



Kings Cliffe Parish Council

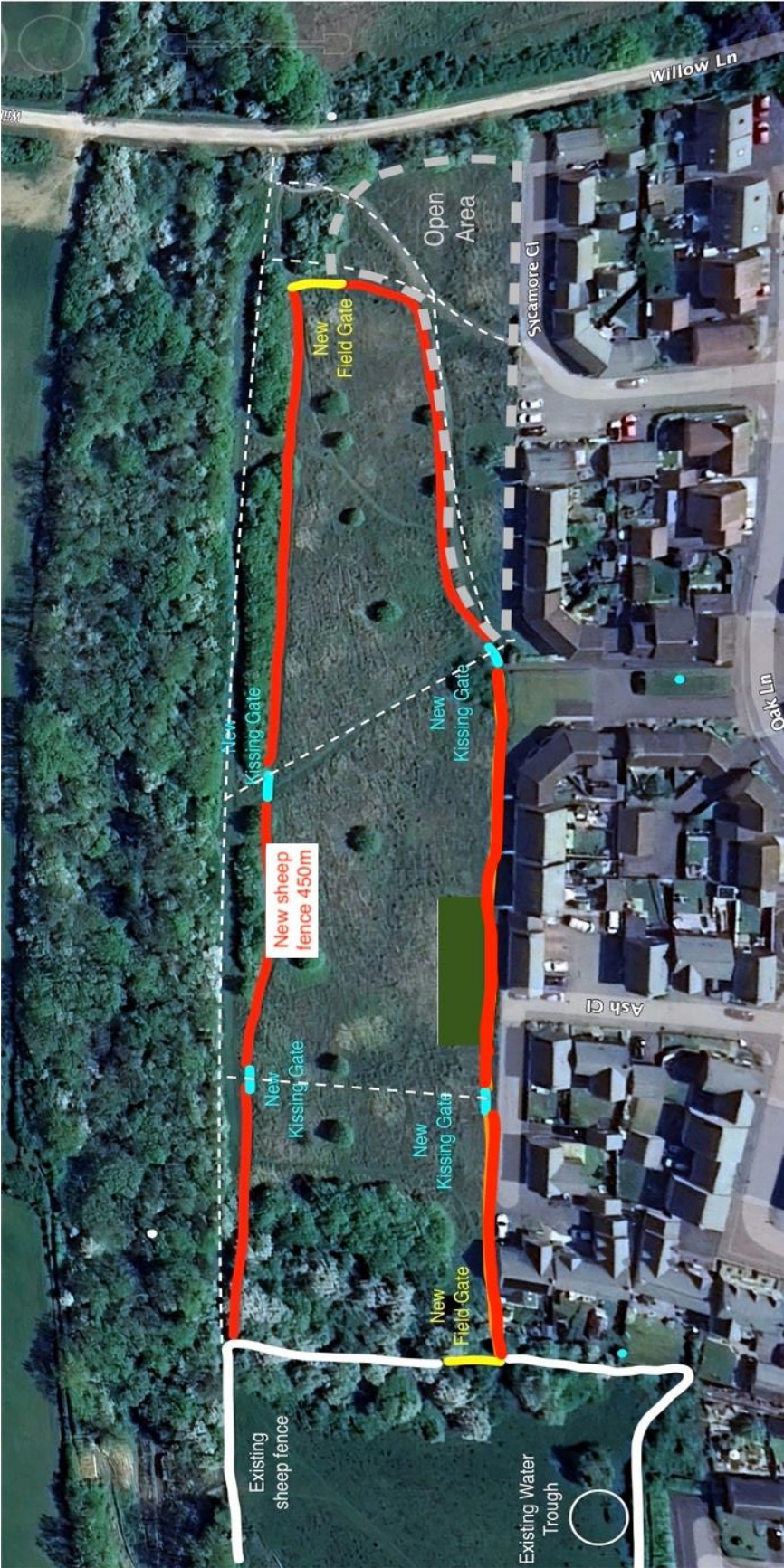
Site Management Plan for The Common, Oak Lane

V1.1 13/13/2026. Amended site plan

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Common to the north of Oak Lane Kings Cliffe is in need of a management plan. This is to protect and improve biodiversity, while retaining access for the community. In addition, a 'fire break' margin is required along the house boundary to the south, to guard against the risk of summer wildfires affecting properties. This all to be achieved at minimal ongoing cost to the Parish Council or to the community.
- 1.2 The proposed plan is to implement sheep grazing at appropriate times of year, to develop the main grassland area into a species rich meadow, similar to the existing Kings Cliffe Meadow alongside.
- 1.3 60% of the site would be fenced, using grants from local or national bodies in support of biodiversity projects. A local grazier is to be engaged to put sheep onto the site between September and March. There would be no ongoing costs for the grazing contract to either party.
- 1.4 The fencing would include weighted kissing gates to allow community access, and field gates for machinery access if required. Footpath access around the fenced area would be maintained to allow the community to cross the site without entering the sheep area if preferred.
- 1.5 The remainder of the site is made up of existing scrub areas which are valuable shelter belts for birds and mammals, footpaths outside the fence, and a further 'open area' outside the fencing which could be cut for recreational use.
- 1.6 In preparation for grazing to be introduced, most of the site will be flailed to remove as much of the existing 'light scrub' as possible. The denser scrub areas will not be affected.

2. Site plan



3. Background

- 3.1 The site is located to the north of Oak Lane and is around 4 acres in size, currently mainly light scrub and rough grass.
- 3.2 The Common was originally a farm field, grazed primarily by horses. After Persimmon Homes took ownership TKC Wildplaces managed it for 3 years, clearing scrub and ragwort, and recording the flora and fauna on the site, before it was transferred to the Parish Council. At this time the site was surveyed by the Wildlife Trust and achieved a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) designation, for flora and fauna.
- 3.3 In more recent years, the site has been cut most summers by the PC and the arisings left on the site. Under this regime, much of the original wildlife has disappeared - including pyramidal and common spotted orchids, and a wide variety of more common farmland flowers. The site was also previously rich in voles and other small mammals, which barn owls were observed hunting there.
- 3.4 A number of paths have developed informally across the site as the community from Oak Lane use the area to access KCA, the Village Field, Millennium Wood Kings Cliffe Meadow and the school.
- 3.5 In 2023, Kings Cliffe Parish Council (the PC) adopted a biodiversity policy, which includes the following provisions -
- (to) manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
This will include adopting beneficial practices with regard to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work.*
- 3.6 This management plan implements these provisions, aiming to reverse the decline in biodiversity on the site, at minimal ongoing cost, while retaining the general access to the site for the community.
- 3.7 The adjoining site to the west is Kings Cliffe Meadow (also a LWS), which is owned by NNC, and managed under guidance from The Wildlife Trust. This area is conservation grazed over the winter months, and has developed into a particularly rich site for biodiversity. Kings Cliffe Meadow has a water trough installed for the purposes of the grazing sheep.
- 3.8 The arrangements for grazing of this site can be extended onto The Common, if a suitable entrance were made at the western end to allow the sheep to move freely between the two sites, utilising the existing water trough.

4. Works

- 4.1 The area to be grazed may need to be flailed initially to reduce the existing light scrub before the sheep can be introduced.
- 4.2 A gap will need to be made in the western boundary hedgeline wide enough for a field gate to be installed. TKC Wildplaces may undertake this work if schedule and resources allow.
- 4.3 The central area of The Common is roughly 2.3 acres (1 hectare), and this will be fenced for grazing purposes. 4 x Kissing gates and 2 x field gates will be included. A grant should be identified to cover these costs.
- 4.4 Arrangements will need to be made for the grazier to introduce an appropriate number of sheep over the winter, to control the grass and other herbage overgrowth. Ideally these will be at a suitable density (to agree with the grazier), between September and March.
- 4.5 Arrangements for twice yearly cut of the open area will be required. Suggested this is done in early summer when the vegetation is getting thicker, and again in autumn. E.g. May and September.
- 4.6 The fenced area shouldn't need further maintenance so long as the grazing schedule is kept, although this should be kept under review.

5. Schedule

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| 5.1 Gain approval for the plan from the full Parish Council | By March 2026 |
| 5.2 Secure quotes for the installation of the fencing, with weighted kissing gates and field gates as required. | By February 2026 |
| 5.3 Agree the grazing contract with a local grazier. | By February 2026 |
| 5.4 Obtain grant cover for the costs associated. | By June 2026 |
| 5.5 Flail clear the site | By June 2026 |
| 5.6 Install fencing | By August 2026 |
| 5.7 First deployment of sheep | September 2026 |
| 5.8 Ongoing twice yearly cut of 'open area' | From September 2026 |
