

A MASTERPLAN FOR THE OUTWOODS

Masterplan Document

July 2018





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Introduction

Purpose of this Document

This document sets the scene for a future masterplan for The Outwoods by examining The Outwoods itself and exploring the role it plays within the wider landscape and settlement context.

This document examines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of both The Outwoods in isolation and as part of a wider network of adjacent 'Honey Pot' sites that fall within a wider study area.

The analysis and supporting figures begin to tease out existing and future access networks and the partnerships that connect people with the site and wider study area. This analysis forms the foundations for the vision.

The Outwoods and its wider Context

The Outwoods comprises 45 hectares of ancient woodland owned by Charnwood Borough Council and is a key site in terms of its value as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site is situated in the north-eastern part of Charnwood Forest Regional Park (CFRP), two miles west of Loughborough. The Outwoods fall on the eastern edge of the National Forest.

The site directly adjoins a smaller woodland to the north called Jubilee Woods, which is managed by Leicestershire County Council.

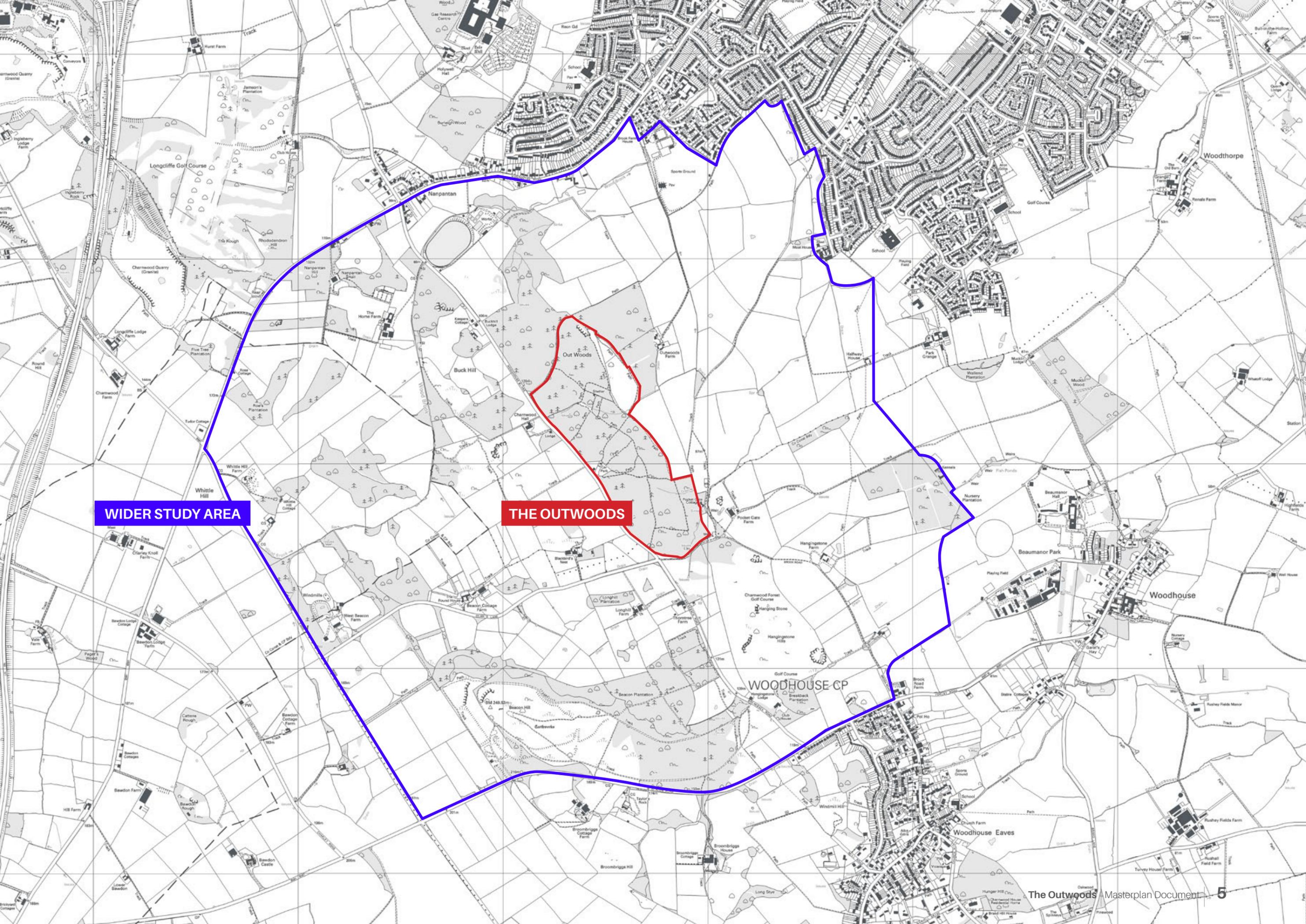
The Outwoods Management Committee is responsible for strategic decisions regarding the management of the site and consists of 5 local residents and 8 district councillors. The Outwoods has had Green Flag status since 2007.

The Outwoods falls in close proximity to a number of other key 'Honey Pot' sites, which include: Beacon Hill Country Park; Beacon Hill; Broombriggs Farm Country Park; Felicity's Wood; Nanpantan Reservoir; and Jubilee Woods.

WIDER STUDY AREA

THE OUTWOODS

WOODHOUSE CP





The Outwoods boundary with Jubilee Woodland and Woodhouse Lane



View towards The Outwoods from a permissive path adjacent to Charnwood Lodge



View along footpath K58 towards Loughborough from the edge of The Outwoods



Footpaths within The Outwoods

Methodology

Background Work

A desk based survey of existing information has been undertaken. This includes a review of key documents, maps and online resources as outlined in the appendix to this document.

Information relevant to The Outwoods and wider study area has been collated, reviewed, analysed and mapped.

Walkover Survey

A walkover site survey was undertaken by a qualified Landscape Architect and Ecologist. Notes and observations in relation to the desk based survey were recorded.

During the survey a Garmin GPS eTrex 10 unit was used to record the routes available within The Outwoods and the wider context.

A waypoint feature was used to mark the locations of key features and items of furniture within the site. This data was then transferred to a CAD model which forms the basis of the figures set out within this document.

The layers of collated information begin to visualise key features and themes that make the area special and unique whilst also summarising the opportunities for the site and the wider study area.

Presentation of findings

This document sets out an analysis of the wider study area first and explores how the individual sites function, their connections to each other, issues and barriers that are present and finally the opportunities that may be worth exploring moving forward. This approach helps to set the scene for how The Outwoods functions as part of a bigger picture.

A second stage of analysis focuses on The Outwoods in more detail. An appraisal of the site picks up the findings of the background work and walkover survey. This is followed by the identification of site specific opportunities.

The discussion within this document is supported by detailed figures and photographs.

The Vision

The Outwoods will be reinforced to be not only a destination in its own right, but as an integral part of a wider family of destinations that collectively have a far-reaching draw and appeal. The Outwoods will play a pivotal role as gateway to the wider National Forest and Charnwood Forest Regional Park by delivering a welcoming interface to settlement to the east, north and south.

Wider Study Area: Honey Pot Sites

- 1.1 Beacon Hill has a well-managed aesthetic with obvious investment in signage, surfacing and fencing. The landscape forms a natural playground for children with streams, trees, rocks and dens.
- 1.2 Jubilee Wood is a small site and feels less managed and more 'wild' (away from Woodhouse Lane) compared to its neighbours. It is unlikely to be a destination in its own right and is most likely used as an extension to The Outwoods site.
- 1.3 Felicity's Wood features some difficult terrain with informal pathways. It appears to receive fewer visitors compared to surrounding sites and has a tranquil and rural feel.
- 1.4 Nanpantan reservoir is gated at its entrance with Woodhouse Lane and feels less welcoming compared to the wider honey pot sites. There are toilet facilities, most likely used by visitors with fishing permits or day passes.
- 1.5 Sites along the edge of Loughborough, including sports grounds and play areas, have views to the west and pedestrian and cycle linkages. The proximity of these sites to the established settlement edge offers great potential.
- 1.6 Charnwood Forest Golf Club is located within the study area but has little scope to include as part of a wider network of sites due to the specialised and focused nature of its use.

- 1.7 Wenlo Riding for the Disabled (RDA) is a registered charity falling within the study area that offers adults and children of all ages with physical and/or learning disabilities an opportunity to ride and look after horses to help their health, confidence and self-esteem. It has been established for more than 25 years. Several horse riders were observed using Woodhouse Lane as part of the site survey.

Summary

Area well used, on the doorstep of cities, towns, villages and a well-respected University.

Collectively the honey pot sites represent a diverse and unique landscape to explore on a local scale, including heath grassland, unimproved grassland, freshwater, ancient woodlands & veteran trees spread across a dramatic topography.

The sites offer broader appeal when viewed collectively. Areas of sensitivity will be conflicted with visitor pressure although the local scale of the sites does allow this pressure to be spread across the sites more evenly than is currently the case.

- Site Boundary
- Study Area
-  Honey Pot Site
-  Honey Pot Site with limited potential for linkage or connections

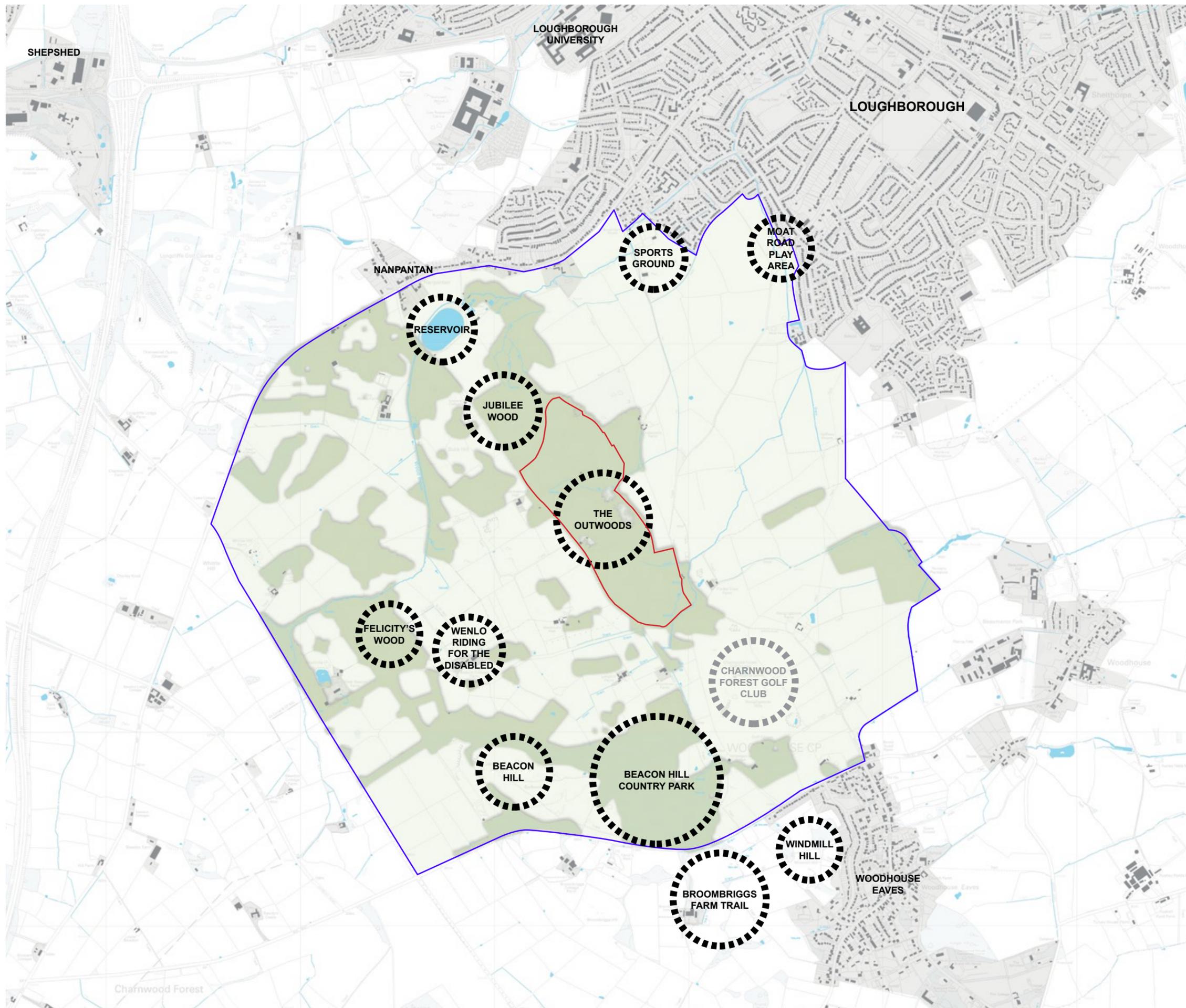


Figure 1
Wider Study Area:
Honey Pot Sites

Wider Study Area: Connectivity Appraisal

- 2.1 Beacon Hill Country Park offers locations for parking and is connected to Felicity's Wood and Broombriggs Farm Trail and Windmill Hill. It offers a broad range of permissive routes and open access land to explore.
- 2.2 Felicity's Wood, in part, provides a linkage between Beacon Hill and permissive routes to the north, ultimately leading to The Outwoods and Jubilee Wood.
- 2.3 Jubilee Wood has informal arrangements for limited pull-in parking off Woodhouse Lane. It is well connected to The Outwoods site.
- 2.4 Nanpantan Reservoir has informal arrangements for pull-in parking off Woodhouse Lane. It has poor connectivity to wider honey pot sites but lies close to the settlement edge of Nanpantan and is connected by a pedestrian footway running alongside Woodhouse Lane.
- 2.5 Sites along the edge of Loughborough, including sports grounds and play area off Moat Road, are connected to wider honey pot sites to the south west by a number of public footpaths, bridleways and byways. The Outwoods acts as a key interface being the first point of arrival for users of these connecting routes.
- 2.6 A permissive path leading west from Woodhouse Lane and along Wood Brook provides the only non-highway and traffic-free linkage between The Outwoods and honey pot sites to the west and south-west. This linkage forms part of a published route set out by Leicestershire County Council under the title 'Walking to Nature - Charnwood Forest'. Along Wood Brook this route features post and wire fencing, which usefully defines the route and reassures users they are on the correct path. However the permissive paths are not recreational routes for families and appear better suited to serious walkers with suitable kit. This is due to poor accessibility, ground conditions and a lack of on the ground signage. The Walking to Nature route guide advises of uneven ground, slippery conditions and uphill climbs.
- 2.7 Visitors to the area can walk along Dean's Lane, Woodhouse Lane and Breakback Road to move between the various honey pot sites within the study area however there is no footway provision.

Summary

The study area has a number of existing connections but the linkages between honey pot sites are not always as clear or desirable as they could be.

-  Site Boundary
-  Study Area
-  Honey Pot Site
-  Parking Area
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Footpath]
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Bridleway]
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Byway]
-  Track used by pedestrians
-  Permissive Walking Route
-  Route 7 'The Outwoods and views of Loughborough' and Walking to Nature Route 1 'The Outwoods' walking routes published by LCC
-  On-Road Walking/ Cycling/ Horse Riding Route

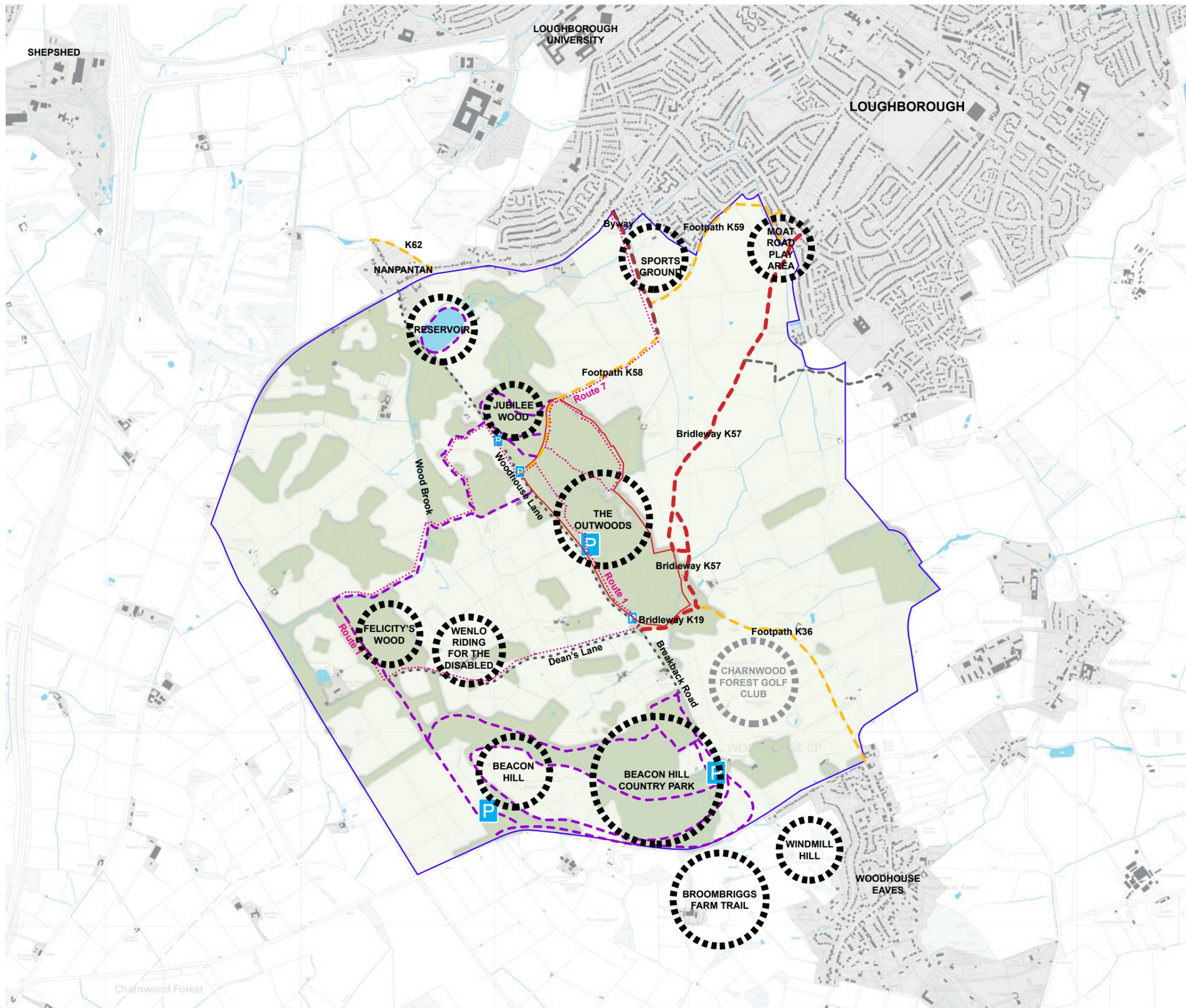


Figure 2
Wider Study Area:
Connectivity Appraisal

Wider Study Area: Issues and Barriers to Connectivity

- 3.1 Permissive paths between Charnwood Lodge (Care Home) and Felicity's Wood would benefit from investment to improve gates, signage and drainage/surfacing. Along this routes handmade 'Keep Out' and 'Private' signs are inconsistent and unwelcoming. Small yellow arrows are used to mark the routes and these are easily missed making woodland areas slightly disorientating. A bridges over Wood Brook was in a state of disrepair and impassable and routes waterlogged in places. Condition are likely to deteriorate further with increased visitor pressures.
- 3.2 Difficult conditions along permissive routes should be identified as such on signage.
- 3.3 Footpath crossing points are not consistently signposted and finger posts needed throughout.
- 3.4 Linkages between honey pot sites on the western edge of Loughborough (sports and play facilities) and wider honey pot sites are let down by signage. These key gateway points do not identify The Outwoods or wider honey pot sites well.
- 3.5 Dean's Lane is currently used as footpath and cycle link connecting Beacon Hill and Felicity's Wood directly to The Outwoods, however, traffic conflicts with these users and although relatively light it does form a barrier to use.
- 3.6 Generally within the study area signage makes it clear that cyclists are not welcome. Signage identifying where cyclists are welcome is less prominent/ clear.
- 3.7 Evidence of verge erosion from visitors parking along Woodhouse Lane within loosely defined pull-in areas.
- 3.8 Breakback Road has grass verge which pedestrians use to link Beacon Hill Country Park and The Outwoods. It appears well used but the proximity of traffic passing at speed makes it less suitable for young families or users with restricted mobility.
- 3.9 The southern end of public bridleway (Ref K57), where it crosses an arable field, has poor surface conditions in wet weather making it difficult to negotiate.
- 3.10 Routes within Jubilee Wood are poorly defined and difficult to navigate due to fallen trees and ground conditions. There is no logical onward connection to Nanpantan Reservoir beyond walking along the grass verge along Woodhouse Lane.
- 3.11 Nanpantan reservoir has poor walking connectivity with wider honey pot sites but does feature a pedestrian footway linking it to Nanpantan.

Summary

Public bridleway (Ref K57), Breakback Road and permissive walking routes between Charnwood Lodge, Buck Hill Farm and Felicity's Wood are not accessible to all. For many visitors these routes would form a genuine barrier to wider movement between sites.

Signage is not comprehensive and where available it is inconsistent in its approach.

-  Site Boundary
-  Study Area
-  Parking Area
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Footpath]
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Bridleway]
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Byway]
-  Track used by pedestrians
-  Permissive Walking Route
-  On-Road Walking/ Cycling/ Horse Riding Route
-  Issue with ground conditions, accessibility, signage or conflict with slower speed vehicular traffic
-  Barrier to Wider and/ or Direct Movement
-  Conflict between pedestrians/ cyclists/ horse riders and fast moving vehicular traffic

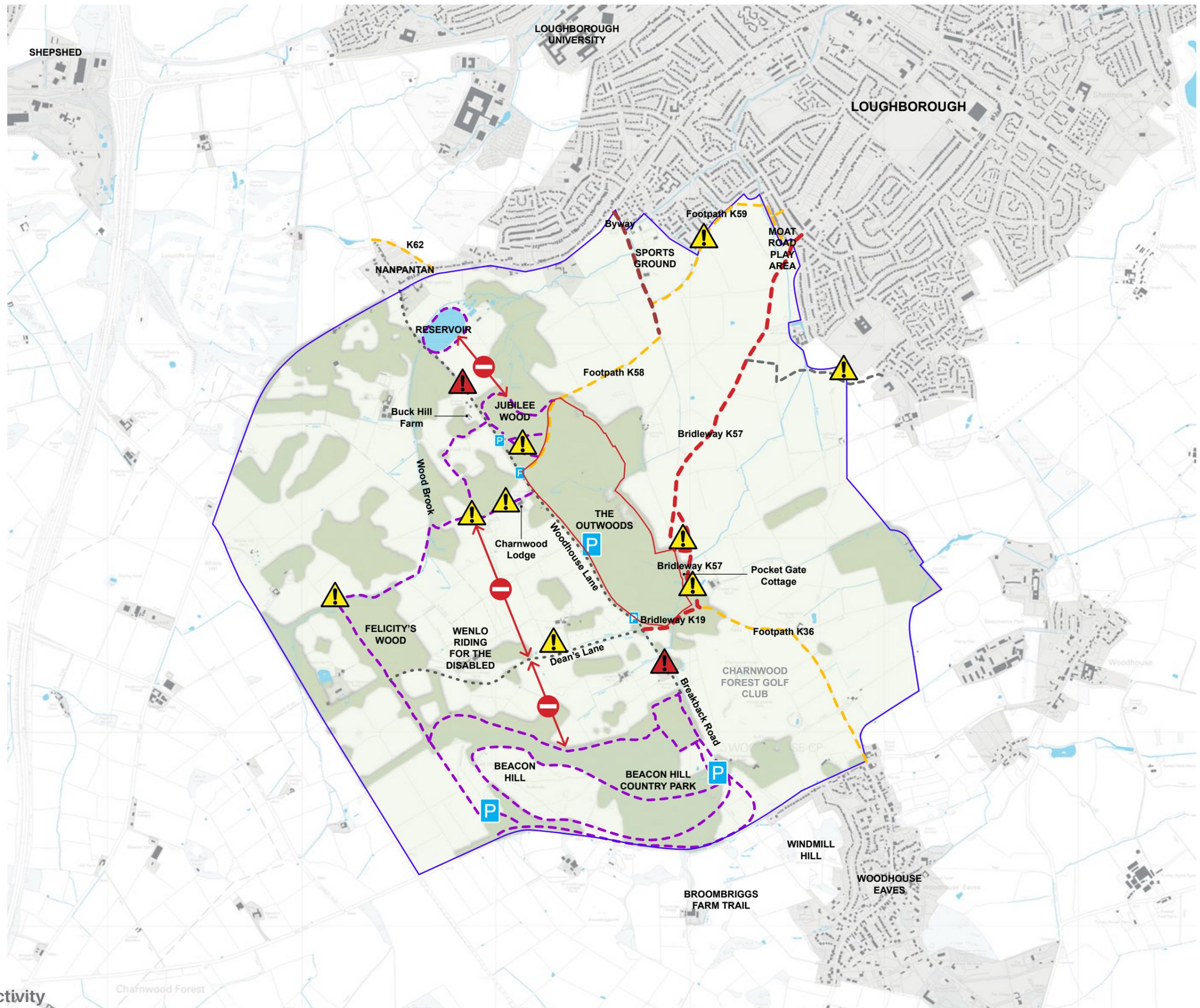


Figure 3
Wider Study Area:
Issues and Barriers to Connectivity

Wider Study Area: Opportunities and Linkages

- 4.1 Targeted investment to improve surfacing along sections of public footpaths and permissive routes would help to establish stronger connections between sites.
- 4.2 New permissive routes, which take a more direct link between honey pot sites should be explored (see P1 to P7 references shown on Figure 4). Initial investigation suggests that alternative alignments could also offer more gradual level changes to the benefit of visitors that have reduced mobility.
- 4.3 Surrounding honey pot sites all offer distinct characteristics/ qualities, which could be summarised on interpretation maps. Routes could be named in a manner that reflects the landscape types they pass through, for example: surfaced ancient woodland stroll, woodland edge and glade loop, gentle ascent to crags and views. Providing named routes, or a brief description of the route, rather than just a numerical reference could help to make them more memorable and legible.
- 4.4 Any investment in new gates, signage and drainage/ surfacing should be co-ordinated through a design standard common to all sites, so all routes link together and are read as one. This would include each site featuring information boards that show an appropriate level of context to help visitors understand the wider opportunities available to them. In addition, signage should pick out more distant destinations (with distance indicated) and not just adjacent destinations.
- 4.5 Collections of sticks, branches, ropes, logs and natural timber structures could be distributed at key nodal points and would form low intervention natural play opportunities for children. These could be themed to suit different locations and could be publicised as part of a wider chain.
- 4.6 Land on the western edge of Charnwood Forest Golf Club (to the east of Breakback Road) could offer potential for a permissive footway route that is close, but not immediately adjacent, to fast moving vehicular traffic.
- 4.7 There could be an opportunity to work with bodies responsible/ owners of watercourses and drainage channels to ensure they are functioning at their best and not compounding accessibility issues.
- 4.8 There is potential to explore wider connections to/ from the University campus and to engage students in volunteering activities.
- 4.9 New linkages could be explored from Nanpantan Reservoir to the north east, connecting with Nanpantan Road and the bus stops and the PRow network which leads north and west from Nanpantan (Ref: K62).
- 4.10 Garendon Park (approved residential development) is located 1.2km to the north of the closest honey pot site (when using Snell's Nook Lane). The potential for linkages should be a considered further as part of a wider connected chain of Green Infrastructure to the west of Loughborough. Garendon Park will be developed to feature a large area of parkland and open space.
- 4.11 Potential to reconsider the scope of Leicestershire County Council (LCC) published routes and add new routes should linkages to wider honey pot sites be improved.
- 4.12 A bi-annual or quarterly newsletter of events could be compiled, posted online (stakeholder web pages and social media) and/ or distributed locally and on community notice boards.

Summary

A design standard shared across all honey pot sites would unify the signage, surfacing and furniture.

Signage and surfacing are two key barriers to establishing stronger linkages between sites. Targeted improvements to surfacing along key routes would help to establish stronger physical connections. Signage within the sites and at key junctions would help to improve ease of movement and a sense of the sites being connected, rather than isolated.

Targeted improvements to key gateway points would enhance a sense of arrival/ welcome and would help to raise awareness for people passing the sites.

With landowner approval there could be the potential to deliver more direct and accessible routes between sites that avoid vehicular roads and traverse more gentle terrain compared to some of the current connections.

-  Site Boundary
-  Study Area
-  Parking Area
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Footpath]
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Bridleway]
-  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [Byway]
-  Track used by pedestrians
-  Permissive Walking Route
-  Route 7 'The Outwoods and views of Loughborough' and Walking to Nature Route 1 'The Outwoods' walking routes published by LCC
-  On-Road Walking/ Cycling/ Horse Riding Route
-  Potential for Permissive Route
-  Key Gateway with Opportunity for Improvement and/ or Improved Signage

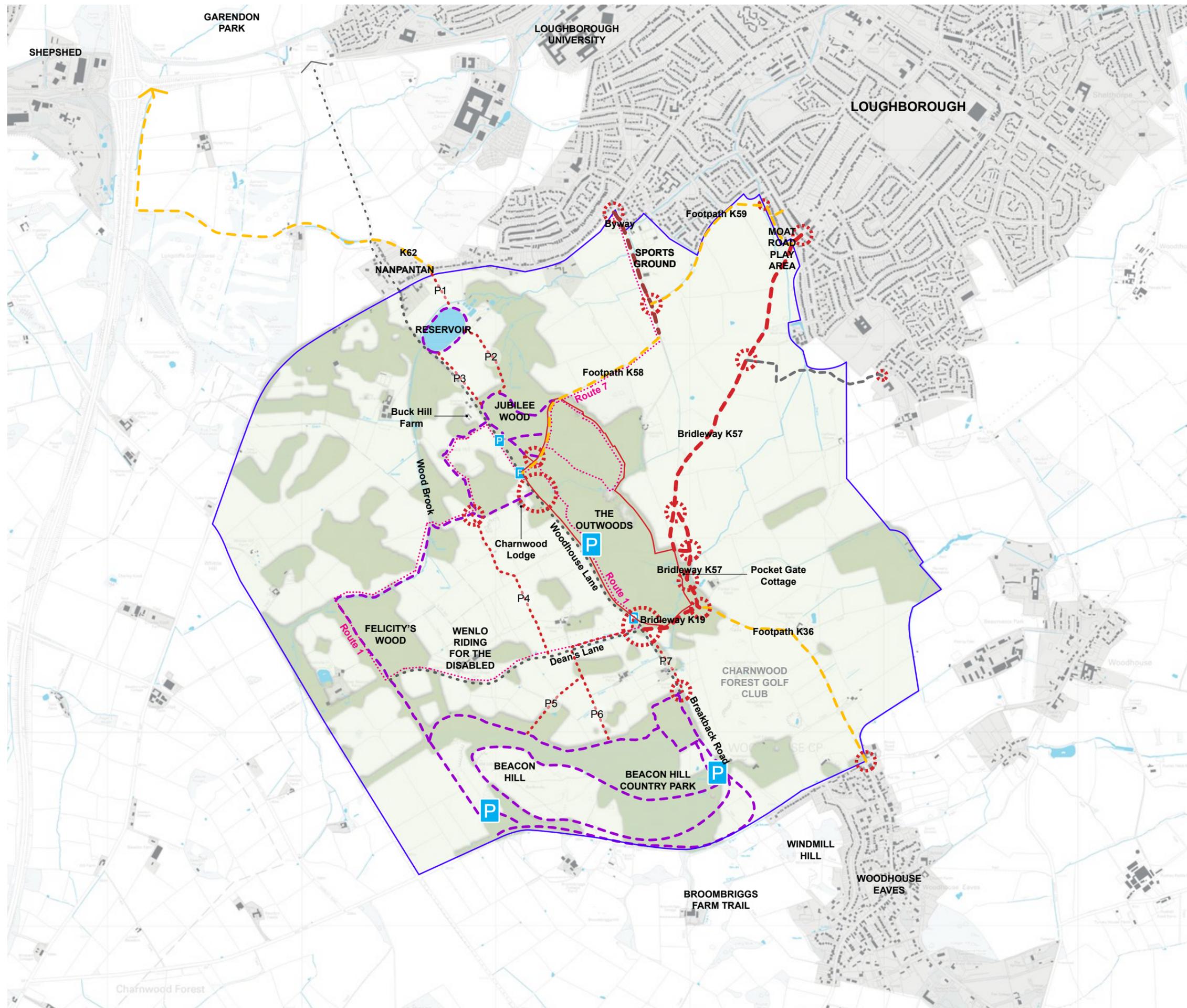


Figure 4
Wider Study Area:
Opportunities and Linkages

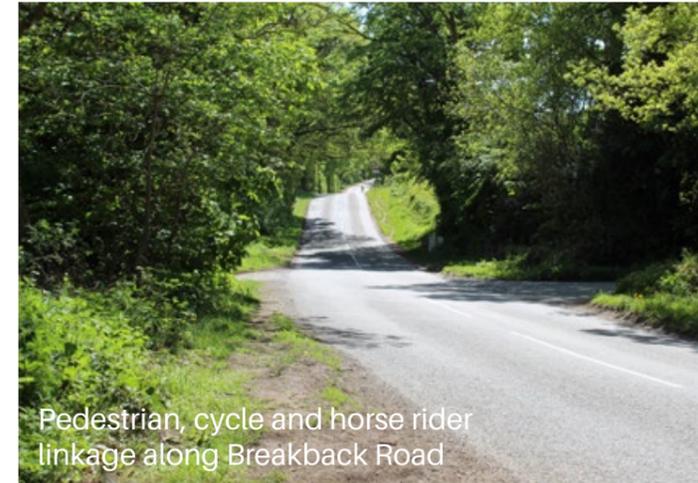
Wider Study Area: Photographs



Natural beauty



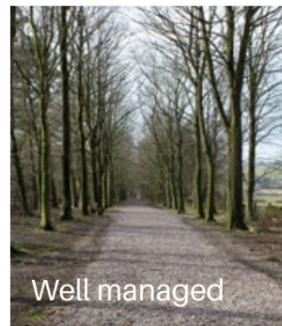
Area well used by walkers and community groups



Pedestrian, cycle and horse rider linkage along Breakback Road



Hazardous route is the only option between sites



Well managed



Working landscape



Waterlogged permissive routes



Handmade signs along permissive routes



Natural Play



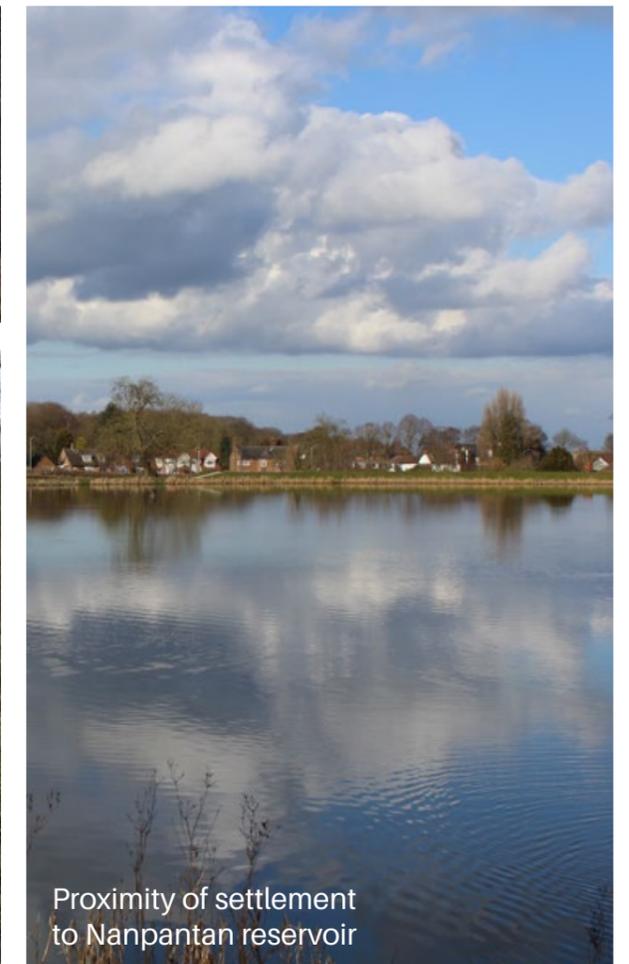
Unwelcoming



Impassable section of one permissive route



Footway within Jubilee Wood



Proximity of settlement to Nanpantan reservoir



Footpath K58 linking the study area with Loughborough



Confusion between public and private areas along Bridleway K57



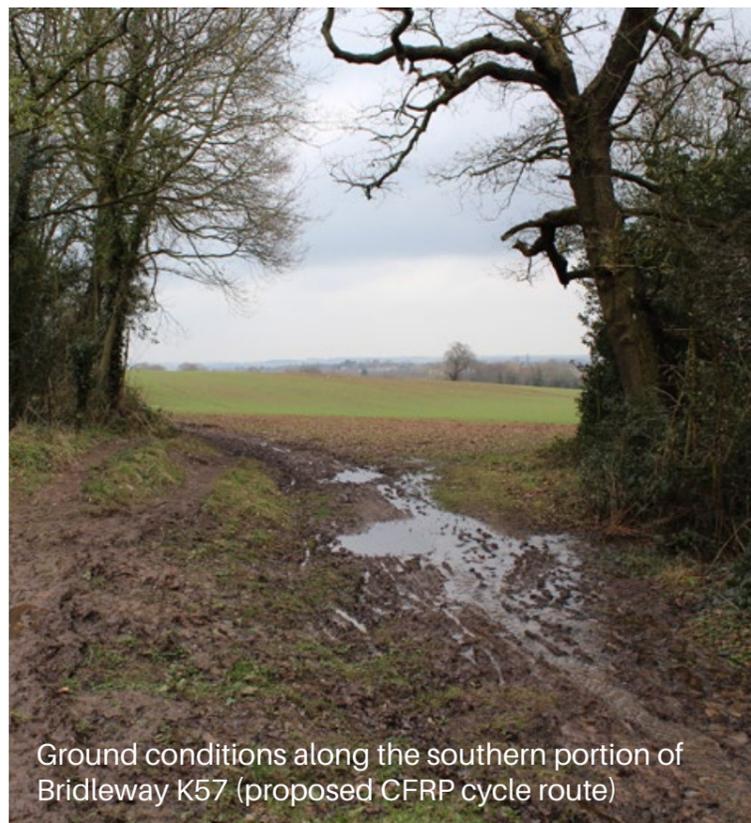
Existing gateway point for Bridleway K57 on the edge of Loughborough



Bridleway K57 & play area off Moat Road with no indication of linkages to Honey Pot sites



Poor linkage from The Outwoods to Bridleway K57 (proposed CFRP cycle route)



Ground conditions along the southern portion of Bridleway K57 (proposed CFRP cycle route)



Open space fringing Moat Road and a key gateway with footpath K59 & Bridleway K57

The Outwoods: Site Appraisal

- 5.1 The woodland is well used by dog walkers, recreational walkers, community groups and joggers. Walking routes through The Outwoods are published by Leicestershire County Council (LCC).
- 5.2 Public footpath (Ref: K58) links and then passes along the northern boundary, it appears to be the most popular means of accessing the site by foot. Footpath (Ref: K15) from Woodhouse Eaves appears to be a widely used means of walking to the site.
- 5.3 There is no public transport access to The Outwoods. The closest bus stop is located off Nanpantan Road (adjacent to the Priory Pub with onward access along Woodhouse Lane) 1.1km to the north and Valley Road (connected by Bridleway Ref: K57) to the 1.7km to the north-east. Neither of these options are very convenient for visitors.
- 5.4 The site has a good management/ maintenance presence and a good range of facilities including toilets and a cafe, picnic benches and seating. Bins and dog waste bins are located throughout the site but recycling facilities are only located in the main car park area and were cross-contaminated on inspection. The main car park appears to have good capacity and charges are not prohibitive but only has one blue badge space on hardstanding.
- 5.5 The site offers a diverse range of woodland types and other features including drainage channels, geological outcrops and ground flora (such as bluebells). Despite this signage/ Interpretation is not consistent throughout the site and shows woodland in a generic manner, revealing little of the diverse character the site offers.
- 5.6 The main surfaced route around The Outwoods is one of the more accessible routes within the study area. However, away from this route some of the minor paths are poorly drained and incapable of dealing with high levels of rainfall. Some are experiencing damage from maintenance vehicles as they are not of a sufficient width or construction to accept traffic.
- 5.7 Some signage/ interpretation boards show coloured walking routes, however, most (including those in the main car park) do not show coloured routes. Coloured marker posts within the site aren't easy to follow as the spacing is not regular enough and some of the colours have dulled reducing legibility.
- 5.8 The hierarchy of routes within the woodland is not readily apparent through signage or surface treatment adding to a sense of confusion when unfamiliar with The Outwoods. Directional markers are not always located on path junctions.
- 5.9 The southern-most access point from the junction of Dean's Lane, Brook Road (Bridleway Ref: K19), Breakback Road and Woodhouse Lane is not clearly visible from the junction itself and so site presence is poor at this point.
- 5.10 The south-eastern access using Bridleway (Ref: K57), past Pocket Gate Cottage, is poorly signposted and the ground conditions can be very poor. In addition the distinction between public/ private is not made clear where route splits with private driveways.
- 5.11 Poor connections with Bridleway Ref: K57 and honey pot sites beyond The Outwoods. The south-eastern access with the bridleway links across a ploughed field and the southern access with Woodhouse Lane has no direct linkages to permissive routes to the west.
- 5.12 Bird feeding stations appear unused and provide a neglected feel. One of the adjacent bird hides is overgrown and is hard to access, another has collapsed. The structures appear in need of repair.
- 5.13 Road users and visitors to adjacent honey pot sites are unaware of The Outwoods due to low key presence and lack of signage. There is no identification of The Outwoods from gateway points on the edge of residential areas.
- 5.14 Stone wall damage in places this could encourage others to climb over or further disturb the stone.
- 5.15 Benches (around bird feeders specifically) are green, located along unsurfaced paths and appear unused. Older benches, including carved log benches provide a neglected feel and are in a condition that is typically unsuitable for seating.
- 5.16 There is no direct access possible from Brook Road due to ecological sensitivity and wet nature of the ground to the south of The Outwoods. The southern portion of The Outwoods feels less managed generally (the boardwalk is an exception to this).
- 5.17 The 'Green Flag' status flag in the main car park has broken free and become snagged in adjacent trees.

Summary

The site appears well used, has good management/ maintenance presence and offers a diverse range of woodland types and other features of interest.

There are some missed opportunities within the site at present and redressing these could help to improve the appeal of the site.

A number of issues have been identified and some of these act as a barrier to The Outwoods functioning successfully as part of a network of wider sites.

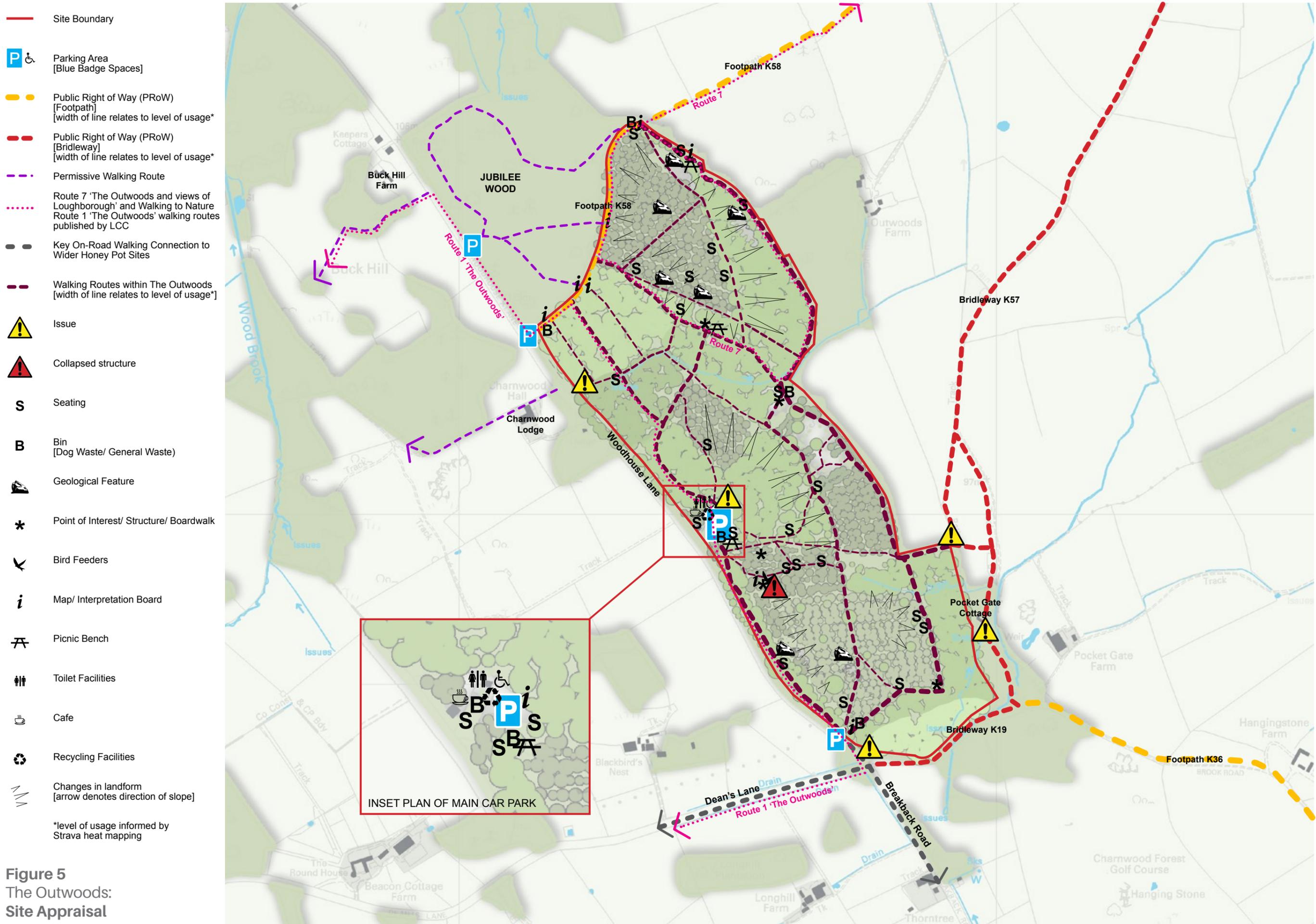


Figure 5
The Outwoods:
Site Appraisal

The Outwoods: Masterplan

- 6.1 Opportunity to locate a small play area adjacent to café and toilet block and masterplan this area to work more successfully and bring the existing building back in to use. It would be logical to locate a group briefing/ open classroom at this location due to the conveniences, proximity to car park and storage lock-ups.
- 6.2 Consider revisiting recycling signage to minimise the likelihood of cross contamination.
- 6.3 Build up/ create stone walls at site entrance points to form more prominent pillars which will help to announce a sense of arrival.
- 6.4 New signage should be consistent through out the site and always show The Outwoods alongside its surrounding context (currently shown floating in white space). In particular connections with and routes through Jubilee woodland should be shown as the two sites are read as one on the ground.
- 6.5 Signage/ interpretation by the entrance points should show wider circular walking options e.g. published LCC walks routes 1 & 7 and provide direction arrows to identify wider destinations e.g. Loughborough and Beacon Hill. Support with finger signs at junctions showing direction and distance to wider destinations (and main car park) to aid wayfinding and encourage wider movement.
- 6.6 Relocate car park interpretation map to be adjacent to Pay and Display machine and at the two key footpath exit points. Consider commissioning a 3D relief map at this location to emphasise the varied landform of The Outwoods. Parking bays could be clearly marked to increase future parking capacity.
- 6.7 Walks and features could be identified with coloured symbols instead of coloured arrows.
- 6.8 Improve the surfacing and drainage of well used minor routes. Create a surfaced link to the proposed upgraded CFRP pedestrian/ cycle route (note connection crosses 3rd party land). Consider the potential for extending the footway along Woodhouse Lane from Nanpantan all the way to Beacon Hill Country Park.
- 6.9 There is an opportunity to announce the presence of The Outwoods from Dean's Lane, Brook Road, Breakback Road and Woodhouse Lane junction by clearing some self-set understorey.
- 6.10 There is a notable opportunity to connect directly with a permissive path to the west (particularly the route leading from Charnwood Lodge). A new entrance/ gateway point from The Outwoods would lead directly to this route and the location on Woodhouse Lane appears conducive to crossing.
- 6.11 Consider relocating some of the least used benches to areas with inclines or along the eastern and western edges where distant views are achievable.
- 6.12 Make a better feature of drainage channels passing through the site, open the channels up and locally clear the canopy above. Through out the site generally introduce more glades for the benefit of ecology and bio-diversity and to benefit infrastructure (i.e. extended life of timber furniture).
- 6.13 Consider the opportunity for a multi-user route through or alongside The Outwoods and set back from Woodhouse Lane. Cyclists and Horse riders from nearby Wenlo Riding for the Disabled use the highway at present.
- 6.14 Bird feeders appear unused. Consider moving closer to the car park for better visitor visibility and for improved ease of access/ maintenance.
- 6.15 Potential to identify features (e.g. rocky outcrops, glades, bluebells areas and steep landform) on interpretation boards as points of interest, natural play features, viewpoints etc. Rocky outcrops generally could be highlighted on mapping.
- 6.16 Consider breaking up the uniformity of the woodland as shown on interpretation boards by highlighting the different character areas within the woodland. Take guidance from the management plan which sets out key species.
- 6.17 Character areas could be shown on signage interpretation, Bluebell Walk, Soggy Bottom (along channels and boardwalk), Welly Walk (unsurfaced routes with boggy edges), The Green Edge/ Oak Edge/ Vista Walk (East), Beech View (West), The Burner/ The Glade (Charcoal Production) etc.
- 6.18 Potential for 'Welly Walks' and small low-intensity natural play pieces along primary walking routes, such as: stepping stones, scramble rocks/ boulders, balance beams, rope swings, log chimes.

Summary

Signage, interpretation and wayfinding within The Outwoods could be updated and improved.

Key arrival points within the site could be reinforced and new access points created to assist movement between honey pot sites.

Some of the existing furniture could be redistributed and older furniture and derelict structures reviewed.

There are opportunities to masterplan the area around the main car park to make it work more successfully.

-  Site Boundary
 -  Parking Area [Blue Badge Spaces]
 -  Public Right of Way (PRoW) [reference to be added] [width of line relates to level of usage*]
 -  Permissive Walking Route
 -  Key On-Road Walking Connection to Wider Honey Pot Sites
 -  Walking Routes within The Outwoods [width of line relates to level of usage*]
 -  Opportunity for Improvement/ Key Gateway Point
 -  Opportunity for a new spatial masterplan
 -  Opportunity for Improved Connection
 -  Charnwood Forest Regional Park (CFRP) Priority Route for Improvement [Multi-User Route from Loughborough to Outwoods and Outwoods to Beacon Hill]
 -  Seating [Issues to Address]
 -  Geological Feature [To be emphasised]
 -  Point of Interest/ Structure [Issues to Address]
 -  Bird Feeders [Issues to Address]
 -  Map/ Interpretation Board [Issues to Address]
 -  Recycling Facilities [Issues to Address]
 -  Improvements to signage/ wayfinding
- *level of usage informed by Strava heat mapping

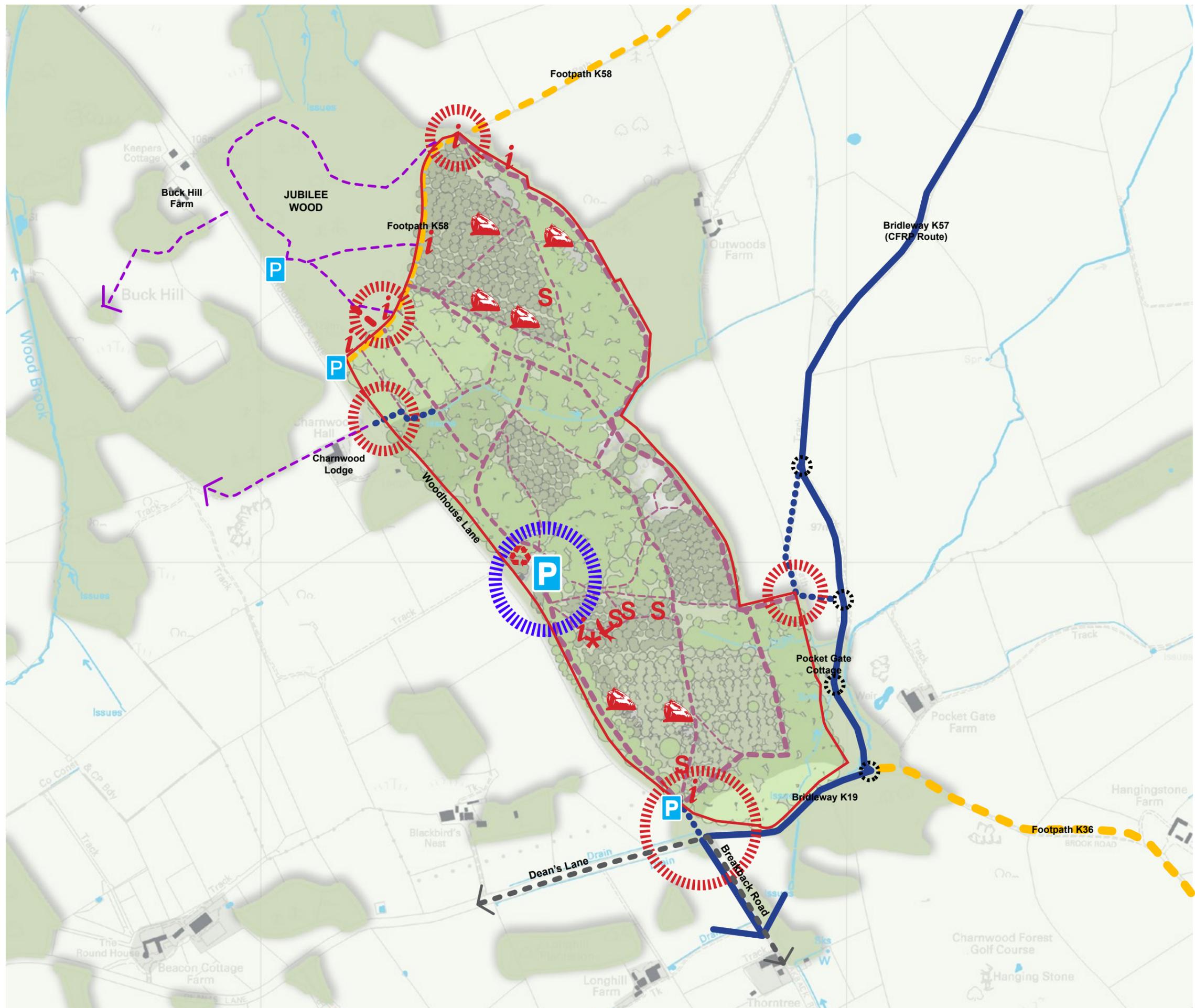


Figure 6
The Outwoods:
Masterplan

The Outwoods: Photographs



Make a better feature of drainage channels



Opportunity to improve key gateway with public footpath K58



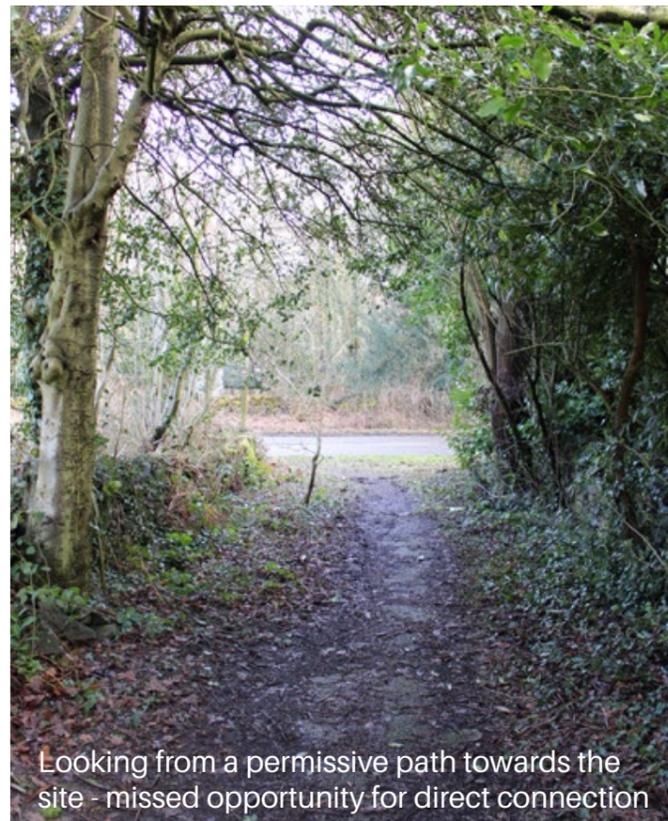
South-eastern gateway point from Bridleway K57 is unwelcoming and damaged



Poor ground conditions along some minor paths



Main route is accessible with positive aesthetic



Looking from a permissive path towards the site - missed opportunity for direct connection



Damage from maintenance vehicles which are wider than some paths



Inconsistent maps



Collapsed and overgrown structure



Opportunity to masterplan the area around the main car park to make it work more successfully



Site is screened from junction with Dean's Lane, Brook Road, Breakback Road and Woodhouse Lane



Benches poorly located and therefore unused



Benches in poor condition provide a neglected feel



The natural assets of The Outwoods are absent from maps



Geological outcrops and other special features/ characteristics of the site ignored by maps of the site which focus on benches and man-made structures

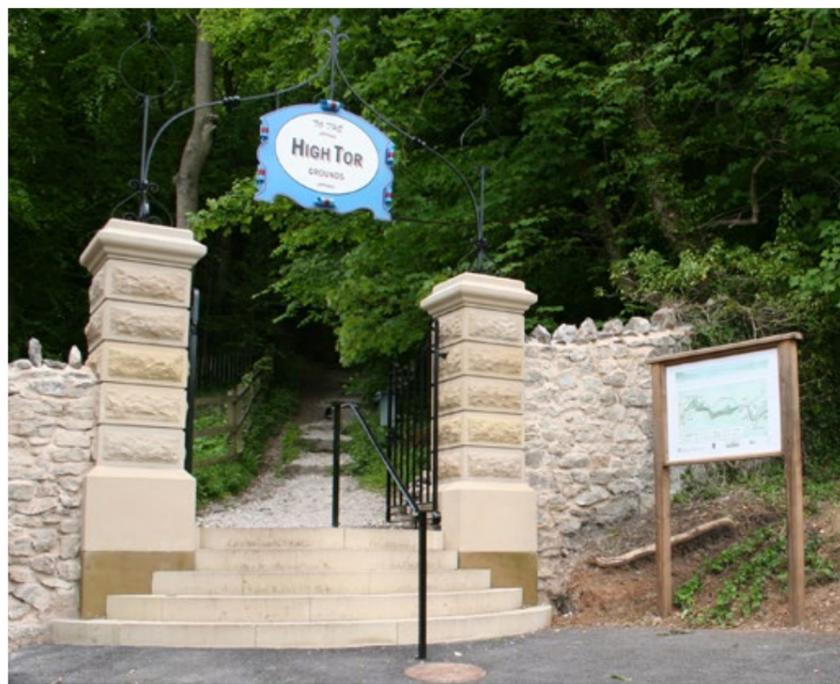
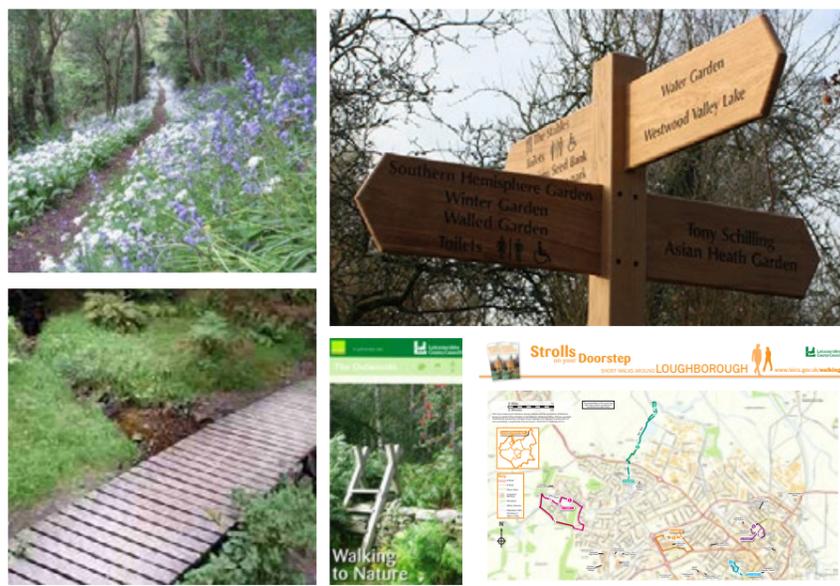
Key Features & Themes

Access

Create 'a sense of place' through welcoming arrival points within The Outwoods, co-ordinated signage and furniture across all honey pot sites, and by expanding the number of temporary and permanent art installations which add to the seasonal variation and joy of discovery.

Reinforce linkages to existing external access routes, published walking routes and routes proposed for upgrade. Implement inclusive surfacing treatments where issues exist at present and explore opportunities for new routes between honey pot sites.

Implement signage and wayfinding within surrounding settlement gateway points to further raise awareness and connect people with The Outwoods and wider sites.



People

Provide a stronger presence at arrival points and along Woodhouse Lane to make passing road users more aware of The Outwoods.

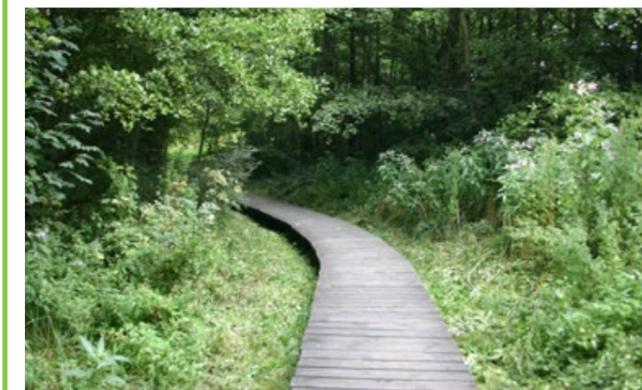
Produce a spatial masterplan for the main car park area to see how existing assets can work with the wider vision for the site in a more cohesive way and to broaden the appeal and offer.

Consider how site maps can 'sell' and highlight the natural assets and features of the site, including landform.

Remove features within The Outwoods that are tired or falling in to disrepair and emphasise existing natural assets such as geology and flora.

Explore how users that are currently excluded, yet clearly evident in the context of The Outwoods (Horse Riders from Wenlo Riding for the Disabled (RDA) and cyclists) can be included without causing conflict.

Consider opportunities for low key interventions aimed at children and families to reinforce appeal.



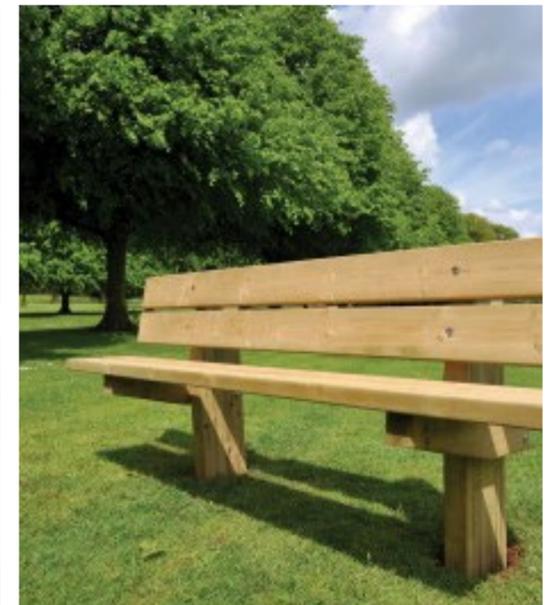


Partnerships

Ensure signage, surfacing and furniture are co-ordinated across all honey pot sites - potentially through a design standard common to all sites.

Explore how surrounding areas/ routes can be improved and upgraded to improve inclusivity.

Explore new partnerships that might yield alternative access routes between sites that are more accessible and direct.



Conclusion

Addressing the opportunities that have been identified within this document will help to realise the future Vision for The Outwoods and the wider study area. Furthermore it will support the strategic aims of the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme, which are to: Explore; Understand, and; Care for Charnwood.

Appendix

The following key documents were reviewed as part of this study:

- ***The Chronicles of Charnwood - A landscape Partnership Scheme bid by the Charnwood Forest Regional Park partnership (2017)***

This bid document sets the overarching aims for The Outwoods and its wider context. The vision and subsequent Masterplan must support the aims and objectives of this document.

- ***Report on a Survey of The Outwoods by Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust (2017) and The Outwoods Management Plan 2013 - 2018***

Both of these documents were useful in understanding the ecology and habitats present within the site and the characteristics that lead to distinctive sub-areas within the woodland.

- ***Charnwood Forest: A Living Landscape (March 2009) by Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust***
- ***Charnwood National Character Area Profile by Natural England (2013).***
- ***Open Spaces Strategy 2013 - 2028 by Charnwood Borough Council.***
- ***Strategy 2014 - 2024 by The National Forest.***
- ***2017/18 Outwoods Consultation Summary by Charnwood Borough Council.***
- ***PAWS Survey - Woodland Trust.***

- ***Felicity's Wood Management Plan 2014-2019 by The Woodland Trust.***
- ***Your guide to Beacon Hill Country Park by Leicestershire County Council.***

The following maps and online resources were reviewed as part of this study:

- ***Ordnance Survey Mapping at 1:10,000 and 1:25,000 scale. All mapping used Licence Number: 100019980 (Centremapslive.com).***
- ***Google Earth aerial photographs and 3D terrain data.***
- ***Map highlighting honey pot sites and key priority routes within Charnwood Forest Regional Park.***
- ***MAGIC [http://magic.defra.gov.uk/] Interactive mapping providing geographic information about the natural environment from across government.***
- ***Leicestershire Where to Walk [https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/cycling-and-walking/where-to-walk-in-leicestershire].***

Used to establish the public right of way reference numbers and descriptions

- ***Strava Heatmaps [https://www.strava.com/].***

This online tool has been useful in analysing the usage of the site and wider study area by walkers, joggers and cyclists.

- ***Explore Leicester & Leicestershire - on foot [http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/explore/explore-on-foot/]***

Including the routes 'Walking to Nature - Charnwood Forest' and 'Loughborough Strolls'.

- ***The National Forest Way [http://www.nationalforestway.co.uk/]***

Stage 1 - Westbound: Beacon Hill and Bradgate.

