

WILDLIFE ALLOTMENT GARDEN

COLD ASH

Date: April 2021

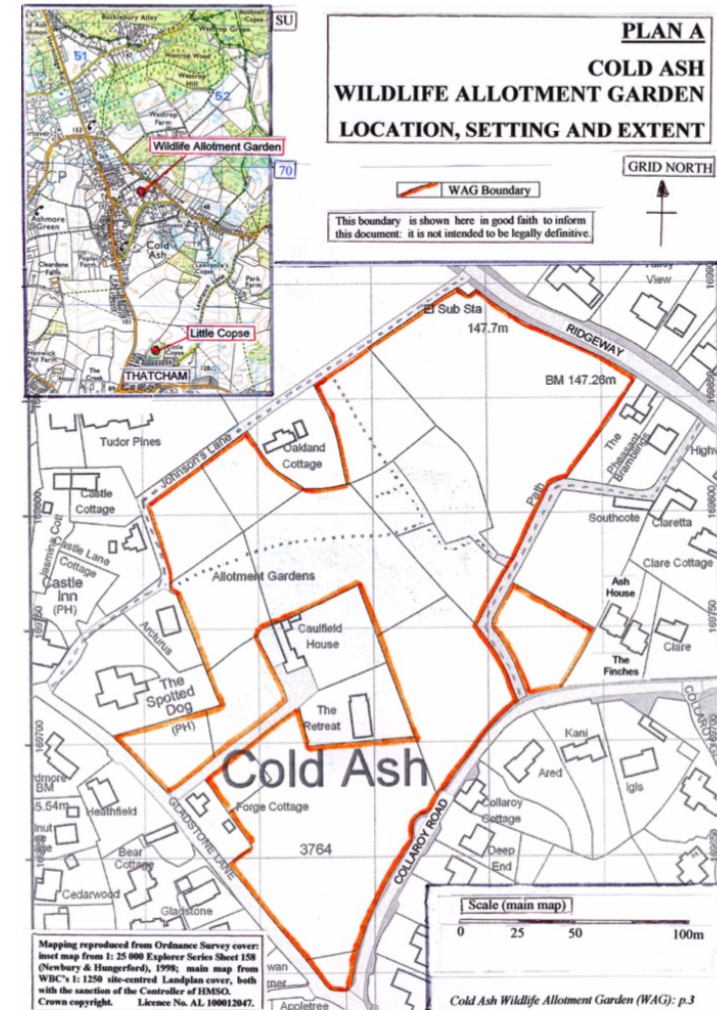
Version: 2

COLD ASH PARISH COUNCIL



The scope of the WAG

The Wildlife Allotment Garden (WAG) occupies some 3 hectares (7.4 acres) of land towards the eastern side of Cold Ash village, and is centred near National Grid Reference SU 514 698. Although essentially rectangular, with its longer axis tilted in a NE/SW direction, its outline is very irregular, encompassing as it does the various enclosures and indentations of adjoining properties.



PLAN A

COLD ASH WILDLIFE ALLOTMENT GARDEN

LOCATION, SETTING AND EXTENT

GRID NORTH

WAG Boundary

This boundary is shown here in pool fath to inform this document: it is not intended to be legally definitive.

Zone 1

Zone 2

Zone 3

Zone 4

Cold Ash

Scale (main map)

0 25 50 100m

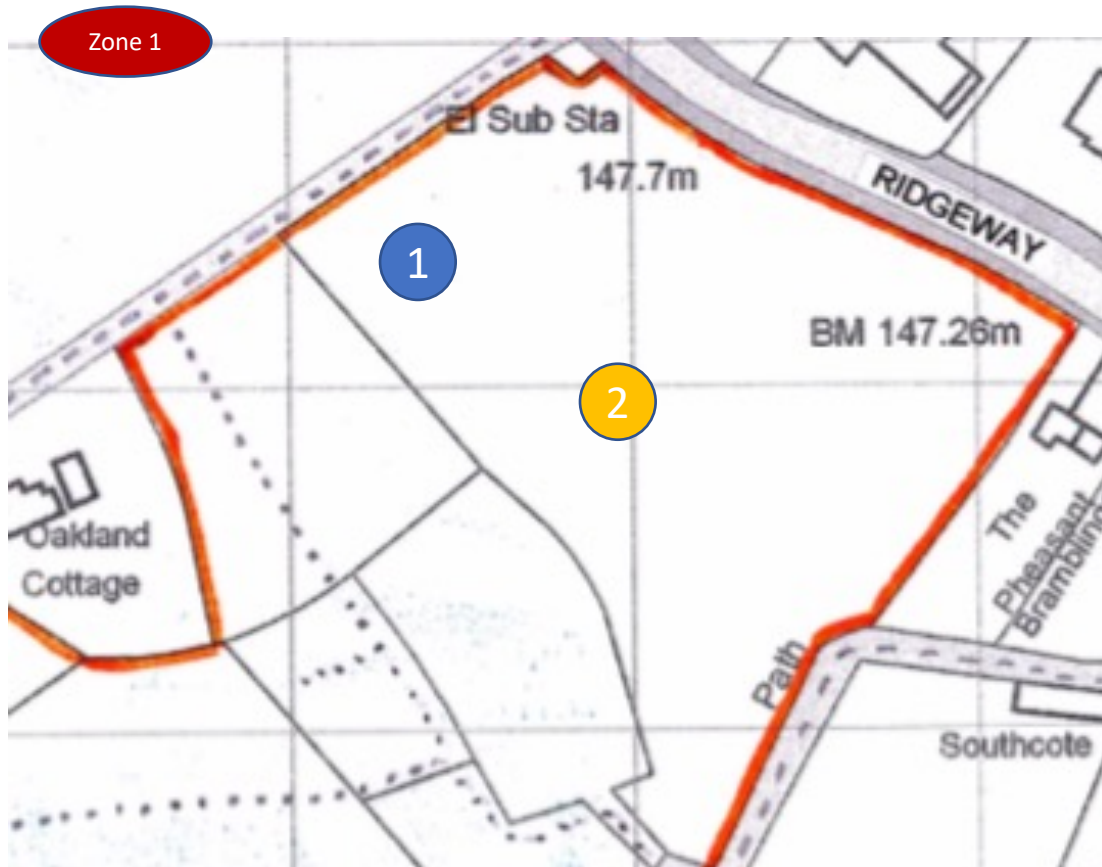
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Cold Ash Wildlife Allotment Garden (WAG): p.3

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-  **Zone 1** – the area adjacent to The Ridge, down to the tree line
-  **Zone 2** – orchard and Nuttery
-  **Zone 3** – the area adjacent to the Johnson's Lane allotments, across to Caufield House and down to the pond
-  **Zone 4** – the area next to the sheep grazing, that is currently not open to the public

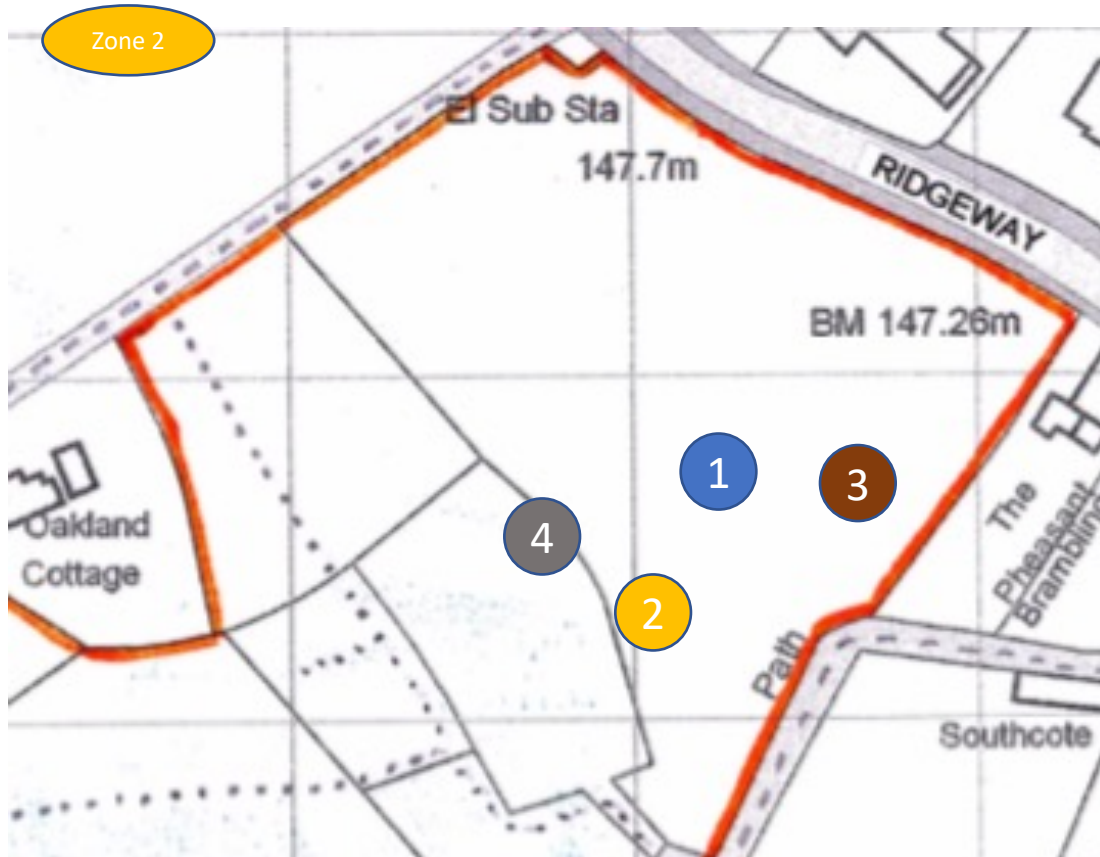
Zone 1 – plan of action



The plans for Zone 1 were:

- 1 **Establish a Hazell coppice** – clear the brambles back to the current tree-line and plant with Hazell's
- 2 **Maintain meadow** – review mowing cycle and consider other actions to maximise the health of the wildflower meadow (flora and fauna)

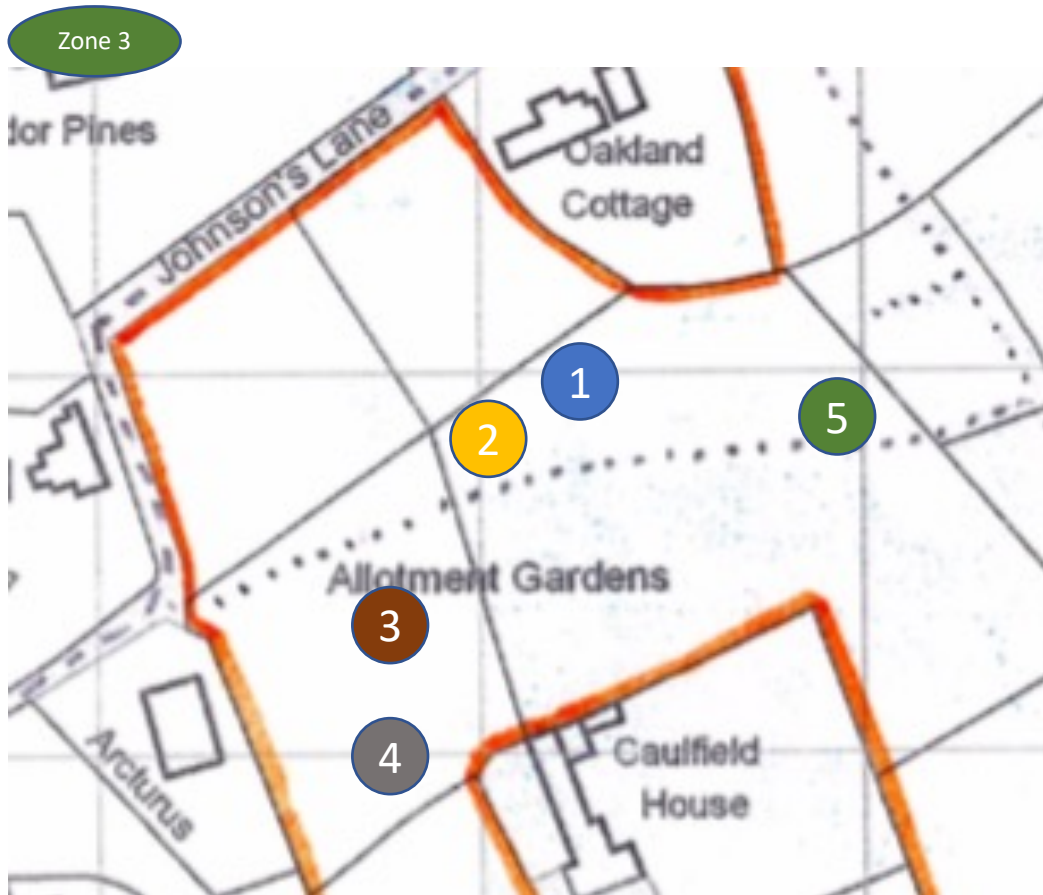
Zone 2 – plan of action



The plans for Zone 2 were:

- 1 **Community Orchard** – review mowing cycle and consider other actions to maximise the health of the orchard (flora and fauna) and accessibility by residents
- 2 **Nuttery**– add some more nut trees
- 3 **General maintenance** – clear brambles and nettles back to the tree-line
- 4 **Review path route** – the path is steep and worn, and becomes impassable during winter

Zone 3 – plan of action



The plans for Zone 3 were:

- 1 **Remove 2 dead Oak trees** – the Parish Council, on recommendation from a private contractor, has agreed to the removal of 2 Oak trees that are dying back

Instal Carved Bench – local artist to carve a bench from one of the Oak trees that were cut down
- 2 **Plant new trees** – clear the space around the removed trees and plant (c50) new trees that are being provided by the Woodland Trust
- 3 **Maintain meadow** - review mowing cycle and consider other actions to maximise the health of the wildflower meadow (flora and fauna)
- 4 **General maintenance** – clear brambles and nettles back to the tree-line
- 5 **Pond area** – clearance of Himalayan Balsam and clearing the pond bed

Zone 4 – plan of action



The plans for Zone 4 were:

- Open up the area to the public
- Establish it as an Environmental Educational Centre – the whole site will be available for education

The changes to be made include:

- Removal of some of the fencing
- Moving a gate, to enable ongoing access to the site for heavy machinery
- Putting in a Kissing-Gate, for controlled access by the public
- Opening up the paths
- Replacing a hand rail over the bridge
- Planting a fruit-tree orchard
- Putting in a number of tables and benches
- Putting in water butts
- Planting some trees provided by the Woodland Trust

Status of the work

A lot of work has been done in the WAG during 2020/21, covering clearing, planting and enhancing:

Clearing

- A group of volunteers has been established to work on the site
- We engaged West Berks Countryside Society to give the clearance a kick-start
- We've continued to engage the Green Gym, to carry-out specific maintenance
- We've pretty-much eradicated invasive Himalayan Balsam from the site
- We've cleared the debris from the 3 trees that were taken down in late 2019
- We've cleared brambles, that had started to become invasive – to make space for the bench and the tree planting
- We've cleared the paddock between the Goat and Sheep paddocks - hopefully we'll have some sheep back soon
- We've started work on tasks identified by the Allotment Holders, removing overhanging trees from the Johnson Lane allotments

Status of the work

Planting

The most successful day in the WAG was the **Community Tree Planting Day**, that was led by the Greening Group, in conjunction with Cold Ash Parish Council. 40-50 parishioners joined us on the day and over 100 trees were planted.

Other activity

- we've planted 10 fruit trees in the new paddock
- we've moved some of the Snowdrops from the path up to the new bench, to avoid them being walked on next year
- Further trees have been planted, to supplement those provided by the Woodland Trust – who knew 100 wouldn't be enough?
- A parishioner has started planting wildflowers around the bench
- A further Walnut Tree has been added to the Nuttery



Status of the work

Enhancing

The most prominent and commented on enhancement is the new carved **Bench**

Other activity

- we'll open up the new paddock in the next couple of weeks. Work includes:
 - A new entrance from Collaroy Road with carved entrance posts and a kissing gate that provides safe access to all
 - New signage to make the WAG more visible and inviting
 - Installation of three 6-seater picnic benches in the new paddock
 - Replacement of the two 6-seater picnic benches on the Ridge
 - A new bridge, to make a second crossing over the water course, opening up the new paddock to the rest of the site
 - Introduction of reptile survey sheets – the survey is being undertaken by a local teenager
 - Installation of new warning signs - it is a wildlife site and so there are risks



Resources

Financial

- The work in Zone 4, opening up the new paddock, was funded from the 2019 members bid. This is a grant that can be applied for via our District Councillor and is match funded by Cold Ash Parish Council
- The Carved Bench and other improvements were funded via the 2020 match-funded members bid
- The work done by West Berks Countryside Society and the Green Gym is funded by Cold Ash Parish Council

People

We would not have been able to achieve all that we have without the support of several voluntary groups:

- The WAG Volunteer Group
- West Berks Countryside Society
- The Green Gym
- The Cold Ash Greening Group

Next steps

There's more to do:

- Establish an environmentally-friendly hedge-cutting and meadow-mowing policy
- Establishing wildflower meadows
- Reintroduction of sheep
- Improvements to Gladstone Lane allotments
- We're hoping that the new area can be used as an Educational Zone / Open-Air Classroom – with access to the full site. We will be discussing this with the local schools and other groups
- And, the ongoing maintenance to both support the natural wildlife and keep the paths accessible

We'll be holding an Official Opening Ceremony for the New Paddock and Bench in the near future

An opportunity for you to input

Do you....

- Have any suggestions for future developments in the WAG?
- Want to get involved in the WAG Volunteer Group?
- Are there other countryside initiatives you'd like to see happen / get involved in?