced by the Romans as an edible, oval-shaped ‘sloe’ fruit and the prime, ideal rootstock for grafting stone fruit trees such as plum, apricots, peaches, and nectarines. All three species are present in the hedgerow that leads to Maggots Grove.

While Spindle and Wild Bullace provide possible colour schemes that can be used in the interior design, *Viburnum opulus* was the inspiration for the floor patterns and mirrored seasonal landscape planting outside.



Figure 9 *Viburnum opulus* leaf, berries, bark and inflorescence

The bench seating externally (or internally if space permits) is modelled on the automation provided by the shuttles used in weaving cloth. Their provenance could be from already felled trees where available and can have circular and elongated recesses at either end to act as ad hoc tables.

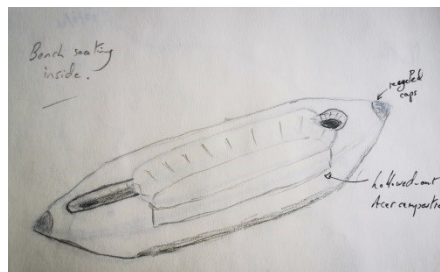


Figure 10 Bench Shuttle-type Seating

Community Hub — Exterior Design

The exterior comprises a community hub landscape with seasonal interest, natural exploration areas, and functional zones. Since access to all four communities in all four directions for walks, runs, rides and recreation is centred on this hub, perhaps a working title for the building at a conceptual stage can be the Four Ways Community Hub.

A brief descriptive breakdown¹ of the external facilities and connections follows:

Core Site Layout & Buildings

The Community Hub Main Building features a central structure called "Four Ways" with outdoor porches and an adjacent terrace. Two wings spur off to the rear of the building to house the 'History and Heritage' and 'Nature and Exploration' zones.

Access and Logistics

The design includes a car park, deliveries area, and an external vehicular approach from Dry Lane on the western boundary

Circular Paths

It complements existing circular paths with a new circular path looping around the property before heading south inside the existing hedgerow turning left, before running parallel to the new Burford Road RVNR

Landscape & Planting Zones

A seasonal colour gradient displays a large Guelder Rose leaf section tracking colour transitions across Spring, Summer, and Autumn. This display is mirrored on the inside of the building to provide symmetry and a sense of continuity between the outside and inside environments.

Shade Gardens

There will be groups of shade-giving trees together, specifically noting native *Acer campestre* and *Sorbus torminalis* (Wild Service) trees, an ancient woodland species

¹ Sourced from the sketched drawing (Fig. 11) and adapted from an AI summary

Formal Rows

These define a structural boundary using a combined *Cornus sanguinea* (Dogwood) and *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder Rose) hedge to shield the viewing and sensory area for calm enjoyment of the same.

Avenue Planting

This leads the eye and body to the exceptional valley view with a funnelled, expanding line of white bark trees, composed ideally of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* 'Snow Queen' AGM (similar to those at the Common Leys campus) or alternatively with the native *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch). Once mature, this avenue will open out onto a stunning vista waiting to be explored.

Viewing and Sensory Area

This area couples a seating/viewing area with aromatic planting beds of rosemary and lavender

Educational and Community Features

Natural Landscape Exploration outlines dedicated zones and paths for interactive outdoor exploration. The main introduction to the zones and their species will be inside the building, but these should be supplemented with information boards externally on the circular walk that crosses this area in front of the building.

Seasonal 'Species Spots' can detail dedicated observation points along each circular route, where species have been recorded.

It would also be wise to include an awareness poster of any species to enjoy within the ancient woodland of Maggots Grove, together with those that need to avoid physical contact with.



Figure 11 Four Ways Community Hub External Approach

The sketch above represents original thoughts of how the design inspiration can reflect in the landscape planting and positioning.

Low-level signage on the gentle down slopes to the proposed wildflower meadow that complements the existing grass limestone meadow and to other circular paths will aid orientation.

Disabled Access will be provided by a 95cm+ wide, firm perimeter path that leads round the site, with specific entrance points to the building via the Natural Landscape Exploration wing nearest to the disabled parking bays, as well as the path that leads up the gentle slope to the Terrace. Similarly, the viewing and sensory area will be level with the perimeter path for ease of access.

Signage for parking at the circular tethering cycle posts would be helpful.

Community Hub — Interior Design

The interior design entrance was conceived as a mirror to the external seasonal landscaping using the *Viburnum opulus* leaf design to provide continuity between both environments.

The aim is to turn an observer into a participant, in the understanding that we are all part of the natural landscape, we walk the same ancient paths as our ancestors did, we admire the same flowers, hedgerows and trees and that we are custodians of it.

A brief descriptive breakdown² of the interior design proposal follows, based on the spatial layout with the material, colour and thematic elements included:

Exterior and Threshold

The architectural shell is a traditional Cotswolds oolitic limestone facade

The Threshold

Large French double doors act as a transparent framing device, providing an immediate, expansive view directly into the main community hub and café interior

Flooring and Spatial Flow (The *Viburnum opulus* leaf)

The floor design serves as the primary visual anchor and intuitive wayfinding system for visitors entering the space

Central Feature

A large, stylised floor rendering of a *Viburnum opulus* leaf

Colour Gradient

The leaf coloration bleeds dynamically from an autumnal red on the left toward a spring light green on the right

² Sourced from the sketched drawing (Fig. 12) and adapted from an AI summary

Circulation Borders (Hard Shoe Traffic)

The outer floor zones border the central leaf and mimic the textures and tones of *Viburnum opulus* bark. This provides a durable pathway that guides visitors to the two distinct wings:

- To the Left it follows the "Historical Track" past a front window
- To the Right it follows the "Nature Track" past a front window

Café Zones and Furnishings

The central area visible through the French doors balances cosy, seated dining with casual, standing-only spaces near the service counter

Main Seating Area

Approximately a dozen traditional wooden tables and chairs arranged directly over the central leaf-rendered floor zone

Standing Zone

Located closer to the main serving counter, it features tall, standing-only circular tables crafted from white or cream-coloured wood, each supported by a single, elegant spindle-like leg

The Shuttle Counter

Positioned prominently at the rear centre under a "Welcome to Four Ways" sign

Design Concept: Mimics a light brown wooden shuttle from the local historical wool industry

Features: Tapered at both ends with a sleek, light steel cap. The front section is cut away cleanly for customer service

Layout: Two professional espresso/barista coffee machines are centred behind the bar, with displays of light snacks and cakes flanking both ends of the counter

Rear Wings and Exhibits

The rear boundary of the café transitions smoothly into specialized cultural and environmental zones via symmetric architectural elements.

Left Wing —History and Heritage

Transition: Small steps and an entrance curve gracefully around the left "Pit" seating area (featuring white stone surrounds and matching white cushions)

Key Features

Leads into an open-plan heritage space

Features an Artefacts Display & Story cabinet alongside an interactive Discovery Table

Convenient access to the facilities (WCs) is located further to the left

Right Wing —Nature and Exploration

Transition: Mirroring the left side, small steps curve around the right "Pit" seating area (also styled with white stone surrounds and white cushions)

Key Features

Leads into an open-plan environmental space

Features the prominent Four Ways Trails exhibition plan and interactive mapping area

Flooring details

For high durability and distinct zoning, here are the flooring material specifications:

The Bark Track (Outer Borders): To handle the heavy, hard-shoe traffic leading to the Historical and Nature tracks, the outer borders will utilize a commercial-grade, textured luxury vinyl tile (LVT) or porcelain stoneware planking. These materials are completely waterproof, highly washable, and slip-resistant, while accurately mimicking the deep, rugged textures and natural earth tones (greyish-brown, white and pale green) of *Viburnum opulus* bark

The Leaf Area (Main Café Floor): The central zone featuring the *Viburnum opulus* leaf design will be constructed using high-traffic commercial laminate flooring with a realistic wood-grain finish. This provides the warm, inviting aesthetic of real timber but offers superior scratch, dent, and fade resistance to ensure the multi-coloured autumnal red to spring green gradient remains vibrant and long-lasting under heavy foot traffic

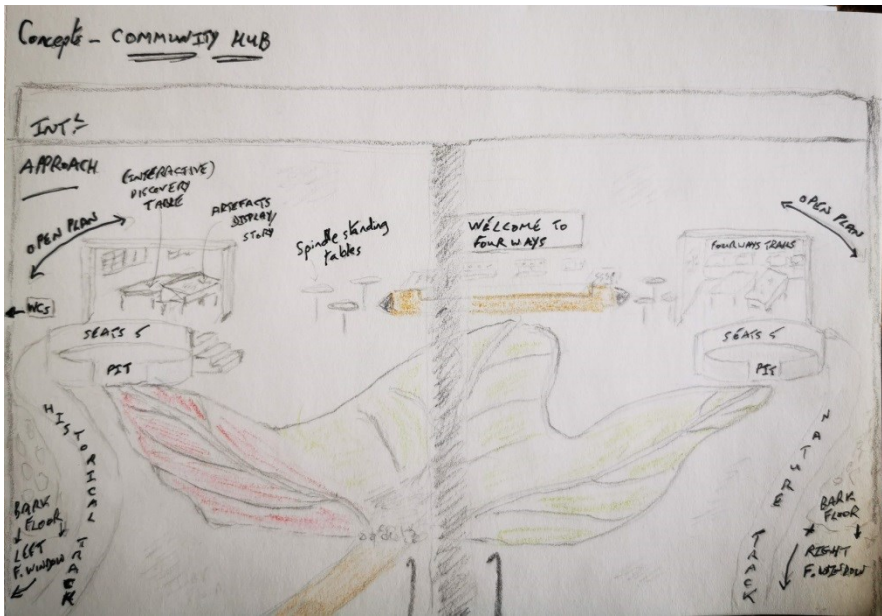


Figure 12 Four Ways Community Hub Internal Approach

The sketch above depicts a view through one of the twin French windows (with plate-enabled automatic opening for disabled access) into the area inside that welcomes participants in for refreshment and sustenance, yes, but also invites them to choose a track depending on their inclination.

The hard shoe border routes permit cyclists with such footwear to explore both landscapes to determine their next route after resting without having to change or remove footwear.

The two circular, white 'Pit' spaces are to mimic the Neolithic round spaces or fire pits where communities would gather to exchange stories, share moments and thoughts in a circle of both friends and perhaps those new to the area. It is hope this 'sharing space' will thrive with lively conversations.

The main area and wings are designed to be open plan, with space enough behind for automatic inward-opening fire doors as a pre-requisite to meet safety and disabled access standards.

Community Hub —Design Visualisation

The following two visualisations³ of exterior and interior designs have been constructed from the sketch drawings above to simulate one possible view of the whole community hub.

Any errors shown are down to my bad handwriting and are retained to remind the reader that these are representative of what an AI engine has made of a drawing and its detailed descriptions.

Among them for example, the compass direction at the end of the Spring seasonal planting is North-East. Similarly, the two signs nearest to the shady zones are meant to refer to disabled access and the location for cyclists of the tethering cycle posts.

Additionally, the access slope to the main entrance beneath the terrace should be gentle, since the current geography already lends itself to this.



Figure 13 Four Ways Community Hub - External view

³ Credit to Gemini for the AI generation component and depictions

The internal view has a cut-away section of the façade to afford a more comprehensive view of the layout once inside.

The intention is to create a light, airy space that feels more like a part of the natural and historical environment only a few metres away in any direction.



Figure 14 Four Ways Community Hub - Internal view

Reports Cited

(Massam, 2026) *CHALK AND RIVER LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION – WITNEY MAPPED AREAS v.11*